

Historical Fieldwork on War in Tuareg Society

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In the period since independence, the Tuareg people of Northern Mali and Niger experienced two catastrophic droughts and six interrelated wars or military conflicts:

- the first Tuareg rebellion in Mali between 1963 and 1964
- the second Tuareg rebellion in Mali between 1990 and 1996
- the Tuareg rebellion in Niger between 1992 and 1998
- a renewed upsurge of the conflicts in Mali and Niger between 2006 and 2009
- the War on Terror in the Sahara since 2003 until present.

I have been involved in both historical fieldwork and more conventional historical types of research on these conflicts since 1994 in Mali, Niger and Europe (because African wars, especially in Francophone Africa, are not only 'fought' in Africa, but in the former colonial Metropole and the main seats of the International Institutions as well, albeit with other than military means). From this experience I would like to reflect upon the themes proposed in this panel, including:

- Doing fieldwork in a (post)war setting and in a conflict zone
- Not being able to do fieldwork in a war setting or conflict zone
- The relation with informants in a (post)war setting or conflict zone
- Dealing with sensitive information, precarious subjects in conversations and interviews, a culture of honour-bound restrictions in speech, and other cultural constraints related to war and fieldwork
- Dealing with one's own and with local concepts, understandings and appreciations of conflict, violence, war, suffering and its justifications, honour, trauma and memory
- Witnessing or experiencing violence and its local appreciation

