That Desert is Our Country: Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)
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A note on spelling and used terminology

This history focuses mainly on Kel Tamasheq and 'Malian' views of the world. In such an enterprise, it is hard to do justice to the complexity of the concepts presented while keeping the text easily readable at the same time. In order not to bother the reader further, I have made use of a rather rough transcription, largely following 'common' French spelling of these terms, especially since the pronunciation of most terms varies among Tamasheq dialects. The pronunciation of the transcription used follows below. All French administrative functions and terms have been left untranslated, with the exception of tribu, which has been translated with 'tribe'; chef de tribu, translated as 'tribal chief'; and Soudan français, known in English as French Sudan. I have used the latter term to indicate the former French colony and reserved Mali for the present-day Republic of Mali. The Mali empire and the Mali federation are indicated as such. Région stands for the administrative unit, whereas region should be read as in English.

Writing a history of a place as unmapped as northern Mali involves great difficulty in spelling place names. Many places in northern Mali are spelled in a variety of ways. I have used the English spelling for those few places for which it exists, such as Timbuktu and Segu. For many others, I have used one spelling throughout the text, but I have left the spelling of these names in sources unchanged. Many Tamasheq place names start with /In/, followed by a noun. To avoid confusion, I have connected /In/ to the following noun, e.g. In-Taykaren, instead of In Taykaren.

The same problem arises with proper names, which I have found in many different spellings. I have used one spelling throughout the text, in keeping with French spelling. Thus, Mohamed instead of Huhammad, (except when indicating the prophet Muhammad).

I have chosen to translate all quotes to English, including citations of published works. Unless indicated, all translations to English are mine. My limited linguistic capacities, combined with the linguistic limits of the authors (often not more than primary education), and the particular idiom used (Marxist or other revolutionary rhetoric) does not always make an easy reading, which cannot be changed however, without dealing too freely with the original text.

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\begin{align*}
a & \text{ as in } blah \text{ (open, clear a)} \\
\text{â} & \text{ long open} \\
e & \text{ as in verb} \\
\text{ê} & \text{ long open} \\
i & \text{ as in bit} \\
i & \text{ long open} \\
ou & \text{ the French ou} \\
ue & \text{ as e in get} \\
g & \text{ as in get} \\
gh & \text{ as the Parisian r} \\
h & \text{ as in ham} \\
\text{j} & \text{ as in French jeu} \\
\text{kh} & \text{ as the Spanish xota} \\
g & \text{ as the Arabic qaf (glottal k)} \\
r & \text{ as the Scottish rolling r} \\
sh & \text{ as in ship} \\
t & \text{ as in take (slightly more palatal)} \\
th & \text{ as in English the} \\
' & \text{ 'ain and hamza both pronounced as Cockney bottle}
\end{align*}
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