

## **An introduction to the history of Kanem-Borno: the prologue of the *Dǝw1n***

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It is well known that pre-colonial African history has to rely to a large extent on external sources, first Arabic and then European. Oral traditions are often used as a complement and as a corrective to the foreign perspective introduced by the contemporary external sources. However, the assessment of these sources and in particular the dating of oral traditions poses important and in some cases insurmountable problems. Therefore in the last two or three decades there has been considerable disillusionment with respect to African history in the *longue durée*. Other factors may have contributed to the changing emphasis, but it is undeniable that after initial euphoria following the independence of African states, the creation in various countries of chairs of African history, and the first attempts to write comprehensive African histories devoting considerable attention to pre-colonial developments,<sup>1</sup> the tide turned very quickly in favour of issues that are of high contemporary relevance.<sup>2</sup> However, the priority given in historical research to the recent over the distant past, and the drawing of the past into the orbit of the present, are not only the consequence of undue political interference with historical issues. It is also the result of the apparent absence of solid evidence bearing faithful witness to past events and situations.

In view of the desperate search for African evidence transmitting authentic echoes of precise figures and genealogical relations in the distant past, it is all the more surprising that the *Dǝw1n sal113n Barn5*, the “Annals of the kings of Borno”, has received so little attention. Of course the fact that it is written in Arabic may have been an obstacle to its usage by general historians. However, the German translation of the *Dǝw1n* was published as early as 1852, while an English translation has been available since 1926 and a French translation since 1977.<sup>3</sup> Another reason for its neglect may have been the impression that chronicles written in Arabic give an undue Islamic bias to the account of past events. Though perhaps emphasized by certain archaeologists, such criticism is clearly not appropriate with respect to the *Dǝw1n*. Two examples may be quoted in support of this point: the very casual reference to the Islamisation of the court in the second half of the eleventh century (§ 11) and the positive view taken with respect to the pre-Islamic Mune cult-symbol destroyed in the first half of the thirteenth century by Islamic reformers (§ 17).<sup>4</sup> Even the brevity of the text, covering in its English translation just seven pages, should not have distracted the attention of scholars from its value because its precise chronology covering at least seven centuries and its sober information on 68 successive kings clearly points to the outstanding significance of the *Dǝw1n* as an historical document.

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver/Fage, *Short History*, 23-180; Fage, *History*, 34-212; Vansina, *Living*, 40-60.

<sup>2</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, 6-192; Collins/Burns, *History*, 251-389.

<sup>3</sup> Blau, “Chronik”, 307-318; Palmer, *History*, 84-91; Lange, *Dǝw1n*, 65-82.

<sup>4</sup> Palmer, *History*, 87; Lange, “Mune-Symbol”, 15-25.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the particularistic and local perspective of the *Dǝwīn* is quite disturbing. Yet, it should be observed that when scrutinized the brief chronicle has valid information to offer with respect to a number of important historical topics, such as the origin of the Kanem state, the importance of the uterine filiations of the early kings, the introduction of Islam, the marginalization of the pre-Islamic ruling group, the chronology of the Muslim kings, the substitution of black for white kings, the failure of radical Islamic reforms, the uprising of the pre-Islamic population, the shift of the royal court from Kanem to Borno, the importance of dynastic conflicts and the continuity of pilgrimages to Mecca at all times during the Islamic period. Admittedly, on other subjects of state history such as territorial expansion, trade and political organization the chronicle is desperately silent. Nevertheless, its thorough scrutiny and comparison with other available sources – Arabic, European and local oral accounts – may bring to light many more important data on Kanem-Borno history than currently suspected.

### 1. Previous treatments of the *Dǝwīn*

The *Dǝwīn* was probably the first chronicle of a West African kingdom which became known to the outside world. Heinrich Barth discovered it in 1851 during his stay in Kukawa, the nineteenth-century capital of Borno, before continuing his travels to Adamawa, Kanem, Bagirmi and Timbuktu.<sup>5</sup> He obtained two copies of the *Dǝwīn* from Shitima Makaremma, one of which he sent by courier via Tripoli to the German Oriental Society in Halle, while he kept the other himself.<sup>6</sup>

This first copy was translated by the Orientalist Otto Blau and published with comments as “Chronik der Sultāne von Bornu” in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 6 (1852), 305-330. It is now at the Library of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* within the *Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt* at Halle, Arabic MS n° 53 (MS H). The manuscript is written in a Sudanic script, it extends over five and a half pages and each page has an average of 35 lines. A copy of it can be found in Lange, *Dǝwīn*, following p. 6. Being a photographic representation of a photocopy, the reading of a few proper names is not unequivocal.

A second copy of the *Dǝwīn* was brought back from Borno by Barth and was later deposited in the Library of the *School of African and Oriental Studies* in London as Arabic MS n° 41 384 (MS L). This manuscript of 18 pages with an average of 14 lines was copied by a European hand,<sup>7</sup> certainly by Barth himself, from a text having 14 pages (as is apparent from the pagination in the margin). That Barth was the author of this copy may be concluded from a question mark in the margin of f. 9 concerning the place of death of two succeeding kings, Kur<sup>2</sup> Gana b. #Abd All<sup>1</sup>h (23) in علي and Kur<sup>2</sup> Kura (24) b. #Abd All<sup>1</sup>h (24) in غلوا. In both versions of his travel account he questions also the validity of these indications by placing question marks after the two mentions of Rhal<sup>3</sup>wa in the German edition and a question mark behind the first Ghaliwā in the English edition.<sup>8</sup> The only

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of Barth’s travels in West Africa, see Schiffers, *Barth*, 9-49.

<sup>6</sup> Barth, *Travels*, II, 16; Lange, *Chronologie*, 10-16.

<sup>7</sup> Lange, *Chronologie*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Barth, *Reisen*, II, 315; *id.*, *Travels*, II, 585. Palmer’s translation has N’geliwa without a

other question mark in the margin of MS L concerns the clan of Kad<sup>2</sup>'s (18) mother, written مغزمه but transcribed by him as Maghárma/Marhárma as above in § 17, thus following up the question mark on the manuscript.<sup>9</sup> Therefore it would appear that Barth obtained a second Sudanic copy of the *Dǝw1n*, comprising fourteen pages, from Shitima Makaremma, which at one stage he copied himself and which he used in London for his reconstruction of Kanem-Borno history in his travel account.<sup>10</sup>

Since no other copies of the *Dǝw1n* were found in Borno, it is necessary to consider in more detail what Barth has to say about his efforts to find written sources on the history of Kanem-Borno in Kukawa, the nineteenth-century capital of Borno. He first states:

“The whole business of collecting documents and information relative to the history of the old dynasty was most difficult, and demanded much discretion, as the new dynasty of the Kánemiyn endeavours to obliterate as much as possible the memory of the old Kanúri dynasty, and has assiduously destroyed all its records wherever they could be laid hold of.”<sup>11</sup>

With respect to the *Dǝw1n*, Barth makes it clear that he got two different copies of the document from Shitima Makarémma, “a man intimately connected with the old dynasty”.<sup>12</sup> He further reports about his informant that he had been a courtier under the old dynasty and that “he was a master of all the history of the old dynasty”.<sup>13</sup> Probably Shitima Makaremma was a court historian of the Sefuwa and as such he was possibly the keeper of the dynastic records.<sup>14</sup> His claim that the *Dǝw1n* was merely an extract from a more voluminous, still existing but carefully concealed work should be considered seriously. Unfortunately Barth could not continue working with his favourite informant on Kanem-Borno history because the latter was executed together with the vizier al-H1jj Bashir in December 1853.<sup>15</sup> During his last stay in Kukawa from December 1854 to the beginning of May 1855, Barth does not seem to have resumed his attempts to find further documents on the history of Kanem-Borno.

The initial endeavours of Otto Blau to throw light on the content of the *Dǝw1n* were restricted to the Arabic text of the document. When Heinrich Barth wrote up his German and English versions of his travel account in London from November 1855 to August 1858 he was in a much better position to work on the historical content of the text. In

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question mark in both cases (*History*, 88).

<sup>9</sup> Barth, *Travels*, II, 584; *id.*, *Reisen*, II, 311.

<sup>10</sup> A comparison with his Arabic handwriting in some of his note books will help to confirm whether Barth was really the copyist of MS L (*cf.* Schiffers, *Barth*, 512, 513).

<sup>11</sup> Barth, *Travels*, II, 16; Lange, *Chronologie*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Though Ibn Furt<sup>5</sup> mentions a military commander called Shat<sup>3</sup>ma B<sup>3</sup>ri Gitr<sup>1</sup>ma (Lange, *Chronicle*, 44), the title was more particularly bestowed on scholars (Brenner, *Shehus*, 141). In 1872 the village head of Kukawa was another official called Shitima Makaremma (Nachtigal, *Sahara*, II, 758).

<sup>13</sup> Barth, *Travels*, II, 16, 39.

<sup>14</sup> In Kebbi this function was in the hands of the Sank<sup>4</sup>ira and in Gobir in the hands of the members of the Fan Akali family (Lange, “Successor state”, 361 n. 8; *id.*, FN 95, 32).

<sup>15</sup> Barth, *Travels*, II, 16, 39; Brenner, *Shehus*, 77-79.

particular, he could rely on a second copy of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n* and he could make use of the notes he had taken in Kukawa on the history of Kanem-Borno. Included in his travel account was his “Chronological table of the history of Bornu”, which provides a first outline of the history of Kanem-Borno based on the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n*, on some Arab geographers and on oral information collected in Kukawa and other localities of Borno and Kanem.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of a remark by Imam Ahmad b. Furṭ̣̣5 – who wrote his *K. ghazaẉ̣̣1t Barṇ̣̣5* on the Borno wars of Idṛ̣̣3s Alauma (1564-1596) in 1576 – that he had consulted Masfarma #Umar's chronicle of the military expeditions of Idṛ̣̣3s Katakarmabe (1487-1509), and noting that the Imam did not make use of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n*, Barth concluded that the beginning of chronicle writing cannot have been earlier than the end of the fifteenth century. While from then on a small section was added to the chronicle at the beginning of every new reign, he believed that for earlier periods the first author of the chronicle had to rely on oral traditions.<sup>17</sup> He did not consider the possibility that Imam Ahmad b. Furṭ̣̣5 might have been ignorant of the existence of a written chronicle such as the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n* as he himself did not find out about the *Kano Chronicle* during his stay in Kano in February 1851.<sup>18</sup> In other words, since the chronological data of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n* show great accuracy from at least the thirteenth century onward, the royal chronicle must already have been existent by the time of the Imam in the sixteenth century. Apparently it was even during the Sefuwa period of Kanem-Borno history surrounded by great secrecy.

Next we have to consider the work of the colonial administrator and amateur historian Herbert Richmond Palmer. Though equipped with only a limited knowledge of Arabic, Palmer translated the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n* with the help of local Malams and through the medium of Hausa, and published it in 1926 before making the Arabic text available in 1930.<sup>19</sup> This text is based solely on MS L and has no additional notes or comments.<sup>20</sup> The translation has some useful notes and takes advantage of the divergent names of burial places provided by some king lists in Kanuri.<sup>21</sup> Palmer's merits are mainly to be seen in his attempts to collect king lists, recently composed Arabic texts, and oral traditions. In many instances he seems to have encouraged local Malams to commit to writing the historical legends they knew.<sup>22</sup>

The present author completed his PhD in 1974 at the Sorbonne in Paris with a thesis entitled *Contribution à l'histoire du Ḳ̣̣1nem-Borṇ̣̣5*. The work comprised an edition of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n* based on the two available manuscripts, MS H and MS L, and a revised version was published as *Le Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n des sultans du Ḳ̣̣1nem-Borṇ̣̣5: chronologie et histoire d'un royaume africain*, Wiesbaden 1977. It offers a new chronology, equates the *Baṇ̣̣5 Ḍ̣̣5ḳ̣̣5* or Duguwa of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣1n* with the Zaghawa mentioned by Arab authors, and suggests that

<sup>16</sup> Barth, *Reisen*, II, 307-367; *id.*, *Travels*, II, 581-605.

<sup>17</sup> Barth, *Travels*, II, 16-17; Lange, *Chronicle*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Barth, *Travels*, I, 489-525. The existence of a Kebbi chronicle even escaped the attention of the scholars involved in the Northern History Research Scheme (Lange, “Successor state”, 3-8; Hunwick, *Literature*, 586-7).

<sup>19</sup> Palmer, *History*, 84-91.

<sup>20</sup> Palmer, *Ta'̣̣̣ṛ̣̣kh*, 130-7.

<sup>21</sup> Palmer, *Memoirs*, II, 83-89, 116-8; III, 36-41.

<sup>22</sup> Most important for the early history of Kanem are the Aisa legends and the origin-chronicles (Palmer, *Memoirs*, II, 87-95).

the chronicle was first committed to writing during the reign of Dunama Dibbalemi (1203-1243).<sup>23</sup> It attributes only marginal importance to the king lists and oral traditions of Kanem-Borno. Subsequently, the chronology of the Sefuwa kings has been improved, so that now the introduction of Islam is dated to 1060/1 instead of 1067/8.<sup>24</sup>

An important contribution to the study of the first section of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n* was made by Abdullahi Smith, to whom we also owe a thoughtful overview of the history of Kanem-Borno.<sup>25</sup> Smith published the introductory chapters of four different manuscripts concerning the early history of the Sefuwa. Most significant for our purpose is the *Kiṭ̣̣ḅ̣̣ al-Barṇ̣̣5* of which al-Ḥ̣̣ij̣̣̣j̣̣̣ Aḅ̣̣5̣̣̣ Bakr al-Miskin of Maiduguri holds a copy. Though the translated section of the text does not include any Arab or other Near Eastern genealogy, it has the reign lengths of the first ten kings, situates their reigns in Arabia and provides some information about their successive rules.<sup>26</sup> However, since the account of Sayf is based on Arab historians it probably does not derive directly from the more extensive chronicle mentioned by Shitima Makaremma. Three other versions of the origin-chronicle, in which Sayf is depicted as “a great sultan”, may prove to be more closely related to the complete chronicle – if indeed it existed.<sup>27</sup>

More recently Augustin Holl suggested that the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n* and the king lists derived from originally separate oral sources. On the basis of the previous French translation of the chronicle, he produced an English translation of the chronicle without notes. Devoting little attention to chronology, he thinks that the two written versions of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n* were produced by Shitima Makaremma himself towards 1850.<sup>28</sup> Modern historians will find it difficult to believe that the lengths of the reigns of at least 49 kings covering 605 years could have been faithfully memorized by successive court historians. Further, the question arises why Africans should have been so reluctant to take advantage of writing, although with the Islamisation of the ruling elite of Kanem about 1060 Arabic as a written language was available to the court historians? These and other considerations reduce the value of a book which disregards the early history of Kanem-Borno and dates the rise of Borno to the twelfth century, although Borno was just a province of the powerful Sefuwa state of Kanem prior to the final shift of the royal court to the west of Lake Chad around 1380.<sup>29</sup>

A new approach to the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n* extends the time scale of the use of writing in Kanem by several hundred years. It may be called the ancient Near Eastern paradigm because it follows traditional evidence suggesting direct repercussions of early “Arab” history on the foundation of Kanem. With respect to the prologue of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n*, it explores in detail a number of elements which were formerly ignored on account of their presumed borrowing from Arabic sources: the Yemenite origin of the dynastic founder, the Baghdadi origin of

<sup>23</sup> Lange, *Chronologie*, 83-94 (chronology), 113-129 (fall of the Duguwa/Zaghawa), 155-160 (beginning of the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n*). Zeltner supports the idea that the *Ḍ̣̣ẉ̣̣n* was first composed at the time of Dunama Dibbalemi (*Pages*, 19).

<sup>24</sup> Lange, *Chronologie*, 67; *id.*, *Kingdoms*, 552.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, “Early states”, 158-183.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Smith, “Legend”, 46-49.

<sup>27</sup> Palmer, *Ta’ṛ̣̣kḥ̣̣*, 5; Smith, “Legend”, 44, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Holl, *Diwan*, 39.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, “Early states”, 174-180; Lange, *Kingdoms*, 85-90.

the ancestral queen mother, and the biblical genealogy of the dynastic ancestors. All these data were neglected for the reconstruction of the state-building process of Kanem because of their assumed nature as *feedback* phenomena. Moreover, until recently historians disregarded the potential of comparisons with ancient Near Eastern societies for the investigation of the emergence of the Sefuwa state.<sup>30</sup> With respect to the title of the *Dǝw1n* a minor example concerns the etymology of its Kanuri equivalent *girgam*, a designation which is also known in some neighbouring societies. Most likely derived from the Sumero-Akkadian word *girginakku* “library, sequence of series of tablets”, the term suggests close connections with ancient Near Eastern chronicles.<sup>31</sup> Seen in this perspective, the detailed study of the *Dǝw1n*’s prologue acquires new interest.

## 2. Text of the *Dǝw1n*’s prologue

Before considering the prologue of the *Dǝw1n* in detail it may be useful to present the Arabic text and its English translation. Apart from the two manuscripts of the chronicle, there are two published versions of the Arabic text: the first, based on MS L, is in Palmer, *Ta’rǝkh*, 130-7, and the second, based on MS L and on MS H, is in Lange, *Dǝw1n*, 22-64. Only the most important differences between the manuscripts are noted here. Other divergences will be found in the table and the following analysis.

هذا ديوان سلاطين برنوا

These are the Annals of the Sultans of Borno<sup>32</sup>

حديث سيف بن ذيزن [= ذي يزن]

It is the story of the sultan Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan (at the beginning).<sup>33</sup>

- وامه مكيه - بن الملك بغداد

His mother was from Mecca;<sup>34</sup> he was the son of the king of Baghdad.<sup>35</sup>

هو بني السكاسي - وقيل السكاسكي - ثم المخرومي

He belonged to the Ban5 al-Sak1s3 – others say al-Sakas1k3<sup>36</sup> – then to the al-Makhz5m3.<sup>37</sup>

هو سيف بن ذيزن [= ذي يزن]

He was Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan,

<sup>30</sup> See Lange, *Kingdoms*, 242-8; *id.*, “Immigration”, 84-106; *id.*, “Magistrates”, 3-24.

<sup>31</sup> CAD, V, 86-87; Lange, *Kingdoms*, 244-5.

<sup>32</sup> MS H: هذه تواريخ; MS L: هنا ديوان.

<sup>33</sup> MS H: حديث سيف; MS L: اولهم.

<sup>34</sup> Formerly S2f was said to be Makata (see below).

<sup>35</sup> MS H: بن ملك بغداد. The grammatically correct reading is: بن ملك بغداد.

<sup>36</sup> MS L: كسكاسي.

<sup>37</sup> Reading of MS H. MS L has the three tribal names without an article.

بن الصح بن الصح

Son of al-**Sahh**, son of al-**Sahh**,

بن لوى بن لوى بن لوى

Son of Lu'ayy, son of Lu'ayy, son of Lu'ayy,

بن الحج بن بكر بن ابى والحاج

Son of al-**Hajj**, son of Bakr, son of (Ab5 al-**H1jj**),

بن الجام بن حملة

Son of **J1m**, son of **Hamla**,

بن هود بن امير

Son of **H5d**, son of **Am3r**,

بن ورديه بن حلينه بن كيس

Son of Wardiyya, son of **Hal3na**, son of Kays,

بن قريش

Son of Quraysh,

بن عبد الله بن عمر بن سعد

Son of **#Abd All1h**, son of **#Umar**, son of **Sa#d**,

بن اسماعين [= اسماعيل] بن ابراهيم

Son of **Ism1#l**, son of **Ibr1h3m**,

بن أزر اخو تارخ

Son of **6zar**, the brother of **T1rakh** (= Terah)<sup>38</sup>,

بن تجور [= نحور] بن شاروخ

Son of **Taj5r** (= **N1h5r**)<sup>39</sup>, son of **Sh1r5kh**,

بن اركوا [= ارغو]

Son of **Ark5** (= **Argh5**), [son of **F1lagh**],

بن امير عبير

Son of the Commander **#Ab3r**, son of **Sh1lakh**,

بن ارفخشذ [= ارفخشذ] مخشد [= مخشد]

Son of **Arfakhshad Makhshad**,

<sup>38</sup> MS H: اخو تارخ أرغزا أزر; MS L: اخو أزر.

<sup>39</sup> Arab historians have **نحور** but **\*نحور** is closer to the Hebrew **נחור**. The Masoretic reading is however **נַחֹר** (Gen 11:22 etc.).

بن سام بن نوح بن لامك

Son of Shem, son of Noah, son of L1mak,

بن متوشلخ متسليم

Son of Mat5shalakh Matusal3m,

بن خنوج بن زيد

Son of Khan5j (= Akhn5j/Enoch), son of Zayd (= Yarid),

بن مهلاييل [= مهلاييل] ملييل [= ملييل]

Son of Mahal1y3 Maly3 (= Mahalalel),

بن فتى [= قنن/قنين] كنانه [بن] يانشى [= يانش]

Son of Kin1n (= Q3n1n/Kenan), son of Y1nush (= An5sh/Enosh)<sup>40</sup>,

بن شئيت بن ادم عليه الصلاة والسلام.

Son of Sh3t (= Seth), son of 6dam, upon whom be blessing and salvation.”

At first sight it would appear that most of these names, if not all, were borrowed from Arab writings. In fact, this is not the case, neither with the Arab nor with the Hebrew genealogical names. Though there is a thin overlay of Arab influences, it can be shown that the core of this onomastic information derives from internal transmission and from a conscious effort at adaptation to the new Islamic situation.

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<sup>40</sup> MS H has either [بن قنين] بخنين (Blau) or فشير (Lange). MS L: [بن قنن] فتى.

List of Israelite patriarchs in the *D3w1n*, in the writings of Arab historians and in Genesis

N°	English name	<i>D3w1n</i> MS H	<i>D3w1n</i> MS L	Arab historians	Genesis 5
21	Ishmael	إسماعيل بن	إسماعيل بن	إسماعيل	לאעמשי
20	Abraham	إبراهيم بن	إبراهيم بن	إبراهيم	אברהם
19	Terah	اخو تَارَح (أَرْغُو) أَرُّ بن	اخو آزر بن	تارخ	תרח
18	Nahor	تجور [= نهور] بن	تجور [= نهور] بن	ناحور	נחור
17	Serug	شَارُوخ بن	شروخ بن	ساروخ	שרוג
16	Reu	اكرما [= ارکوا] بن	ارکوا بن	أرغو	רעו
15	Peleg	Missing	Missing	فالغ	פלג
14	Eber	امير عيبر بن	امير بن	عابر	עבר
13	Shelah	شالغ بن	سالغ (بن ارغوا) [بن]	شالغ	שלח
12	Arpachshad	ارفخشذ مخشد بن	ارفخشذ محمد بن	أرفخشذ	ארפכשד
11	Shem	سام بن	سام بن	سام	שם
10	Noah	نوح بن	نوح بن	نوح	נח
9	Lamech	لامك بن	(سالخ عيبر) بن	لمك	למך
8	Methuselah	متوشلخ متسليم بن	مستليم [= متسليم] بن	متوشلخ	מתושלח
7	Enoch	خنوخ بن	خنوخ بن	أخنوخ	חנוך
6	Jared	زيد بن (بن ميرك) بن	زيد [= يرد] بن	يرد	ירד
5	Mahalalel	مهلاييل ملييل بن	ميرك [= مهلال] بن	مهلائيل	מהלאל
4	Kenan	(بخينن) كنانه [بن]	فتى [= قنن] [بن]	قينان	קינן
3	Enosh	يانش بن	متوشخا [= أنوش] بن	أنوش	אנוש
2	Seth	شنت بن	شنت بن	شيث	שת
1	Adam	ادم	ادم	آدم	אדם

### 3. Analysis of the *Dǝw1n*'s prologue

Broadly speaking there are eight aspects of the *Dǝw1n* to be distinguished: the title of the document, indications concerning the dynastic ancestor and his mother, the home towns Mecca and Baghdad, the ancestral Arab tribes, the Arab and the Israelite genealogy. Although dealing with origins, these elements are so cryptic that up until now historians were unable to use the information. Moreover, it was believed that the onomastically overloaded account of origins was heavily biased by the invention of artificial homes induced by Islam. By looking carefully at all the details, we will see that Arab-Islamic influences only affected the surface of the text. The inner meaning of the chronicle can be shown to have been only slightly altered by Islamic interferences.

**Title:** Though the *Dǝw1n* does not have a formal title, it has an exordium clearly indicating its character as annals of the kings of Borno. More precisely each of the two available manuscripts has a different beginning expressing the same idea. Referring to the 68 sections of the document devoted to 68 kings of Sefuwa, each of the two manuscripts uses a different term for the accumulation of small sections providing the same type of information for the successive kings.

MS H has the title *hadhihi taw1rǝkh sal1ǝn Barn5* which may be translated as "These are the annals of the sultans of Borno". The plural of *ta'ǝkh* "date, history, chronicle, annals" is surprising in this context because the more current singular would have been quite appropriate for a document claiming to offer historical information.<sup>41</sup> Yet, it can be argued that the plural *taw1rǝkh* refers more particularly to the sections of the chronicle, thus coming close to the idea of *girgam/girginakku* "sequence or series of (writing) tablets".<sup>42</sup>

MS L has the title *hun1 dǝw1n sal1ǝn Barn5* "this is the *Dǝw1n* of the sultans of Borno". The term *dǝw1n* has a wide range of meanings: "register, collection of written leaves or papers, collection of poems written by one author, governmental office and chancellery".<sup>43</sup> Its usage in the singular implies a plural meaning insofar as many registers, leaves or poems are involved. Because of its usage by Barth, *Dǝw1n* became the customary title for the document despite its occurrence in the less valid MS L.

The two different titles given to the same chronicle seem to imply a long history of separate transmission. But in fact, the two manuscripts diverge from each other significantly only with respect to the last three independent Sefuwa kings #A13 b. D5nama (1747-1792), Ahmad b. #A13 (1792-1808) and D5nama b. Ahmad (1808-1816).<sup>44</sup> Hence, it would appear that from about 1792 onward the two manuscripts were composed and transmitted separately. Another important difference between the manuscripts concerns a sentence in § 11 indicating a shift of power from the Ban5 D5k5 to the Ban5 Hume, and hence the destitution of the Zaghawa, which is omitted in MS L. Though this information has important implications for the history of Kanem, the reason for its omission in MS L is not clearly understood. The earlier idea that the court historians tried to conceal a dynastic change from the thirteenth century onward would imply that beginning from this

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<sup>41</sup> Lane, *Lexicon*, I, 46; Wehr, *Dictionary*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> CAD, V, 87; Lange, *Kingdoms*, 245.

<sup>43</sup> Lane, *Lexicon*, III, 939; Wehr, *Dictionary*, 350.

<sup>44</sup> Lange, *Dǝw1n*, 57-58, 82.

time the two manuscripts diverged, which is not the case.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the Duguwa were not a dynasty but one of the two ruling groups within a bicephalic state which continued to play an important role in Kanem-Borno history until at least 1335 CE and probably even later.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Story of S2f:**

Following the exordium, the two manuscripts are distinguished by another important difference: while MS H begins with *had3th Sayf* “the story of Sayf”, MS L has *awwaluhum al-sult1n Sayf* “their first [king] was the sultan Sayf”. The difference between the two versions of the text may at first sight be explained by the surviving allusion – in MS H – to an earlier explicit story of S2f also reflected to some extent in the origin-chronicles.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the use of the title *sult1n* for S2f in MS L is reminiscent of the most authentic versions of the origin-chronicle, according to which the eponymous ancestor was “the greatest of the sultans” or “the great one, the sultan” or “the great sultan”.<sup>48</sup> According to the two parallels it can be argued that a preceding version of the *D3w1n* had a story of S2f which depicted the eponymous ancestor of the Sefuwa as a great ruler of the ancient Near East.

**Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan:** Next, we have the Arabised name of the dynastic ancestor of the Sefuwa – Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan designating originally a famous but historically minor Yemenite hero. According to Arab historians, around 670 CE Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan expelled the Ethiopians from Yemen with Persian help, thus exchanging one foreign domination for another.<sup>49</sup> In all likelihood the original name Sayf or S2f in the chronicle induced the court historians to adopt the Yemenite hero as their new eponymous ancestor some time after the introduction of Islam around 1060. This substitution of an indigenous name by a foreign name borrowed from Arabic history offers a good example of Arabo-Islamic *feedback*. It is not an adoption out of nothing but a loan based on phonetic and historical similarities: thus, S2f became Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan on account of the apparent identity of the name – S2f = Sayf (b. Dh3 Yazan) – and on the basis of the apparent resemblance between the early Sefuwa and the early Yemenite or Tubba#kings of Arab historians.

In fact, the prologue of the *D3w1n* itself mentions Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan twice<sup>50</sup>, but subsequently the main texts refers twice to Sayf or S2f without the parental name Dh3 Yazan. Thus, in the first section of the annals and in § 16 the ancestral figure is simply designated as Sayf/S2f. The available dynastic lists confirm in turn that the great ancestor of the Sefuwa was only called Sayf/S2f.<sup>51</sup> Oral traditions call him by the slightly

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Lange, *Chronologie*, 97-99; Zeltner, *Pages*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Lange, *Chronologie*, 97-99; *id.*, “Magistrates”, 12-19.

<sup>47</sup> Two of the currently available origin-chronicles correspond at the beginning to loans from Arab historians (Palmer, *Memoirs*, II, 93; Smith, “Legend”, 46-47). The two others refer to S2f as the “great sultan” (Smith, “Legend”, 44, 45).

<sup>48</sup> Palmer, *Ta’r3kh*, 5; Smith, “Legend”, 44, 45.

<sup>49</sup> Hitti, *History*, 65-66.

<sup>50</sup> The abbreviated form of both manuscripts سيف بن ذيزن (in MS L corrected by Barth) points to an old adoption of the name (see conclusion).

<sup>51</sup> Nachtigal, *Sahara*, II, 394 (Séf b. Hasan); Landeroin, “Notice”, 342, 348 (Seif b. Aïssata); Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 42).

different name of Seibou or Sebu.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the eponymous ancestor of the Sefuwa was not the minor Yemenite figure Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan but a historically important leader called Sayf, S2f, Seibou or Sebu.

Above all, it should be noted that the adoption of Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan as the dynastic founder of the Sefuwa is witnessed as early as the thirteenth century by Ibn Saʿd.<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, al-Qalqashandī criticizes the simultaneous affiliation of the kings of Kanem-Borno to the South Arabian hero Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan and to the North Arabian genealogical figure Quraysh.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, a confusion of Southern and Northern Arabian affiliations is unacceptable to Arab genealogists. Hence, Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan should be considered as a secondary or *feedback* name which at the beginning of the Islamic period replaced the earlier and more authentic name Sayf/S2f or Sebu designating the dynastic founder of the Sefuwa.

The question therefore arises, who was the real ancestor of the Sefuwa? The most likely candidate for this identification is Sargon of Akkad (2334-2279), the founder of the Akkadian empire. Sargon's incarnation of the mythological figure Dumuzi, the antediluvian shepherd, during festive cult-dramas could explain his designation by names such as S2f or Sebu, probably derived from the Sumerian sobriquet *sipa* "shepherd" of Dumuzi.<sup>55</sup> Hence Sayf/S2f seems to be none other than Sargon of Akkad, the first Mesopotamian ruler of an empire. Sargon being the simplified Hebrew form of his Akkadian name *yarru kīn* "legitimate king", in Kebbi and Songhay the great king is remembered as Kanta. Apparently derived from *yarru ki-na-a-ti* "king of rightful things", the African name seems to have dropped *yarru* "king" and to have changed *ki-na-a-ti* to Kanta.<sup>56</sup> Such identifications may appear at first sight to be rather speculative. Yet, seen in the overall context of the repercussions of the fall of the Assyrian empire on the history of the Central and the Western Sudan, their plausibility increases considerably.<sup>57</sup>

**Aisa:** With respect to the mother of Sayf, the *D3w1n* seems to provide only two elements of information: she was from Mecca and she was the daughter of the king of Baghdad, two names of towns which need to be qualified. Her Baghdadi origin does not take into account that both manuscripts read *wa-ummuhu Makkiyya bin al-malik Baghd1d* and thus have *bin* "son", instead of *bint* "daughter" before "the king of Baghdad". The sentence can either be translated as "his mother was from Mecca, daughter of the king of Baghdad" or as "his mother was from Mecca, he was the son of the king of Baghdad". From corrections of MS L it appears that Barth saw the grammatical problem: first he wanted to read *bint* instead of *bin* but then crossed out the correction and decided

<sup>52</sup> Landeroin, "Notice", 353; Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 36.

<sup>53</sup> According to Ibn Saʿd, Muhammad b. J31 (= D5nama Dibbalemi) was of the posterity of Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan (Lange, "Région", 168, 176). Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan is also mentioned with respect to Kanem by al-Maqr33 and by Ibn M1jid (Levtzion/Hopkins, *Corpus*, 353, 367).

<sup>54</sup> Levtzion/Hopkins, *Corpus*, 345, 347.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobsen, *King List*, 72-73 (Dumuzi – shepherd); Burstein, *Babyloniaca*, 19 (Berossus – Danaos).

<sup>56</sup> Seux, *Épithètes*, 308; Lange, "Successor state", Levtzion/Hopkins, *Corpus*, 87 (Qand1).

<sup>57</sup> Lange, "Magistrates", 4; *id.*, "Successor state", 588.

to put (وامه مكبه) between brackets. He therefore believed that the text has Sayf, not his mother, as a descendant of the king of Baghdad. Palmer's translation follows this reading by stating "Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan, the son of the king of Baghdad".<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, the *D3w1n* mentions at the beginning of its annalistic section that Ibr1h3m (2) was the son of #6'ish1, the daughter of Karam (§ 2). This information may be compared with the name of the prototypical Magira Aisa Kili Ngirmaremma or Ngirmarma, which seems to be derived from the Arabic divine name *kar3m* "generous", a Semitic term which in Kanuri is preserved as *ngwrma* "big and strong (of a horse)".<sup>59</sup> The name may be interpreted as meaning "daughter (-ram) of the Ngwrma/kar3m" or else as "royal (-ma) daughter of the Ngwrma/kar3m".<sup>60</sup> According to the chronicle itself, Aisa/#6'ish1 was therefore the mother of Ibr1h3m (2) and – as we will see – also of S2f (1). She might therefore be considered as a great ancestral figure presiding over the destiny of the Sefuwa.

Similarly, the Aisa legends of Kanem and Borno ascribe to the ancestress of the queen mother Magira great fecundity.<sup>61</sup> Called Aisa Bagdarimaram "Aisa, daughter of the king of Bagdari/Baghdad", she is said to have married the Yemenite king Abraha in Baghdad, to have become pregnant by him in Yemen and to have subsequently returned to her father in Baghdad where she is thought to have given birth to S2f who is supposed to have grown up in that city.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Aisa is believed to have been the ancestress of different noble clans originating from the Near East: the Magumi from Yemen, the Kayi from Baghdad, the Mani and the Tomagira from Medina (Mad1'in?) and the Kuburi from Egypt.<sup>63</sup> Apparently the legend combines three different traditions: an old dynastic tradition focussing on Baghdad, old clan traditions distinguishing between different ancient Near Eastern origins of various noble clans, and a more recent scholarly tradition derived from Arab historians concentrating on Yemen. Hence, Aisa seems to function in this legend as a former mother deity having traits of Ayerah and of Iytar, whose different sons were the divine ancestors of various immigrant clans from different ancient Near Eastern localities.<sup>64</sup> In the monotheistic context she became the wife of succeeding husbands in order to explain her motherhood with respect to the most important noble clans of Kanem-Borno. Patriarchal tendencies may have contributed to the elaboration of a combined dynastic and clan legend of the great ancestress centred on Baghdad, originally only the town of the male ancestral figure S2f.

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<sup>58</sup> Palmer, *History*, 84.

<sup>59</sup> Lange, *Chronicle*, 132-3. It should be noted that *kar3m* is a divine name (Wehr, *Dictionary*, 962).

<sup>60</sup> At Logomani, northeast of Maiduguri, Aisa Kili Ngirmarma is considered to have been a king (FN 77, 88b).

<sup>61</sup> According to the song of the Magira, the first Magira was called "Magira Aisa" (Patterson, *Songs*, 5). Local traditions of Gambaru near Birni Gazargamo call the legendary royal mother Aisa Kili Ngirmarma (Lange, *Chronicle*, 132-3; 150).

<sup>62</sup> Landeroin, "Notice", 353 n. 3; Palmer, *Memoirs*, II, 83, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Palmer, *Memoirs*, II, 83; *id.*, *Bornu*, 99; Lange, Ngigmi FN 77, 136.

<sup>64</sup> N. Wyatt, "Asherah", T. Abush, "Ishtar" in: Van der Toorn, *Dictionary*, 183-196, 847-855; Lange, *Kingdoms*, 184-6.

**Mecca:** Though at first sight the *nisba* Makiyya seems to refer to the female ancestress, there are reasons to believe that originally it was an epithet of the dynastic ancestor S2f. As we have seen before, it is followed in the *D3w1n* by *bin* and not by *bint* and therefore appears to qualify a male and not a female figure. Furthermore, we have to consider the epithet of S2f in two texts, a creation account where it figures in Arabic as سيف مكة بن عائشة and in the French translation of a king list from Kanem as: *Seif ben Aisata dit Makkata (le Mecquois)*.<sup>65</sup> Clearly in both contexts it was the dynastic founder S2f who was called Makata and not the royal patroness Aisa. Since no other texts or oral traditions refer to Mecca as the home town of either S2f or Aisa, it must be supposed that Makata was an old epithet of the dynastic founder.

According to the king list of Kebbi, the founder of the royal dynasty of Kebbi, the famous Kanta, bore the Hausa epithet *na Makata*. Though the Kebbi chronicle distinguishes between Kanta and Makata, it is clear that originally Makata was an epithet of Kanta. As such it possibly refers by the prefixation of the possessive *ma-* to Akkad, the new capital of the great empire builder Sargon of Akkad.<sup>66</sup> Once more there are good reasons to believe that an apparently superficial Islamic *feedback* is based on an older element of information which by its resemblance to a well-know Arabic name tempted an earlier chronicler to proceed to an unjustified emendation.

**Baghdad:** Obviously the Abbasid capital is the pivotal point of various important traditions of origin in the Central Sudan.<sup>67</sup> Most prominent is the Hausa legend of Bayajidda, which is firmly embedded in the cult-dramatic proceedings of the former New Year festival surviving under the overlay of the Islamized Gani or Maw15d festival in Daura. In fact, the Gani festival corresponds to a re-enactment of the tradition of origin of the Hausa which distinguishes between the earlier arrival of Magajiya Daurama with the bulk of the people and the later solitary coming of the founding hero Bayajidda. While Magajiya and her people are said to have originated from Palestine and Canaan, i.e. Syria-Palestine, Bayajidda is thought to have been the son of the king of Baghdad. After the destruction of his hometown by enemies, he withdrew to the west with half of the army which he lost by ceding them to his father-in-law, the king of Borno, who used them for his own wars. When subsequently the king of Borno tried to eliminate Bayajidda, the hero fled to Daura where he killed the snake of the well, married the queen Magajiya and fathered with her the ancestors of the seven Hausa states.<sup>68</sup> There are good reasons to believe that the orally transmitted legend provides a valid account of the fall of the Assyrian empire, the flight of its last king Assur-uballit II (612-609) (= Bayajidda) from Nineveh to Harran, his alliance with the Egyptians and his final retreat towards West Africa.<sup>69</sup> Therefore it would appear that in the case of the Bayajidda legend Baghdad corresponds to the Assyrian capital Nineveh, destroyed by the combined forces of the Babylonians and the Medes in 612 BCE.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Landeroin, "Notice", 342, 348.

<sup>66</sup> Lange, "Successor state", 10.

<sup>67</sup> Hitti, *History*, 292; Lange, "Hausa-Traditionen", 49, 57-58, 64, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 133-4; Lange, *Kingdoms*, 289-294.

<sup>69</sup> Lange, "Successor state", 379 n. 83.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. J. E. Reade, "Ninive (Nineveh)", RLA, IX, 396-7.

It is unlikely that the reference to Baghdad in the *Dǝw1n*'s prologue concerns the same city. A very early substitution of Baghdad as the dynastic home town of the Sefuwa to an earlier Mesopotamian city – such as Madayana in the Kebbi chronicle<sup>71</sup> – is suggested by the old form *Baghd1tha* of the name in MS H, which seems to have been corrected recently to *Baghd1d* in MS L. However, as we have seen, the town was originally considered to have been the capital city of the great ruler S2f, who in all likelihood corresponds to Sargon of Akkad. As such it was probably equivalent to Akkad, a town the remains of which have not yet been identified but which are being searched for in the neighbourhood of Baghdad.<sup>72</sup>

**Arab tribes:** The *Dǝw1n* proceeds by mentioning two Arab tribes to whom it attaches S2f: *huwa ban3 al-Sak1s3 wa-q3la al-Sakas1k3* “he belonged to the Ban5 al-Sak1s3 – others say al-Sakas1k3<sup>73</sup> – then to the al-Makhz5m3.<sup>74</sup> It is quite surprising that S2f should belong to two tribes and not only to one. Since S2f is said not only to descend from Dh3 Yazan but also from Qurays, one might expect that these two tribes figure in the *Dǝw1n* as prominent representatives of Southern and Northern Arab tribes. In fact, the Sak1sik were members of the Southern Arabian tribal confederation of the Kinda, while the Makhz5m were part of the Quraysh of Mecca and as such belonged to the Northern Arabs.<sup>75</sup> In all likelihood, the names were also chosen because they sounded similar to significant traditional names of Kanem. On account of the two articles prefixed in MS H to the tribal names and the two *nisba* suffixes added to them in both manuscripts, it can be argued that in the first place these “tribal names” were the titles of two leading officials: al-Makhz5m3 and al-Sak1s3. As for the original offices designated by these transfigured tribal names it may be supposed that al-Makhz5m3 stood for al-Magh5m3/al-Mag5m3 and al-Sak1s3 for al-Zagh1w3, the two most prominent magistrates of the earlier *suffet* system, which later turned into a bicephalic royal system. Indeed, other considerations lead to the suggestion that Kanem was originally a *suffet* state governed by two leading magistrates, the Magumi and the Zagh1w3. According to this theory, the Magh5m3/Magumi was the *mqm elim* “resurrector” responsible for the dying and rising god, while the Sak1s3/Zagh1w3 was the ‘*dr #rm*’ “head of the helpers” or Zaghawa magistrate opposed to the resurrection of the dying and rising state god.<sup>76</sup> If these equivalences are valid, the early Muslim chroniclers of Kanem would have tried to transpose the cultic antagonism between the two *suffets* and their people, the Magumi and the Zaghawa or Duguwa, to the political antagonism between the Northern and Southern Arabs.

**Arab genealogy:** Besides his connection with the influential Yazan clan in pre-Islamic Hadramawt – and not with the Himyarites – there is no known genealogy of Sayf

<sup>71</sup> Lange, “Successor state”, 364.

<sup>72</sup> E. Unger, “Akkad”, RLA, I, 62.

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that al-Saksak/al-Sak1sik was the eponymous ancestor of the al-Sak1sik (Caskel, *Jamharat*, II, 503).

<sup>74</sup> MS H. MS L has the first two tribal names without an article.

<sup>75</sup> Caskel, *Jamharat*, II, 48, 383, 503; Lange, *Dǝw1n*, 65 n. 5 and 6.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Lange, “Magistrates”, 6, 19.

b. Dh3 Yazan.<sup>77</sup> The other important figure in the *D3w1n*'s Arab genealogy is Quraysh, who was the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad. As in the case of Kanta, who became Muhammad *na* Makata in the Kebbi king list, Islamisation in Kanem may also have led to the identification of the great dynastic ancestor with Muhammad or rather, because of the greater age, with his great ancestor Quraysh.<sup>78</sup> In fact, the affiliation of the Sefuwa to Quraysh is first mentioned by al-Qalqashand3 on the basis of a letter from Borno from 1391/2.<sup>79</sup> Hence the postulated replacement of the name S2f must have been carried out after Islamisation of the royal court of Kanem about 1060 and before the date of the letter.

There are no other explanations to be offered for any other male names of the Arab genealogy. In particular, none of the three ascending figures of the *D3w1n* before Ishmael – #Abd All1h b. #Umar b. Sa#d – corresponds to the known nine ancestors of Fihir/Quraysh before #Adn1n b. Qaydhar b. Isma#l. Likewise, none of the 16 figures in the ascending genealogy from Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan to Quraysh resembles the ten ancestors between Muhammad and Quraysh.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, there is no similarity with the genealogy of Makhz5m b. Yaqaza b. Murra, which besides the father's name equals that of Muhammad. The same is true for al-Sak1sik, whose eponym was al-Sak1sik b. Ayras b. Kinda.<sup>81</sup> Noteworthy, however, is the genealogical bridge between the Arabs and the Israelites by Ism1#l, which stresses the North Arabian factor.<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, most of the twenty names in the *D3w1n*'s Arab genealogy are incompatible with Arab genealogical names. The following male names never occur in Arab genealogies: Kays (5), H5d (9), which is the name of a prophet, J1m (11) – for H1m *جام < حام* ? – al-H1jj (12), al-Hajj (15), al-Sahh (19), (20) and three consecutive times Lu'ayy (16), (17), (18).<sup>83</sup> Further, there are three female names which never appear in Arab genealogies: Hal3na (6), Wardiyya (7) and Hamla (10). However, with respect to the female names there is a noteworthy parallel in the Hausa tradition of Daura according to which nine Magajiyas mentioned by name succeeded each other during the migration from North Africa to the Central Sudan.<sup>84</sup> Following shortly after the obviously Arabic Quraysh (4) and being closely connected – indeed, Hal3na (6) and Wardiyya (7) succeeded one another – it may be suggested that these female figures were related to the office of the queen mother Magira. Like the Magajiya of Hausaland, the Magira of Kanem-Borno may once have been considered to be the descendant of the original female leaders of the migration from the Near East to the Central Sudan. Her ancestress would thus stand for the bulk of the immigrated people formerly established in Syria-Palestine and historically corresponding

<sup>77</sup> A. Beeston, "Yazan", EI<sup>2</sup>, XI, 302. There is no genealogical figure called Yazan (Caskel, *Jamharat*, II, 592).

<sup>78</sup> The Kebbi king list calls Kanta (= Sargon of Akkad) Muhammad *na* Makata (Lange, "Successor state", 368).

<sup>79</sup> Al-Qalqashand3, *Subh al-a#sh*1,V, 279; VIII, 117; transl., Levtzion/Hopkins, *Corpus*, 345, 347.

<sup>80</sup> Caskel, *Jamharat*, I, fig. n° 4.

<sup>81</sup> Genealogical tables in Caskel, *Jamharat*, II, n° 4, n° 233; W. M. Watt, "Luraysh", EI<sup>2</sup>, V, 437.

<sup>82</sup> Caskel, *Jamharat*, I, 39-40.

<sup>83</sup> Lu'ayy appears ten times individually but the name never follows a preceding Lu'ayy (Caskel, *Jamharat*, II, 387).

<sup>84</sup> Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, 135, 142-3; Lange, *Kingdoms*, 289.

to the deported communities of the Assyrian empire, while the last ancient Near Eastern “ancestor” of the king, Ark5 (9), would represent the fleeing “son of the king of Baghdad” and his Assyrian army, which was annihilated by the Babylonian forces during the final combats.<sup>85</sup>

**Israelite genealogy:** The usual assumption is that the Israelite genealogy of the *D3w1n* does not deserve much consideration because of its derivative nature. From the start, the few scholars who studied the document were thus convinced of its primordial and deep influence by Arab writings.<sup>86</sup> In fact, in respect of twenty names of Israelite patriarchs from Adam (1) to Ishmael (20) no other source seemed to be conceivable. However, close study of these names reveal important and valid specificities which imply direct transmission from ancient Israelite sources.

Most significant are six double names for which there is no basis in Arab writings, though they convey relevant information concerning the biblical patriarchs. It has to be remembered that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (*tawr1t*) are based on three successive layers of scriptures: the Jahwist, the Elohist and the Priestly text, the last being realized according to most authors in Babylon in the first half of the sixth century BCE.<sup>87</sup> The Greek and Arab translations of the Bible are from this canonical text. Earlier forms of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Torah, can at present only be reconstructed on the basis of the only available canonical text, the Priestly edition. From the analysis of some of the double names provided by the *D3w1n* for the Israelite patriarchs it would appear that this valid material is derived from a pre-canonical biblical source. In fact, in the Jahwist genealogy there is the example of Mehujael, for which the text has two different forms מחויאל and מחייאל. Since the result of this comparative research will be published elsewhere, it will suffice to repeat here the most important conclusions with respect to four double names.<sup>88</sup>

The name of the fifth patriarch Mahalalel (מהללאל)(5) is rendered in ms H of the *D3w1n* as Mahalay3 Maly3 (مهلاييل ملييل), while Arab authors have the nearly identical first name Mahal1' 3 (مهلائيل). In Hebrew there is the second name for the patriarch from a Jahwist source in Gen 4:18 Mehujael (מחויאל, מחייאל). Though the second name has no *kh1'* corresponding to the Hebrew *h2u* there is in view of the rare duplication of patriarchal names in the Hebrew Bible a certain possibility that Maly3 stands for Mehujael. The difference between the two names can be explained by the erroneous substitution of *l1m* for *kh1'*.

The name Methuselah (8) is rendered in MS H of the *D3w1n* by the double name M.t5sh.lakh M.tusal3m (متوشلخ متسليم) standing for Methuselah and Methusalem. The double name joins the name Methuselah from the Hebrew Bible (Gen 5:21-27; 1Chr 1:1-24) to its substitute Mathusalem witnessed by later texts of the early Christian period.<sup>89</sup> The

<sup>85</sup> Lange, “Successor state”, 368; id. *Foundation* (in press).

<sup>86</sup> Blau, “Chronik”, 319-321; Lange, *D3w1n*, 22-23; Zeltner, *Pages*, 18-20; Holl, *Diwan*, 2-3, 40.

<sup>87</sup> E. Tov, “Textual Criticism (OT)”, ABD, VI, 393-412; R. Smend, “Pentateuchforschung”, BHHW, III, 1413-9.

<sup>88</sup> Lange, “Biblical patriarchs”, 588-598.

<sup>89</sup> In the Jahwist genealogy there is Methushael מחושאל (Gen 4:18) who seems to be a different figure (Hess, “Methushael”, ABD, IV, 801).

motivation for this replacement could have been the religious meaning of the theophoric name composed of the West Semitic *mutu* “man, husband” and the divine name *Yalah* “god of the infernal river”, possibly rejected by faithful worshippers of Yahweh.<sup>90</sup> Hence, the double name in the *Dšw1n* may reflect the tendency to substitute orally the earlier Canaanite name by a less compromising alternative form of the name.

For Arpachshad (12) we find in MS H Arfakhshadh Makhshadh (أرفخشذ مخشد). Scholars suppose that the first part of the name stands for Arrapḫa, a town of the Hurrians corresponding probably to modern Kirkuk, and the second for *kaūdm*, the Hebrew ethnic name for Chaldeans.<sup>91</sup> Since from Old Testament times the name was understood to refer to the Chaldeans of Babylon,<sup>92</sup> the first part of the name might have been eliminated in order to obliterate the reference to Arrapḫa and hence to the Hurrians and to reinforce the meaning of the second part of the name – *keyed* – and its focus on the Chaldeans.<sup>93</sup> In view of the dwindling importance of the Hurrians in the first millennium BCE and the successful war of the Chaldean rulers of Babylon against Assyria, the reshaping of the ethnically significant name Arpachshad for the designation of the Babylonians seems to be a plausible explanation for the early emergence of the modified name Makhshad (אֲרַפְכְּשָׁד < מַכְשָׁד or מַחְשָׁד). If these considerations are correct, the end of the seventh century BCE was the most probable period for such a modification, which may later have been forgotten again.

Instead of Eber (14) the *Dšw1n* has the double name Amšr #Abšr (أمير عبير) found as such in MS H, while MS L has Amšr, the second element #Abšr being inserted in MS L before Methuselah (8) in a wrong position.<sup>94</sup> The first element of the name is the Arabic word *amšr*, which means “commander, lord” and which could correspond to an Arabic translation of a Hebrew or an Aramaic term.<sup>95</sup> No other patriarch mentioned in the *Dšw1n* is singled out by a similar epithet having a precise meaning. It seems to imply that Eber was the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, a supposition which is indirectly supported by the Bible. According to Gen 10:21, Shem (11) was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber (עֵבֶר), a statement which seems to indicate that Eber was a prolific patriarch with many descendants. As such he could have easily been the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews (עֵבֶרִי). Josephus confirms in 93 CE that the Hebrews were indeed called after Eber (Ant I, 6:4). On the other hand it is generally supposed that as members of the widely known *xabiru* or *xapiru* the Hebrews were originally some kind of outlaws and a mobile population element.<sup>96</sup> Hence, Eber might have been considered as the “commander” of those *xapiru* who constituted the early Hebrews, who later gave rise to the Israelites. Such

<sup>90</sup> Westermann, *Genesis*, 484; Hess, *Studies*, 70-71.

<sup>91</sup> Hess, *Studies*, 77-78; *id.*, Arpachshad, ABD, I, 400.

<sup>92</sup> According to Josephus, Arpachshad was an earlier name for the Chaldeans (Ant I, 6, 4).

<sup>93</sup> Apart from the addition of the personalizing prefix *ma-* (cf. Mahalalel) the plosive *kap* became a guttural *kh1*.

<sup>94</sup> It should be noted that in ms H #Abšr is written in the margin of the manuscript but inserted by a line in its correct position.

<sup>95</sup> Lane, *Lexicon*, 1, 97. Amšr figures also in the Arab genealogy (Lange, *Dšw1n*, 22).

<sup>96</sup> N. P. Lemche, “Xabiru, Xapiru”, ABD, III, 6-10. For a ritualistic definition of the Xabiru, see Lange, “Überleben”, 307-322.

a concept could have been particularly significant for Israelites who for one reason or another were forced to leave their country and to seek refuge elsewhere.<sup>97</sup>

Other significant differences between the *D3w1n*'s and the Arab historian's readings concern: Shi't instead of Sh3th for שֵׁת Seth (2), Y1nush instead of An5sh for אֲנוֹשׁ Enosh (3), \*Qinan or Kin1n instead of Q3n1n for קִינָן Kenan (4), Khan5kh instead of Akhn5kh for הֲנוֹךְ Enoch (7), #Ab3r instead of #6bir for עֶבֶר Eber (14) and \*Nah5r instead of N1h5r for נַחֹר Nahor (18).<sup>98</sup> From comparison with the Hebrew names it appears that the divergent readings of the *D3w1n* are always plausible and in some cases – Seth (2), Enoch (7), Eber (14) and Nahor (18) – they can be considered equally valid. Most noteworthy is Khan5kh for Enoch (7) because it is closer to the Hebrew original הֲנוֹךְ (*H.n5k*) than the general Arab reading *Akhn5kh*. As with the double names, these single names of biblical patriarchs certainly do not derive from Arabic writings.

On the other hand the *D3w1n*'s prologue was considerably modified sometime in early Islamic times. During that period, Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan was substituted for S2f, Arab figures were added in order to connect him genealogically via Ishmael to Abraham, and the Qur'anic 6zar was inserted as father of Abraham, while Terah became his brother.<sup>99</sup> In view of the fact that Abraham occupies the second position after S2f in the subsequent annals, these two persons must have originally been considered as more or less contemporaneous figures. Hence, it is quite likely that the list of biblical patriarchs finished with Abraham in the earlier version of the *D3w1n*.

Finally, it should be noted that the contrast between the Israelite and the Arab genealogy is considerable. On account of the written nature of the *D3w1n*, the impact of Islamic *feedback* on an older tradition can in this case be studied in detail. While the twenty names of the Israelite genealogy of Ism1# b. Ibr1h3m reveal great stability and authenticity, the same number of names in the Arab genealogy shows considerable inconsistency and light-handedness. Followers of the *feedback* theory should realize that in the Islamic period presumed fabricators of genealogies could have copied Arab as easily as Israelite genealogies. Moreover, the clumsy usage of Arab genealogy must be extremely significant since even Arabs with little education would have been able to distinguish between Northern and Southern Arabs and thus between the ancestors of Quraysh and those of Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan. By contrast, the Israelite genealogy is highly reliable and in some aspects it even surpasses the respective information transmitted by Arab historians. Thus, comparisons with written Arab sources that may have been available in medieval Kanem-Borno oblige us to turn our thoughts from *feedback* explanations to the possibilities of authentic and ancient internal transmission.

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<sup>97</sup> Lange, "Immigration", 101-3; *id.*, "Successor state", 375-380.

<sup>98</sup> The following books were consulted: Ibn Qutayba, *K. al-ma#rif*, (ed. S. #Uk1sha), 1960, 18-31; al-Ya#q5b3, *Ta'r3kh* (ed. Beirut, 1960), I, 8-23; al-Tabar3, *Ta'r3kh* (ed. M. Th. Houtsma), 1879, I, 164-224; al-Mas#d3, *Mur5j al-dhahab* (ed. M. M. #Abd al-Ham3d), 1958, 38-44.

<sup>99</sup> It should be noted that MS L has the unnamed "brother of 6zar", *i.e.* Terah, as the father of Abraham.

## Conclusion

Although it deals with the hotly debated question of state origins, the *D3w1n*'s prologue has not yet been taken into account by historians for any side of the arguments exchanged.<sup>100</sup> As we have seen, the reason for this neglect lies first of all in the cryptic and onomastic nature of the transmitted information. Moreover, the suspicion that wishful thinking dictated the invention of imaginary homes in the Near East has further inhibited attempts to clarify the meaning of the different elements of the prologue.

From the present analysis it appears that an overlay of Arab-Islamic *feedback* data seriously affects the general form of the prologue, but it certainly did not produce all its content. In particular, the names of the Israelite patriarchs can be shown to derive from an older and more reliable source than the one available to Arab historians, while the Arab genealogical names correspond to spurious insertions. Mainly based on etymological considerations, three different types of Arab influence on the text of the prologue are detectable (apart from adjustment of several of the patriarchal names to the Arabic spelling<sup>101</sup>). Firstly, there was an attempt to identify the main figures in the indigenous tradition on the basis of Arab history available through Arab traders. Thus, S2f was equated with Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan and a figure elsewhere identified with the Prophet Muhammad, but situated earlier in time, with Quraysh. Secondly, we find the attempt to translate the names of locally relevant officials and their groups into the medium of the Arab tribal system. Thus, the major officials of the *suffet* administrative system, the Magumi and the Zagh1w3, and their people were likened to al-Makhz5m3 and al-Sak1sak3, the supposed leaders of the two corresponding Arab tribes. Thirdly, we note the attempt to update the names of the relevant ancestral hometowns by providing better understood equivalents. Thus, two ancient Mesopotamian cities or more likely one capital city referred to by two different names, Akkad, became Baghdad and Mecca. Moreover, the unnamed ancestral patroness is in the present text connected with Mecca, though earlier she was more like a universal and unlocalized mother goddess ancestral to the earliest kings and hence to the major noble clans.

Trying to uncover the older prototype of the *D3w1n* we have to remember that the Sumero-Akkadian name *girgam/girginakku* points to a pre-Israelite form. Perhaps the reference to the two antagonistic magistrates, who led the clans of the dying and rising state god and his opponents, provides a hint of some kind of cosmic antagonism between a primordial deity and a creator god such as Omorka/Tiamat and Bel/Marduk mentioned in the chronicle-like *Babyloniaca* of Berossos. With respect to the transition between cosmic and worldly figures it should be noted that the *Babyloniaca* ends with an account of Assyrian and Babylonian kings.<sup>102</sup> Hence, the Israelite patriarchs before and after Noah, who figure prominently in the prologue, would appear to correspond to the ante- and postdiluvian kings in a Mesopotamian chronicle serving as a prototype.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Oliver/Fage, *Short History*, 44-52; Fage, *History*, 57-70; Iliffe, *Africans*, 49-51; Collins/Burns, *History*, 78-94.

<sup>101</sup> Notable are the following examples: Lamech (9), Noah (10), Shem (11), Shelah (13), Terah (19), Ism13 (20), Ibr1h3m (21).

<sup>102</sup> Burstein, *Babyloniaca*, 13-30; Lange, "Magistrates", 11-12, 19-20.

<sup>103</sup> Jakobsen, *King List*, 70-111; Burstein, *Babyloniaca*, 18-21.

However, as far as we can judge from the present document, the *Dʒw1n* seems to have had as its starting point the story of the great ancestral figure S2f, i.e. Sargon of Akkad, not any account of creation. This does not preclude that S2f, may originally have been credited with the victory in the fight between the two primordial forces represented by the two *suffets*, since he is affiliated not only to one but to the two antagonistic ruling groups. As such he would have taken the position of a magnified and historicized Bel known from the document as the Magumi/Makhz5m3, Bel's worldly representative. Moreover, the genealogical account of the *Dʒw1n* ascends from the substitute hero Sayf b. Dh3 Yazan via the inserted Arab figures to Abraham and hence via the biblical patriarchs of the original document to Adam. Other well-known origin genealogies all descend – not ascend – from primordial figures like the biblical Adam, the Assyrian Tudija and Adamu and the Sumerian Alulim or Aoros.<sup>104</sup>

It goes without saying that such considerations implying modifications of a pre-existing prototype of the chronicle presuppose some form of writing in Kanem prior to the introduction of Arabic, either in Hebrew or in Aramaic, for which there are indeed some indications.<sup>105</sup> Linguistic evidence pointing to a pre-Arabic script perceptible through the local Arabic writing system, concerns the addition of a final *h1'* in place names even in case of a final preceding consonant.<sup>106</sup> This corresponds to the use of the *he locale* in Hebrew in form of a relic having lost its function.<sup>107</sup> On the basis of this pervasive grammatical feature, the list of patriarchs directly derived from biblical sources preceding the Priestly edition of the Bible in the sixth century BCE and the previous Sumero-Akkadian designation *girgam/girginakku* of the *Dʒw1n* it must be concluded that prior to Arabic there existed a prototype of the *Dʒw1n* or *Girgam* – as we should perhaps call it – in Hebrew. Apart from current misconceptions with respect to local origins of chronicle-writing and state-building there is no reason not to accept the idea that prior to the coming of Islam some people of Kanem were already literate in Hebrew and perhaps also in Aramaic.<sup>108</sup>

In Islamic times there was a new beginning of chronicle writing and the document became something like a secret foundation charter. Early in this period, probably in consequence of the translation process, the account of the beginning of Sefuwa history was profoundly modified by the substitution of two earlier figures by two incompatible

<sup>104</sup> Gen 5: 1-23; Grayson, “Königlisten und Chroniken”, RLA, VI, 102; Jacobsen, *King List*, 71; Burstein, *Babyloniaca*, 18.

<sup>105</sup> With respect to Kebbi, see Lange, “Successor state”, 21.

<sup>106</sup> Thus we find in the *Dʒw1n* in a locative position Damasak (§ 26) دمسكه Diskam (§ 20), كانمه Kanem (§§ 4, 31) and سكدمه Sakadam (§ 9), having a final letter *ha'* that has no recognizable function in either Arabic or Kanuri. Ibn Furt5 writes consistently تمسكه (*K. ghazaw1t Barn5*, ١٠١٦١٤), but more in conformity to Arabic also كاتم (٦١, ٢١) and بسكم (٥٦) (Lange, *Chronicle*, ١٠-٥٦).

<sup>107</sup> HALAT, I, XXIV. For example in Hebrew there is for Sodom the basic form סדום and the locative form סדומה (HALAT, III, 702). The generalized relic aspect of the locative *h1'* appears in the *Dʒw1n* in the context of a propositional construction with *bi-* (§§ 4, 9, 20, 26), a form that in Hebrew is not normally associated with the *he locale*. The remarks on the *he locale* are owed to discussions with Klaus Schubert.

<sup>108</sup> Al-Zuhr3 (wr. c. 1155) mentions that the people of Am3ma in the Western Sudan professed Judaism and read the Torah (Levtzion/Hopkins, *Corpus*, 99).

Arab figures on the basis of Arab historical knowledge but without any direct consultation of Arab literati. A chronological gap extending over several centuries testifies to the fact that at this point – or earlier – the flow of information must have been seriously disrupted. Writing two historical accounts in 1576 and 1578, Imam Ahmad b. Furt<sup>5</sup> did not refer to the *Ḍ̣ẉ̣n* either because he did not know about the chronicle or else because he had no access to it. In all likelihood the document remained in the hands of a family of court historians – probably that of Shitima Makaremma – having the task of assuring the continuity of the text by adding relevant information concerning the previous reign upon each new reign.<sup>109</sup> Thus carefully concealed information was transmitted in written form with the purpose of providing valid information for future generations. It concerned an Arabised account of origins, annals of the successive kings and a royal chronology providing – like the chronicles of Ibn Furt<sup>5</sup> – no *hijra* dates, an omission which is all the more surprising since these dates must have been available from the time of the introduction of Islam in the eleventh century. Yet, the ancient tradition of dating by the reigns of the indigenous rulers explains the survival of an alternative dating system and the chronological stringency of the *Ḍ̣ẉ̣n*. Besides the one great and clumsy reshuffle of information at the beginning of Islam, intended to provide an Arabic and hence more comprehensive and less polytheistic version of the origin account, there was probably no other attempt to update or to renew its content. On the contrary, in the course of time the patriarchal figure Ism<sup>1</sup>~~1~~ became Ism<sup>1</sup>~~1~~ and the supposed eponymous ancestor himself, Sayf b. Dh<sup>3</sup> Yazan, became Sayf b. Dh<sup>3</sup>zin, without any subsequent attempt at correction.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, not only the analysis of the precious biblical data and the clarification of the process of textual adaptation to Islam but also the shielded nature of the document itself support the idea of a direct internal transmission of the patriarchal and ancestral names without any further interference by foreign elements going back until the time before the Priestly edition of the Bible in the mid-sixth century BCE.

Though some of the foregoing suppositions may be speculative and discarded by further research, continued neglect of the oldest information provided by the *Ḍ̣ẉ̣n* would deprive the earliest history of the Sefuwa – and for that matter, the earliest state history of West Africa – of some of its most valid assets. Whatever the difficulty in understanding them, written sources, being less amenable to divergent interpretations than oral traditions, certainly deserve highest priority in historical research even if the disturbing message of this particular text is immigration from Syria-Palestine.

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<sup>109</sup> In Kebbi this function was in the hands of the Sankira and in Gobir in the hands of the members of the Fan Akali family (Lange, “Successor state”, 361 n. 8; *id.*, FN 95, 32).

<sup>110</sup> Apart from the emendation in MS L obviously made by Barth himself (Lange, *Ḍ̣ẉ̣n*, 22 n. 10).

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