

THE WARP OF A NATION:  
THE EXHIBITION AND CIRCULATION OF NIGERIEN ART, 1920- PRESENT

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THE WARP OF A NATION:  
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Art education and exposition of the colonial and immediate post-independence eras continue to influence how art in Niger is made, exchanged, and displayed. One form of contemporary Nigerien art that mostly clearly demonstrates this is weaving, and other relevant media include leatherwork, metalwork, embroidery, and fashion design. This dissertation includes the recording of aesthetic and business expertise of artisans, the documentation of various ways of navigating the global marketplace, and analysis of the historical resonances in contemporary Nigerien arts exposition and trade. Of particular importance are the nature of the decisions that lead to aesthetic change, and what meanings are ascribed to old and new motifs. To be sure, art pedagogies, business structures, and museum spaces have impacted Nigerien artisans' aesthetic and business choices in specific ways. In turn, artisans' work affects the institutions and networks in which they operate.

The Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, founded in 1959, offers a compelling example of the appropriation of a European institutional form that was then transformed and given new meaning by Africans. The movements of artisans and the objects they make underscore the global history of this museum, and make the

interpretation of these travels key to the understanding of its art and the artisans it houses.

The first chapter foregrounds an analysis of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. In Chapter Two, I focus on the work of weavers in Niger from the 1950s until the 1980s. In Chapter Three, I seek out artisans' perspectives and artworks' social lives in a history of the educational and exhibitionary projects of the Afrique Occidentale Française government in the 1930s and 1940s, a period that left lasting effects on formal and non-formal artisanal education in Niger. Chapter Four traces the changes in aesthetics, organizations, and education that artisans have instigated, encountered, and altered from the 1970s to the present. Chapter Five historically and globally contextualizes contemporary Nigerien fashion, especially that related to the biannual Festival Internationale de la Mode Africaine. The dissertation concludes with a call for broad access to arts education that uses Freirian pedagogy to teach rigorous hand skills and related conceptual content in Niger.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amanda Kay Gilvin was born in Mount Sterling, Kentucky in 1978. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in English (Women's and Gender Studies Concentration) from Kenyon College in 2000. She completed her master of professional studies in African and African American Studies at Cornell University in 2006, for which she wrote the thesis, "The Fire Is Too Hot For Them': Gender & Change in the Krobo Bead Industry." Her writings have appeared in various publications, and she is the lead editor for the 2012 volume, *Collaborative Futures: Critical Reflections on Publicly Active Graduate Education*. In July 2012, she began a Five College Postdoctoral Fellowship in African Art and Architecture at Mount Holyoke College and Smith College.

For my father, William Wayne Gilvin, who taught me to value precision in my craft.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Brother, I sense in you something—one could say a kind of friendship—that is not expressed in the historical account that you just sketched out by indicating the essential dates. History only has value for its lessons: the insights that allow us to mature, which motivate and translate in our behavior, by a particular way of driving us, of determining us before the events that are taking us away.*

Boubou Hama

*Boubou Hama: L'itinéraire de l'Homme et du Militant*<sup>1</sup>

*There are Nigeriens who have never seen work done like this. Perhaps they saw it on the television, but they've never seen it up close.*

Goumer Abdoulwahid<sup>2</sup>

*In an era of globalization, it is necessary to have knowledge. What New York City does, what Paris does, Niamey can do.*

Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly<sup>3</sup>

At the closing ceremony of the 2011 Salon International de l'Artisanat Pour la Femme in Niamey, Niger, music and dance performances punctuated an evening of speeches and award presentations at the city's premier venue, the Palais de Congres. The featured region for the 2011 festival was Tillabéry, which is home to several former centers of weaving, including the towns of Tillabéry, Téra, and Ayerou, and this encouraged an emphasis on the medium of weaving during the artisanry festival. The ten-day event included a daylong workshop entitled “The Revival of Weaving in Niger.”<sup>4</sup> At the closing ceremony, the emcee wore an embroidered ensemble tailored from *bazin* and a *téra-tera*, and he told the audience that his stylish dress proved that

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<sup>1</sup> Boubou Hama, *Boubou Hama: L'itinéraire de l'Homme et Du Militant* (LaSalle, Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1993). All translations from the French and Hausa are by author unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Goumer Abdoulwahid, Interview, November 16, 2009. Translated from the Djerma by Noura Garba. Translated from French by author.

<sup>3</sup> Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly Lecture, Université Abdou Moumouni, October 23, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> This workshop was initiated by Aichatou Boulama Kané in part as a response to my talk in June 2010, “L'Urgence du Tissage d'une Histoire de l'Art Nigérien.” At the 2011 workshop, I presented a talk entitled “L'Histoire et l'Avenir de l'Art du Tissage Nigérien.”

tradition and modernity exist in concert.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 0.1) The handwoven black, red, and white panels on the sides echoed the black central embroidery, even as their contrasting textures both accentuated the shiny white of the starched *bazin*.



Figure 0.1:  
Emcee of the Closing Ceremony of the 2011 Salon International de l'Artisanat Pour la Femme, Niamey, Niger. His tailored ensemble includes panels of hand wovencloth and a front panel of machine embroidery.

One of the music and dance performances took up textile production as its theme. (Figure 0.2) Two dancers mimed weaving, and two mimed spinning yarn as the other dancers used pestles, baskets, and hanks of thread as accessories. The dance was

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<sup>5</sup> Popular across West Africa, *bazin* is an imported, industrially produced cotton damask cloth that is usually hand-dyed and starched in West Africa. The *téra-tera* is a genre of hand-woven textiles associated with the Djerma culture. Exchanged at weddings, it has gained currency in other cultures in Niger and also has a long history of exportation to Benin.

meant to evoke a shared, pre-nation past in which there were discrete ethnicities with clearly defined, unique cultural practices. Specifically, dancers performed an imagined Djerma agrarian past, one in which weaving was a ubiquitous activity. The dancers pretending to weave moved a shuttle from hand to hand to the beat of the music played by performers also on the stage. The loom frames were approximate fascimiles of functional ones, and while heddles hung from them, other key elements were missing. However, most, if not all, members of the international audience knew the basics of what weaving looks like in West Africa, and easily apprehended the activities. As with other official events in Niger, the audience at the Palais de Congres was but a fraction of the eventual viewers of the performance, which would be broadcast on the state-owned television station, Télé Sahel. Photographers are visible in both Figures 0.2a and 0.2c, and Figure 0.2c in particular attests to the close-up shots accorded to one of the dancers miming weaving.

In performing weaving, the dancers performed a kind of labor with deep national, cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic symbolism and associations. The dancers wore handwoven garments. Unlike the emcee's ensemble, the dance invited views to imagine the weaving of the past, not of the present. The sign, the faux weaving, could safely replace the referent, any actual weaving, in this spectacle because Djerma weaving was being deployed as a symbol of Niger's national heritage, and what was (or was not) being woven was irrelevant. Visualizing a vague portrayal of the technology and the labor to use it took precedence.



Figures 0.2a-c: Photographs of Dance Performance at Closing Ceremony of the 2011 Salon International de l'Artisanat Pour la Femme, Niamey, Niger.

This visualization and celebration of weaving can potentially contribute to new interpretations of the medium as a modern expressive art, but it also descends from historic images of weaving that deny weavers' own perspectives of their work and the textiles they produce. Only a handful of practicing weavers were invited to the closing

ceremony, and the dancers had a wider variety of high quality thread than was available in the markets of Niamey at the time. Interpreting art in Niger requires an appreciation of the complex cultural, political, and economic networks in which it has moved and transformed. To see an artisan working—or even a dancer miming an artisan working—is not a neutral act, but one weighted with historic precedents, economic interests, and aesthetic regimes.

As discussed at length in Chapter One and Chapter Three, artisans working on display were early and longlasting features of colonial representations of Africa in Europe. This illustration of a West African weaver working at the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris does away with the loom altogether, for the sake of depicting the scene of a weaver being watched by a crowd of Europeans. (Figure 0.3) Defying any technical realities of weaving, the weaver stands in the center of long warp threads that do not seem to be woven at any point, and most implausible of all, he moves foot pedals while standing. In most West African weaving techniques that use double heddles, the weaver sits with feet on pedals that move the heddles (which are also omitted from this image). This illustration prioritizes the act of watching over the act of weaving. What the weaver wove held no interest for the illustrator or author of the accompanying article.



Figure 0.3:  
Georges Scott, “In the street of the Sudanese section of French West Africa: a native weaver working on a primitive craft,” *L’Illustration*, 1931.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as many as twenty weavers worked in the reconstruction of a Songhay village at the Musée National du Niger. (Figure 0.4) In this photograph, two weavers pose in the thatched shed where they worked. One of the faux village’s huts is visible at the far left of the photograph. On the left, a weaver sits in front of a *téra-tera* textile on display. Others like it were available for purchase in the museum shop. He wears a stylish print button-down shirt over dark slacks, and his jaunty hat and loafers sit to his right. Simply labeled “Artisans of the Musée National du Niger,” the photograph is strangely unfocused on the artisans themselves, for the face of the second weaver is completely obscured by a gourd hanging from the shed, and a third loom sits empty of a weaver. Yet, they have paused from their work, and the camera does not focus on the looms either. Rather, it is the presence of artisans and

their looms in the village exhibit where they are available for viewing that suffices.

As fewer and fewer people have commissioned weavers to work in their homes since the 1980s, weaving has become a far less visible occupation than it once was. As my weaving instructor Goumer Abdoulwahid has noted, many Nigeriens have not seen weaving up close—although they know from photographs and television enough to properly interpret the long warps or moving shuttles in photograph of the museum, the drawing of the 1931 exposition, or the dance at the SAFEM ceremony. Abdoulwahid observed that “There are Nigeriens who have never seen work done like this. Perhaps they saw it on the television, but they’ve never seen it up close.”<sup>6</sup>



Figure 0.4:  
Photograph of Weavers at the Musée National du Niger, ca. 1970  
Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger.

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<sup>6</sup> Goumer Abdoulwahid, Interview, November 16, 2009.

Four weavers work consistently at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger in 2012, including Mahamadou “Mota” Hama and Amadou “Fin” Oumarou, who first arrived at the museum in 1968 and 1970, respectively. As discussed in Chapter Two, the museum has been an important site for these weavers, who also include Goumer Abdoulwahid and Saadou Amadou, to gain visibility among the international clientele that passes through the museum. Working at the museum also has facilitated relationships with supportive government officials, nongovernmental organization workers, artists, and as demonstrated by this project, researchers. In preparation for this photograph, Oumarou arranged the band of a cotton *kounta* that I had commissioned, so that it would be attractively displayed in the image of him weaving it. (Figure 0.5) He participated in his self-representation, knowing that he would receive a copy and that it was likely to be viewed in the United States. Oumarou is long accustomed to being photographed. Along with his decades of experience at the national museum, he wove on display during trips to Germany and the United States in the 1980s, and a clip of him working regularly airs between standard programming on Télé Sahel.



Figure 0.5:  
Amadou “Fin” Oumarou, Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, May 2010.

During nine months of field research in Niger in 2009 and 2010, I chose to focus on textiles in part because I quickly realized their ongoing deep significance in contemporary Nigerien wedding ceremonies. Men and women had strong emotional connections to the hand woven blankets and garments that they gave and received during weddings. (Figure 0.6) In this image, a groom and his friends hide under the *téra-tera* textile given to him by his wife's family as they go meet her and her friends at the conjugal bed, where there will be a ceremony before the couple is left alone for the night. The Saturday night ceremony is a joyous moment, and textiles are critical tools in serious rituals of marriage that are also lighthearted and sometimes even humorous.



Figure 0.6: A Groom and his Friends Carry a *Téra-tera* Textile, 2010

The *krou-krou* being carried here hearkens to the grooms' ancestors and their blessings by nature of being handwoven. The groom hides under the textile to feign a disguised entry into the conjugal bedroom, where he will have a faux negotiation with a woman representing the bride's family before he can join his new wife on the bed. There, framed by the two textiles given to them by the bride's parents, they will pose for photographs with their friends. Handwoven textiles in Niger have come to *mean* marriage, and the French and English colloquial terms "Wedding blanket" and "couvertures de mariage" reflect this. The weavers at the national museum shape Nigerien and foreign visitors' understandings of textiles, just as they incorporate viewers' extant knowledge into their marketing techniques.

As SAFEM has grown, it has taken many cues from the Festival International de la Mode Africaine, which Sidhamed "Alphadi" Seidnaly founded in 1998.<sup>7</sup> Trained in tourism and a former official in Niger's ministry of tourism, Alphadi, as he is known, completed his training in fashion and couture at the Chardon Savard Studio in Paris in 1983, and he launched his own label in 1984. Alphadi has produced wide-ranging styles within his couture collections. He finds inspiration in many African artistic traditions, especially textile production and Tuareg visual culture, in addition to building upon his Parisian training in French haute couture.

Along with gaining prominence as a designer of haute couture, sportswear, handbags, perfume, and more, he has been a leader in organizing African designers to demand global industry recognition. The cornerstone of this part of his work is FIMA, which is discussed more in Chapter Five. Alphadi cites the preparations for the first

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Five for an extensive discussion of Alphadi and FIMA.

FIMA, which took place on November 12-14, 1998 in the desert outside of Agadez and required the reopening of the airport there (which had been closed because of years of military conflict between Tuareg rebels and the Nigerien government), as a contributing factor to the June 8, 1998 peace settlement. After surviving massive protests against it in 2000, FIMA has become an institution in Niger, and governmental support has remained steady through the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Republics.<sup>8</sup> Popular interest in Niger has grown in this event that from its inception was international in scope. Alphadi has had immense influence on visual culture in Niger since the 1980s, and he has had perhaps even greater influence on the representation of Nigerien cultures and African aesthetics outside of Niger.

In the poster advertising the 2009 FIMA, a model gazes from the sandy coast out onto the Niger River, where four pirogues float, the fishermen aboard barely discernable. (Figure 0.7) Her fuschia gown draws the eye to the center, away from the blue sky, the green trees, the river, and the sand. In the poster, Niger is the background, but an essential one. By persistently hosting FIMA in Niger, even as security concerns have confined it to Niamey and the nearby village of Gourou Kirey since 2007, Alphadi defies characterizations of Niger as a periphery to the global economy or to global cultural systems. Alphadi claims to be apolitical, and his diplomacy serves him well not only in Niger's fractious political scene, but also in his vast network that stretches across Africa, China, Europe, and the United States.

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the protests related to FIMA in 2000, see Barbara Cooper, *The Anatomy of a Riot: Single Women and Religious Violence in Niger*. Working Papers in African Studies 241 (Boston: Boston University African Studies Center, 2002); and Chapter Five.



Figure 0.7: Poster for 2009 Edition of the Festival International de la Mode Africaine (International Festival of African Fashion)

Alphadi has been working since 2000 to found a school of art and fashion in Niamey, and FIMA already emphasizes education, through its workshops and through the prizes awarded to young designers in the form of trainings at fashion houses in Europe. Alphadi is particularly passionate about educating Nigeriens about industrialized production methods and information technology. In his own institution building, Alphadi recognizes his debt to the institutions constructed early in Niger's independent nationhood, especially the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger.<sup>9</sup> In many ways, Alphadi's multifaceted career as a government official, designer, organizational leader, educator, and public figure echoes the influential and complex legacy of the scholar, politician, and writer who initiated the founding of the museum

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<sup>9</sup> Interview, Sidhamed "Alphadi" Seidnaly, November 10, 2009.

and for whom it is now named, Boubou Hama.

The Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger anchors this dissertation, although its topics and themes range far beyond it. My affiliation with the museum and the artisans' cooperative on its grounds influenced how I approached all of the subjects I address, including those that pre-date the institution and those that happen far outside its fences. It is a large park of forty-four hectares (over one-hundred acres) with diverse buildings and attractions scattered throughout the property, which is located in central Niamey. My apprenticeship with weaver Abdoulwahid Goumer at a loom in the reconstructed Songhay village, which neighbors the main artisans' workspace and sits right above the lions' cages, shaped my perspectives on Nigerien artisanal production, education, and institutions as significantly as my time in various archives, collections, and formal interviews.

My analyses of museology and nationalism in Niamey, Niger, now home to the West African Museums Program, offer innovative interpretations of the functions of museums outside of Western cultures. Although little academic work has been done on it, and none in English in recent years, the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, founded in 1959, provides a compelling example of the appropriation of a European institutional form that was then transformed and given new meaning by Africans. The study of African museums is an urgent priority, for the exhibition of African art in European and American museums cannot be adequately understood without an appreciation of the practice and exhibition of African art *in Africa*. Moreover, the movements of artisans and the objects they make underscore the global history of this museum, and make the interpretation of these travels key to the understanding of its art and the artisans it houses.

The Nigerien government proclaimed 2006 a year in celebration of the one-hundredth year after the politician, author, and educator's birth. In 2008, the Musée National du Niger was renamed the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. In 2010, as part of the first annual celebration of Boubou Hama Days, museum curators, intellectuals, and the military government's representatives joined together to unveil a new monument to Boubou Hama near the entrance to the museum most frequented by pedestrian visitors. The museum, which is a park consisting of free-standing galleries, a zoo, office buildings, three artisanal groups, two shops, an artisanry education center, a museum outreach office, and a small informal neighborhood, is unique in Niger and in West Africa in many ways.

On holidays, the museum's grounds are crowded with parents and children. For example, on December 5, 2008, for the holiday of Tabaski, 8740 adults and 6831 children purchased tickets, for a total of 15, 571 visitors on a single day. The total number of admissions in 2008 was 219,188 people.<sup>10</sup> For Ramadan in 2009, over the course of September 20, 21, and 22, a total of 24,957 Nigerien adults, 18,324 Nigerien children, and 19 foreign tourists purchased tickets, for a total of 43,400 people over three days.<sup>11</sup> Unlike many West African museums, which see very few local visitors, Niamey residents and Nigerien visitors to Niamey fondly enjoy the museum, and see it as especially important for children. While the children are most attracted to the animals, particularly the hippopotamuses, the lions, and the monkeys, Nigeriens also take special pride in the Costume Pavilion, which depicts the dress associated with various Nigerien ethnic groups in the early twentieth century.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Service Financier, Comptable et Matériel, "Statistiques Des Entrées 2008," Niamey, Niger: Musée National Boubou Hama, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Service Financier, Comptable et Matériel, "Statistiques Des Entrées 2009," Niamey, Niger: Musée National Boubou Hama, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> See Anne Gaugue, *Les États Africains Et Leurs Musées: La Mise En Scène De La Nation* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1997).

The museum is also unique as an institution and a space in Niamey. It is the only public, recreational space to which most women and children can go for a freeform, respectable family outing. Its popularity must be understood in relation to the dearth of other secular and national recreational and educational sites in the capital. Niamey residents visit one another's houses for naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals, and great crowds of men go to mosques every Friday of the week. Women and men fill various markets around the city to conduct business and see one another. A few other public parks and gardens exist, but they are either conspicuous spaces at heavily trafficked intersections (where few women would sit out of concerns for modesty) or the opposite: darkly lit, spacious bars most popular at night, when no one can see who you are there to meet. In addition to its many other functions, the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger provides experiences of nationalist levity to thousands of visitors each year. Along with holiday visits to wander the park, many Nigeriens enjoy the occasional music concerts, evening receptions, and trade fairs hosted by the museum.

The museum's renewed recognition of Boubou Hama is part of a slow intellectual and popular movement to claim Hama as a de-politicized national political hero that began in 1989, when a colloquium was held in Niamey to discuss his intellectual work.<sup>13</sup> Hama's multifaceted career was nearly erased from Nigerien public discourse and international scholarship when he was imprisoned in 1974 by the military regime of Seyni Kountché in the wake of the coup d'état that deposed the government that he, as President of the National Assembly, and Hamani Diori, as President and Chief of State, had led since 1959. Hama published prolifically; in all, he authored or co-authored forty-three books. Seen as the *éminence grise* of the First

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<sup>13</sup> Diouldé Laya, Boubé Namaïwa, and Jean-Dominique Pénel. *Boubou Hama: Un Homme De Culture Nigérien : Le Séminaire De Mars 1989, Niamey*. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).

Republic, Hama was extremely unpopular among many Nigeriens by the early 1970s. Viewed by many as an elderly intellectual out of touch with the mostly illiterate population, his reputation suffered further during his imprisonment. His position as President of the National Assembly of the single party First Republic long overshadowed his other work.

While in prison, he continued writing, including a curious autobiographical text, *L'Itineraire de l'Homme et du Militant*, in which he converses with another aspect of himself, or his Double, a concept discussed at greater length in Chapter One. Although it is loosely chronological, like many of his other autobiographical and historical works, in it, Hama explicitly challenged teleological representations of history as he compressed his memories of activism against the French colonial state with his conversations with himself in a cell in Agadez in the independent nation-state of Niger under military rule. He offered frank assessments of his career, and in the excerpt that precedes this introduction, he reminded himself that it is only in what we learn and apply from history that we find its value. After three years in prison, Boubou Hama was released, and spent the rest of his life under house arrest. He died in January 1982 at the age of either seventy-three or seventy-six.<sup>14</sup> In Chapter One, I examine his role in founding the museum and his philosophical writings in greater detail.

In 2003, Nigerien curator Maman Ibrahim completed his master's thesis on the need for the reinstallation of galleries at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger and the improvement of the care of the animals.<sup>15</sup> Under his leadership as director from 2007 until 2011, the museum embarked on many new programs and renovations. The museum hosted regular temporary exhibitions, including one of Nigerien painters

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<sup>14</sup> Hama was born in either 1906 or 1909.

<sup>15</sup> Maman Ibrahim, "La Problematique De La Gestion Des Expositions Permanents Au Musée National Du Niger". Institut National Supérieur des Arts et de l'Action Culturelle, 2003.

and another organized by the French Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, entitled *Touaregs du Niger: Le Regard d'Edmond Bernus, Géographe*. Contests and games were organized by the museum for high volume days like Tabaski. Ibrahim wrote several applications for international grants to make the much needed renovations that his thesis had recommended. Germany funded the reconstruction of the Traditional Musical Instruments Pavilion in 2008.<sup>16</sup> A mining company agreed to fund an expanded lions' habitat in 2010, although it reneged from the arrangement after construction had begun. The American Embassy in Niger planned to fund and organize the renovation of the Pablo Toucet Costume Pavilion before cancelling that project due to the withdrawal of United States aid to Niger in protest of President Mamadou Tandja's dissolution of the constitution of the Fifth Republic of Niger in 2009. The Spanish government then stepped in, and having renovated a storage and office facility at the Museum in 2011, it will fund and advise on the renovation of the Costume Pavilion in 2012. In 2010, the museum hosted a workshop on textile conservation organized by the West African Museums Programme. In 2012, now that the United States has resumed funding to Niger, its Department of State is also funding a multi-faceted cooperative project between the Lincoln Park Zoo and the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, which teaches seventh graders in Chicago and selected high school students in Niamey how to study animals scientifically.<sup>17</sup>

While it remains a socially sanctioned and pleasurable daytime outing for Nigerien families, especially on holidays, the geography of the Musée National

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<sup>16</sup> Germany had funded the original Musical Instruments Pavilion in 1969.

<sup>17</sup> Tara Malone, "Lincoln Park Zoo Helps Chicago and Niger Students Connect for Animal Conservation," *The Chicago Tribune*, January 3, 2012. [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-01-03/news/ct-met-lincoln-park-zoo-niger-20120103\\_1\\_lincoln-park-zoo-animal-conservation-students](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-01-03/news/ct-met-lincoln-park-zoo-niger-20120103_1_lincoln-park-zoo-animal-conservation-students) [Accessed February 19, 2012]; Carrie L. Kaufman, "Lincoln Park Zoo Sends Teacher to Niger in Unique Learning Exchange," *Chicago Parent*, January 24, 2012. [http://www.chicagoparent.com/magazines/web-only/2012-january/parker\\_lpz\\_niger](http://www.chicagoparent.com/magazines/web-only/2012-january/parker_lpz_niger) [Accessed February 19, 2012].

Boubou Hama du Niger has changed substantially since the 1980s, even though no new galleries were constructed between 1984 and 2008.<sup>18</sup> The museum's boundaries with the city remain porous, but they were near nonexistent for its first thirty years. The museum had no admission fee and little fencing until 1992, when the museum implemented a scaled ticketing system, with different prices for Nigerien citizens, citizens of West African nations, and other international visitors. Yet, in some informal ways, its boundaries are even less defined. During Pablo Toucet's tenure as museum director, from 1959 until 1974, the grounds and sidewalks were assiduously watered to create a green space with little dust. Sellers were not permitted to approach visitors, and the atmosphere was highly controlled. The museum, though much more manicured than most other public spaces in Niger, now suffers from as much dust as other parts of the city, and guards do not reprimand unaffiliated sellers from approaching visitors. Toucet permitted some employees, including artisans, to live on the grounds of the museum in the reconstructed "ethnic" villages and others to build small adobe houses on the border between the museum and a cluster of other institutions initiated by Hama.<sup>19</sup> The families of some of these original residents and other families still live in this small community, which is not intended to be on display and is rarely trafficked by casual visitors.

The museum's role in city life also has changed with an increase in street crime in Niamey since the 1980s. In its first decades, the museum hosted many popular events in the evening and was considered safe at all hours by the Nigerien and

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<sup>18</sup> In 2010, the museum broke ground on a large new lion enclosure, to be funded by a mining company. The relationship was brokered by an American former Peace Corps volunteer working at the company. When he left the mining company on bad terms, the company reneged its donation, and construction is now on hold.

<sup>19</sup> These include the Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines (IRSH), which houses several departments, including a library and rare Department of Arab and Ajami manuscripts (MARA). IRSH is now a part of the Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey. Next to IRSH is Centre d'Etudes Linguistique et Historique par Tradition Orale, which is now a program of the African Union.

foreign visitors who flocked there. Now, even during the daytime, its perimeter bordered by a major thoroughfare is one of the most notorious locations where pedestrians can expect to be mugged in the city.<sup>20</sup> At night, many Niamey residents consider the area around the museum, including the street between it and the popular Centre Culture Franco-Nigérien Jean Rouch, to be dangerous. When organizing a concert for the 2010 Fête de l'Artisanat, the Nigerien members of the commission on which I served, who were artisans and bureaucrats, unanimously preferred the Centre Culturel Oumarou Ganda to the museum, based on safety concerns.

The restrictions on driving within the museum were long ago lifted, and many expatriate visitors, especially those just dropping in to shop at the artisans' workspace, experience the museum by viewing it through the windows of their SUVs. A few artisans and employees also have cars, and many others ride motorcycles into work at the museum. Most Nigeriens who visit the museum still wander around on foot. Walking was a central aspect of Toucet's intention for a visitor learning about Niger, and the practice of driving suggests a more pointed consumerist approach to the museum on the part of many visitors, but also the changing technological and transportation practices in Niamey.

Paradoxically, one way that the museum changed from 1984 until 2011 was

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<sup>20</sup> The thoroughfare near the museum leads to the Pont de Kennedy, which was funded and constructed by the United States. After years of stalled efforts, it opened in 1970. The design of the bridge and the roads connecting to it were shaped by theories of urban renewal then popular in the United States, which had transformed many American cities in the mid-twentieth century. The thoroughfare's structural deterrence to pedestrians reflects this influence. As one of the lead engineers wrote in his sensationalist memoir about the bridge, he was directed that "This is an American bridge, American in design, and of American material of which 80% of the work has to be performed by American personnel and of American material." Remo Bloise, *Bridge over Niger: The True Story of the J.F. Kennedy Bridge*. (New York: Writer's Showcase, 2001): 5. For more on urban renewal strategies in the United States, see Raymond Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities." *Sage Urban Studies Abstracts* 33.1 (February 1, 2005); and Joseph F. C. DiMento, "Stent (or Dagger?) in the Heart of Town: Urban Freeways in Syracuse, 1944—1967." *Journal of Planning History* 8.2 (May 1, 2009): 133–161. Despite United States Department of State warnings about crime in Niamey (especially around this perimeter of the museum), INTERPOL statistics actually report a remarkably low rate of crime in Niger. See [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_986.html#crime](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_986.html#crime) and <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/rwinslow/africa/niger.html>.

through a period of stasis, after two decades of feverish building. In 1984, the gallery dedicated to uranium mining and funded by the French mining group AREVA, was constructed. Between 1984 and 2008, only minimal changes were made to any of the permanent exhibitions. Many of the original installations in the Boubou Hama Classical Pavilion, which opened in 1959, such as a display on weaving that includes a miniature loom, are still in situ in 2012. Standards of care for animals held in zoos have changed substantially since the 1960s, so that Nigerien and foreign visitors are often distressed by the close quarters in which many of the animals live. Maman Ibrahim has written on the challenges for the institution to care for the living creatures in its custody on an extremely restricted budget.<sup>21</sup> The museum requested assistance from the American Peace Corps and volunteers worked with staff at the museum to care for the animals between 2008 and 2011.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in combination with its dynamism and activity as a large park where people live, work, and visit, there is a paradoxical sense of stasis and decay at the museum in its exhibitions. One artisan who works at the museum claimed not to have entered any of the pavilions in twenty years, because he knew nothing had changed inside them.

### *Laying the Warp of a History of Art*

The title of this dissertation, “The Warp of a Nation: The Exhibition and Circulation of Nigerien Art, 1920-Present,” signals the key themes herein, but it also suggests the key paradoxes, ambiguities, and challenges. The “warp” of the title first refers to warp threads in weaving, which in most West African weaving traditions,

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<sup>21</sup> Maman Ibrahim, “L’Exposition des Animaux Vivants au Musée National Boubou Hama de Niamey,” Unpublished Paper, September 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Volunteers sought out additional food for animals and worked with MNBH employees to feed animals. They also discouraged young visitors from throwing objects at the animals. One volunteer acquired grant funds and led the commission of an artist (another American Peace Corps volunteer) to make signs that discouraged visitors from feeding animals or throwing objects at them.

begin as a group of threads many meters long that are laid out a distance in front of the loom. Warp threads are the fixed threads over and under which the weft threads are passed. Preparing the warp is a key step in weaving, and in Fulani and Djerma symbolism around weaving, a weaver's progress along the warp threads by incorporating the weft threads suggests the passage of time. The shuttle that passes back and forth and the pedals that move up and down indicate the cyclical nature of life and time.<sup>23</sup> Pedagogies in and representations of art and artisanry have been key strategies for politicians, policymakers, curators, artisans, and bureaucrats to define and form Niger as a nation-state. This dissertation examines the roles demanded of art in processes to constitute a nation-state—or the representation of one. This metaphor also refers to the cyclical nature of time and history portrayed in symbolism associated with West African looms and weaving. Despite consistent attempts to instrumentalize art and artisanry within teleological representations of Nigerien, African, and world history, tracing the social lives of Nigerien objects reveals histories that move in various spatial and temporal directions at once.

In Djerma, the first language of many of the Djerma and Bellah Tuareg weavers I interviewed, the warp threads that have not been woven are called “gosay.” In Fulfulde, the word for the warp thread, “geese,” is the same that is used for the threads in a spider web, evoking the extensive mythology connecting spiders, storytelling, weaving, and history.<sup>24</sup> In Hausa, the term for weaving, “saka,” can be used metaphorically to express “pondering or planning.” In French, a language I used to discuss weaving with many artisans, curators, and businesspeople, the warp is referred to as the “chaîne,” a term that evokes strength, consistency, and length. The title plays upon the multiple meanings of “warp” that are very specific to the English

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<sup>23</sup> Interview, Abdoulwahid Goumer, October 2009. See also Amadou Hampaté Bâ, *Aspects De La Civilisation Africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972).

<sup>24</sup> See for example Rosalind I. J. Hackett, *Art and Religion in Africa* (New York: Cassell, 1998): 31.

language.

To warp is to distort, and in tracing parts of the history of Niger as a nation-state through its objects and institutions, this dissertation suggests the fundamental inconsistencies and fallacies of the nation-state as an institution. As pointed out by Aamir Mufti in his analysis of Edward's Said's work,

the organicism of national belonging, its mobilization of the filiative metaphors of kinship and regeneration, obscures its exclusionary nature; that it can be achieved only by rendering *certain* cultural practices, *certain* institutions, *certain* ethnical positions representative of "the people" as such. Secular criticism seeks continually to make it perceptible that the experience of being at home can only be produced by rendering some other homeless.<sup>25</sup>

Employing artisanal objects and artisanal labor, French colonial and Nigerien nationalist policy makers and educators have used institutions such as schools, museums, and workshops to inculcate a sense of home for Nigeriens in all of Niger. This has required a distorting myopia that ignores the artificial imposition of first colonial and then national boundaries in West Africa. Following Mufti, all nationalisms demand distortion, or the warping, of previous worldviews. As discussed more fully in Chapters One and Two, Niger's emergence as a nation-state was fraught with a systematic neocolonial agenda handed down by France. The myth of the nation-state as an institution that is a nurturing home to its citizens hid a government that extracted capital from subsistence farmers as it displaced nomadic groups in order to facilitate the mining of uranium for French interests and the accumulation of capital for select Nigerien citizens.

Nation-building is not an apt term, for the nation-state in Niger frequently has focused far more on extraction than on construction. The quality of life for many in

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<sup>25</sup> Aamir R. Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 25.1 (Autumn, 1998): 107.

Niger has deteriorated at times since the declaration of independence on August 3, 1960. Niger is consistently ranked in of the two lowest positions in the United Nations Development Index's Human Development Index.<sup>26</sup> In desertification, Lake Chad's shrinking size, the Niger River's pollution, mining towns' radioactivity, and consistent famine, the accomplishments of nation-states in the realm of ecological destruction and widening life quality inequalities are certainly more dramatic in Niger, but they reflect broader global trends and possibilities that are often enabled, enforced, and pursued by nation-states. All of these phenomena attest not to Niger's peripherality, but to its deep integration into systems of industrialization and globalization, which is rooted in colonial governance and resource extraction.<sup>27</sup> The French nation-state owns approximately 80% of AREVA, the company that mines uranium in Niger, which is then processed at nuclear reactors in France, where approximately 80% of electricity results from nuclear energy.<sup>28</sup> Since the 1990s, Chinese companies have been an increasing presence in Niger's northern regions, as they also seek to supply China's rising demands for energy.<sup>29</sup>

This dissertation confronts the injustices and difficulties that affect Nigerien art and artisans, but it should not be read as adhering to theories of Afro-pessimism, which depict African leaders as inevitably despotic and African nation-states as

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<sup>26</sup> See United Nations Development Program Human Development Index. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/>. [Accessed February 20, 2012]. See also "Niger 'Worst Place to Be Mother'." *BBC*, May 8, 2012, sec. Africa. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17984899>.

<sup>27</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.aveva.com/EN/finance-402/shareholding-structure-o>; and Casey Coombs, "French Nuclear Power: A Model for the World?" *Hinckley Journal of Politics* 11, no. 1 (May 18, 2010). <http://epubs.utah.edu/index.php/HJP/article/view/305>.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Keenan, "Uranium Goes Critical in Niger: Tuareg Rebellions Threaten Sahelian Conflagration." *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 117 (2008): 449–466; Andrew McGregor, "Mining for Energy: China's Relations with Niger." *ChinaBrief* VII, no. 18 (October 3, 2007): 8–9; Serge Michel and Michel Beuret, *China Safari: On the Trail of China's Expansion in Africa* (New York: Nation Books, 2009).

inherently corrupted.<sup>30</sup> Instead, it questions the institution of the nation-state more broadly, and it emphasizes how artisans and other Nigeriens have worked within the nation-state and related institutions and organizations to pursue their artistic, personal, and economic livelihoods. In order to counter primitivist, dehumanizing stereotypes of Africa as a “dark” continent made up of irrational, hopeless, and violent tribes incapable of forming nation-states, I focus on the modern institutions and modern cultural expressions Nigeriens have invented within a global context of inherently warped nation-states. I take up Boubou Hama’s image of the Double to juxtapose time periods and question conventional temporalities. I consider how extractive economic strategies invented for natural resources are applied to the aesthetic realm in the name of philanthropy. Many Nigeriens aspire for democratic governance, and these goals are reflected on a national level by the broad resistance to President Mamadou Tandja’s dissolution of the constitution of the Fifth Republic of Niger in order to serve a third term as president. Artisans negotiate and disrupt power structures by forming and joining the professional organizations discussed in Chapter Four. SAFEM, FIMA, and the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger promise continuing experiments in trade, exhibition, and education led by Nigeriens. West African cosmological symbolism of artisanry and artisans’ ongoing innovative commitment to beauty bolster the ultimately hopeful conclusions of this dissertation.

### ***Art and Artisanry in Niger***

Art education and exposition of the colonial and immediate post-independence eras continue to influence how art in Niger is made, exchanged, and displayed. One form of contemporary Nigerien art that mostly clearly demonstrates this is weaving,

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<sup>30</sup> See Patrick Chabal, “On Reason and Afro-Pessimism.” *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 78, no. 4 (2008): 603–610, and Bennetta Jules-Rosette, “Afro-Pessimism’s Many Guises.” *Public Culture* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2002): 603–605.

and other relevant media include leatherwork, metalwork, embroidery, and fashion design. This dissertation includes the recording of aesthetic and business expertise of artisans, the documentation of various ways of navigating a global marketplace, and analysis of the historical resonances in contemporary Nigerien arts exposition and trade. Of particular importance are the nature of the decisions that lead to aesthetic change, and what meanings are ascribed to old and new motifs. To be sure, art pedagogies, business structures, and museum spaces have impacted Nigerien artisans' aesthetic and business choices in specific ways. In turn, artisans' work affects the institutions and networks in which they operate.

In Niger, as elsewhere, creative workers call themselves and are identified by others by various names, and this dissertation includes discussions of people who identify as artisans, artists, and designers when discussing their work in French. Sometimes these categories are understood to be mutually exclusive, and others see some flexibility in the categories. Some artisans identify with ancestral endogamous castes, such as the Fulani *Mabuube* or the Tuareg *Inadan*. Others discuss their work identities in Djerma and Hausa in ways very closely identified with medium. In Djerma, “to weave” is “kay,” and a weaver is a “cakay,” or someone who weaves. In Hausa, “to weave” is “sak’a,” and a weaver is a “masak’i,” or someone who weaves. The accepted Hausa translation of artisanry is “aiki na hannu,” or work done by hand.

The contours of aesthetic taxonomies in Niger have been and continue to be shaped by local, regional, global, and syncretic understandings of art, labor, and culture. In some communities and cultures, certain kinds of skilled artisanry, which required expert material facility, corresponded with certain spiritual facilities and powers, as in the case of the historically ambivalent but crucial position of *Inadan*

within the larger Tuareg societies.<sup>31</sup> In other cases, such as weaving in many Djerma and Tuareg communities, certain kinds of artisanal labor, like weaving, were performed by enslaved laborers. Other Djerma and Hausa weavers and other artisans historically were perceived as performing handwork comparable to other occupations, with no associated denigration of their social status. Such associations of spiritual skills, caste, and social status permuted over the twentieth and twenty-first century, during the many changes in the region, but they persisted and remain salient. Artisanry and education beyond middle school (CM2) are considered mutually exclusive in Niger in 2012. A person who has graduated from high school or university might be a designer or artists, and may even work with artisans in the same media, but he or she will not identify as an artisan. Conversely, only a small percentage of members of the many artisans' groups in Niger have beyond an elementary education, and only a small percentage identify as artists or designers.

As demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, French conceptions of art, artisanry, and labor also have sustained long influence in Niger. Sharing in Western post-Enlightenment art canons that give primacy to painting, sculpture, and architecture, France also has a unique historical relationship to artisanry as labor and as an aesthetic practice. The nation's longstanding role as a leader in handmade luxury products was cemented in the early twentieth century, and it required a segment of the labor force with specialized skills in intricate handwork. France's national identity has been hewn from artisanal labor, and Paris's ongoing significance in haute couture attests to this. Paris was also the epicenter of the early twentieth century primitivist infatuation with African and African Diasporic cultures, or what Petrine Archer Straw

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<sup>31</sup> See Kristyne Loughran and Thomas Seligman, *Art of Being Tuareg: Sahara Nomads in a Modern World*. (Los Angeles: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University; UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2006).

has termed *negrophilia*.<sup>32</sup> Today, French fashion and other designers lead training projects in Niger, some as members of the organization *Artisans Sans Frontières*.

Due to the specific entry of African artworks into the scope of art history as objects of anthropological curiosity and modernist inspiration, the study of African art has required a reassessment of the entire discipline's canons and taxonomies since it became a legitimate subfield. Scholars have continued to challenge canons in an act that is fundamentally epistemological.<sup>33</sup> Richard Sennett suggests that by asking the question, "What is art?" we are actually asking about autonomy.<sup>34</sup> Labeling an object as art in an industrialized age acknowledges the maker's autonomy, voice, individuality, and agency, while labeling an object as craft or a worker as an artisan suggests physical work that adheres to aesthetic regimes but lacks conceptualism. The changing taxonomies of art and craft in art history more generally are bound up in ongoing discussions of the taxonomies of traditional, usually considered artisanal, and the contemporary, increasingly recognized as conceptual, within the field of African art.

The textiles and other works studied in this dissertation are conceptual art objects located in history. As rhetorical categories, the traditional and the contemporary are neither commensurate nor mutually exclusive. The categories rely on different criteria for their composition, and the labels both require tortuous representations of African art within time. The "traditional" insists on aesthetic and

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<sup>32</sup> See discussions in Chapter Three and Chapter Five, in addition to Petrine Archer Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Monica Amor, "On the Contingency of Modernity and the Persistence of Canons." in Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee, eds. *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008): 83-96; Suzanne Blier, "Art Systems and Semiotics: The Question of Art, Craft, and Colonial Taxonomies in Africa," *American Journal of Semiotics* 6.1 (1989): 7-18; Okwui Enwezor, "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition." *Research in African Literatures* 34. 4 (2003): 57; and Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, eds. *Unpacking Culture Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 65.

cultural linkages to the past, but the extent of changes in aesthetic innovations and exchange systems allowed for an object to remain classified as “authentic traditional African art” remain vague, as does how such categories relate to colonialism and post-colonialism. The “contemporary” sounds like it refers to time, but in practice, it refers to the acceptance and interpretation of art, and the artist who made it, within the markets and disciplines of globalized conceptual art, generally made by formally trained studio artists.

Objects categorized as traditional that have been made at the same time as contemporary artworks exist in uneasy tension within this taxonomy. They too have functioned within African modernities that interacted with, but were not defined by, an imagined singular European modernity. Art historian and cultural theorist Terry Smith argues that the “contemporary” is the theoretical term that can allow us to defy the “traditional-modern” dichotomy inherited from colonial scholarship, but for the moment, “contemporary” is all too often a euphemism for a singular, Eurocentric “modern” opposed to a static, peripheral “traditional.”<sup>35</sup> Mary Nooter Roberts argues that tradition-based African arts are conceptual, and she insists that tradition in fact implies innovation, reinvention, and relevance.<sup>36</sup> In this dissertation, I analyze the intellectual conditions within which these categories manifest, rather than calmly working within them. Most of what I study is traditionally categorized as traditional and artisanal, but these objects circulate within exchange networks that also include popular fashion, haute couture, fine art, and contemporary art. The intertwining interpretations within distinct categories demonstrate how porous and contingent the boundaries between them are.

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<sup>35</sup> Terry Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Mary Nooter Roberts, “Tradition Is Always Now: African Arts and the Curatorial Turn.” *African Arts* 45, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 1–7.

## *Methodology*

I have used diverse methodologies to conduct research for this dissertation. In Niger, I conducted ethnographic research in over one hundred and fifty formal interviews, in addition to informal interviews, observation, and participation. From October 2009 until March 2010, I had an apprenticeship in weaving with Abdoulwahid Goumer, a weaver based at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. I volunteered labor and expertise for the Festival International de la Mode Africaine in October 2009, the Fête de l'Artisanat de Niamey in April 2010, and the artisanal group GIE-DANI. I was invited to speak at a workshop on the revival of weaving at SAFEM (Salon de l'Artisanat Pour et Par la Femme) in December 2011. I conducted archival research in various ministries and libraries in Niger. I studied objects in the collections of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. I conducted extensive archival and collections research at the French Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer (Aix-en-Provence, France), the Archives Nationales de la France (Paris, France), the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris, France), the Museum der Kulturen (Basel, Switzerland), the Archives Nationales du Senegal (Dakar, Senegal), the Newark Museum (Newark, New Jersey), and the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.).

The narratives that I created about history of art of Niger were inevitably shaped by the circumstances in which I wrote them. Several senior scholars cautioned me against conducting my dissertation work in Niger, where little art historical research is done. For reasons further discussed in Chapter Two, my choice to focus on hand woven textiles after learning of their centrality in women's representations and experiences of Nigerien modernity was met with equal incredulity among some scholars in Europe and the United States, because the literature on them does not exist already and Nigerien weavers and European scholars alike accept teleological myths that hand weaving has become obsolete and will cease as a medium in Niger.

The nine months between September 2009 and May 2010 were eventful for any American researcher in Niger, and many current events contributed to my emphasis on the nation-state, Nigerien national politics, and contemporary neocolonial dynamics. Over the course of my primary fieldwork stay, President Mamadou Tandja dissolved the constitution of the Fifth Republic of Niger, Al Qaeda in the Maghreb increased its kidnapping of Westerners, President Tandja declared the Sixth Republic of Niger, the armed forces launched a successful coup d'état, Military Chief of State Salou Djibo initiated the Seventh Republic of Niger, Niger experienced an especially deadly hot season (with temperatures in the capital reaching 120 degrees Fahrenheit), and many Nigeriens suffered yet another famine.

I faced some predicted and other less expected constraints to my research methods because of political circumstances in Niger and in the Sahel during my field stay. The State Department of the United States of America advised United States citizens against travel to Northern Niger due to restrictions stemming from the most recent conflicts between Tuareg rebels and the Nigerien nation-state. Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, a group that has affiliated itself with the global network Al Qaeda, had moved its base in the Sahara Desert in Mali closer to the Nigerien border in 2007 and 2008. After the kidnapping of Canadian diplomat Robert Fowler in 2008, the State Department of the United States of America strongly advised United States citizens against most travel to the Tillabéry region. The Tillabéry region is home to Foneko, Boubou Hama's home village, as well as the towns of Tillabéry, Téra, and Ayerou, all of which were once regionally significant weaving centers. One of them has lent its name to Niger's most well known textile genre, the *téra-tera*. Research in these locations might have informed my analysis in rich ways, but it did not merit putting myself in danger when I gathered more data than can be addressed in a single dissertation during my research in Niamey, Dosso, Say, Bonkougou, Baleyara,

Maradi, Dogondoutchi, Lougou, Zinder, Tanout, and other locations around Niger. The tenuous national government situation in Niger and the ongoing kidnappings and kidnapping attempts on the part of Al Qaeda in the Maghreb in Niger and Mali required additional prudence and caution, and I thus chose to focus on Niamey for the first five months of my primary period of research. My interest in institutions was conducive to these circumstances, and my dissertation adds to growing scholarship on urban African experiences.

The body of the dissertation, although informed by ethnographic research influenced by self-reflexive anthropological theory, is not heavily “author-saturated,” and this introduction serves in part to contextualize my relationships as a researcher, scholar, and person to Nigerien art. Assessing his long history of research in Niger, Paul Stoller has argued for greater attention to how the subjects of research perceive researchers.<sup>37</sup> This includes not only reflexivity in methodology, but he suggests the need for a scholarly analysis of how foreign researchers are understood in various cultural contexts. The paucity of art historical research in Niger was reflected in artists’ and artisans’ expectations of my role. As discussed in Chapter Four, artisanry has long been approached by national and international organizations in Niger to expand the cash economy as a method of economic development. Artisans form groups in part to be better positioned to negotiate with offers from development organizations. I was understood in this context of European, American, Japanese, and other volunteers, development workers, and consultants. My aspirations for reciprocal learning and participation in locally organized events further blurred already unclear boundaries for many.

Artisans in the Cooperative at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger

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<sup>37</sup> Paul Stoller, “Son of Rouch: Portrait of a Young Ethnographer by the Songhay,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 60.3 (July 1987): 114-123.

agreed among themselves that they would not solicit me to purchase their products, because they considered my official affiliation with the museum to include an unofficial affiliation or membership in their cooperative. A Peace Corps volunteer had worked with the cooperative in 2008 and 2009, and some cooperative officials at first expected me to perform some of the same roles she had. In 2009 and 2010, I performed translation and other work for the MNBH Cooperative, FIMA, GIE-DANI (Groupement d'Intérêt Economique - Développement de l'Artisanat au Niger), and FRANI (Fédération Regionale de l' Artisanat de Niamey), and I went to great lengths to assemble an audience of artisans, governmental officials, curators, and others for my concluding talk at the American Cultural Center in Niamey, Niger. Despite my persistent explanations that I did not represent a coveted “*projet*,” many artisans rightfully categorized me with these other foreign participants in the world of art and artisanry in development. I used these ambiguities as launching points for discussion as often as possible, and I concluded every interview by asking if my interlocutor would like to ask me questions—which most did. Many asked how they would benefit from my work, and I explained that in the short term, most would not. I hope that in the long run, this research project will offer intellectual and indirectly, material, benefits to the artisans and artists who have so generously contributed their perspectives by reorienting taxonomies of art that currently exclude them and by fostering educational and economic opportunities that contribute to their artistic aspirations and overall well-being.

### ***Literature Review***

Little academic work has been done on the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, and none in English in recent years. Julien Bondaz completed a doctoral thesis in 2009 that includes the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger in an

anthropological study of three West African national museums.<sup>38</sup> Mahamane Saley's insightful masters' thesis of 1984 took an extremely local, institutional and sociological approach.<sup>39</sup> My dissertation has greater historical depth and a specifically aesthetic focus that distinguishes it from either of these works. Nigerien artisanal work other than Tuareg jewelry is also a much-neglected topic. Olivier Meunier includes artisanal work in his examination of Nigerien industry.<sup>40</sup> However, he too takes an economic and sociological approach, rather than an art historical one. One exception to this is the 2009 doctoral thesis in art history by Audrey Boucksom, which analyzed Nigerien artisanry through the lens of Western consumers and "tourist art."<sup>41</sup> Boucksom challenges conventional taxonomies of art in a study of Nigerien art that highlights the perspectives of French clients and potential buyers. She focuses on media according to its popularity with French and other western buyers, and thus glosses over weaving and gives great attention to Tuareg jewelry.

Kristyne Loughran and Thomas Seligman's work on Tuareg art portrays many of the complexities faced by members of this transnational group, and artisans' specific aesthetic and economic strategies.<sup>42</sup> Yet, their focus on the Tuareg of Niger elides the relationships between the Tuareg and other Imazigh groups, and between

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<sup>38</sup> Université de Lyon II, Novembre 2009. See also Bondaz, "Imaginaire national et imaginaire touristique: L'artisanat au Musée national du Niger," *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* ILIX (1-2), 193-194, 2009, pp. 365-389.

<sup>39</sup> Mahamane Saley, *L'Artisanat Nigerien et Son Musée National à Niamey de 1959 à 1983*. Unpublished Thesis. Université Lyon II: Diplôme des Hautes Etudes, 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Olivier Meunier, *Formation, Organisation du Travail et Maintenance Dans les Entreprises en Afrique Subsaharienne: Anthropologie des Techniques dans les P.M.I./P.M.E. du Niger* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> Audrey Boucksom, "Arts 'Touristiques' en Afrique et Consommateurs Occidentaux: Le Cas de l'Artisanat d'Art au Niger". Unpublished thesis. Université Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne, Ecole doctorale d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Kristyne Loughran, "Jewelry, Fashion, and Identity: The Tuareg Example." *African Arts* 36.1 (2003): 52; Kristyne Loughran, "Tuareg Jewelry: Continuity and Change." Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Indiana. Bloomington, Indiana. 1996; Kristyne Loughran and Thomas Seligman, eds. *Art of Being Tuareg: Sahara Nomads in a Modern World* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2006); Thomas Seligman, "Going Global," *African Arts* (Summer 2006), Vol. 39, Issue 2: 48-63.

Tuareg artisans and other regional artisans. Ethnicity is experienced and staged in significant ways by artisans in Niger, and I seek to analyze rather than perpetuate ethnic divisions and stereotypes. This pattern in the little art historical work on Nigerien topics reflects the broader scholarly conventions of historical and ethnographic work in the region. With the exception of Ousseina Alidou, most scholars have selected an ethnic group around which to center their work.<sup>43</sup>

My attention to the written oeuvre of Boubou Hama distinguishes my work from all previous work in English on Nigerien history. In addition to his histories, memoirs and educational analyses, I investigate his philosophical treatises, such as *Le Retard de l'Afrique: Essai Philosophique*, to better comprehend his contributions to the national museum and to national cultural policies.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, I relate Hama to other writers and cultural leaders with whom he was in dialogue, such as Amadou Hampate Bâ, Frantz Fanon, and André Malraux.<sup>45</sup>

Scholars have conducted thorough analyses of the development of the museum as an institution, identifying its roots and ongoing significance in its general association with nation-building.<sup>46</sup> Recent scholarship has asked how museums function within globalized networks of travel, media, and exchange.<sup>47</sup> Under the leadership of the West African Museums Programme, work has been published on

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<sup>43</sup> Ousseina Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> For example, see Boubou Hama, *Enquête Sur Les Fondements Et La Genèse De L'unité Africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1966); *Essai D'analyse De L'éducation Africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1968); *Le Retard De L'Afrique: Essai Philosophique* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972); and *Cet "autre" De L'homme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972).

<sup>45</sup> Bâ 1972; Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés De La Terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); and André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire De La Sculpture Mondiale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952).

<sup>46</sup> Gaugue 1997; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> Ivan Karp, Gustavo Buntinx, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and Ciraj Rassool, *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/ Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

West African museums, much of which is didactic in nature.<sup>48</sup> Agbenyega Adzedze wrote a compelling dissertation on museums in the former Afrique Occidentale Française, which includes some comparative analysis with former British colonies.<sup>49</sup> A recent collection resulting from a collaborative project by a number of African and European museums examines exhibition practices of African art in both Africa and Europe.<sup>50</sup>

Since Benedict Anderson's groundbreaking theorization of the nation-state, several postcolonial and decolonial theorists have offered challenges and modifications to his compelling framework of imagined communities.<sup>51</sup> Examining cases in South Asia and the Middle East, Partha Chatterjee and Aamir Mufti insist on the specificities of context, refusing Anderson's assertion that the nation-state is a sort of pre-fabricated construct that post-colonies then adopt.<sup>52</sup> Mahmood Mamdani and Anne McClintock demonstrate how individuals and groups necessarily relate to the nation-state in fundamentally inequitable and distinct ways due to gendered colonial histories.<sup>53</sup> Achille Mbembe's theorization of the African state in both real and metaphorical terms has many resonances in Niger.<sup>54</sup>

Interpreting Nigerien textiles in the context of other art forms and from a

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<sup>48</sup> Claude Daniel Ardouin and E.N. Arinze, eds., *Museums and History in West Africa* (London: J. Currey, 2000); and Claude Daniel Ardouin and E.N. Arinze, eds., *Museums and the Community in West Africa* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Agbenyega Adzedze, "Collectors, Collections and Exhibitions: The History of Museums in Francophone West Africa." Unpublished Diss. University of California at Los Angeles. History Department. 1997.

<sup>50</sup> Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, ed. *Afrique: Musée et Patrimoines Pour Quels Publics?* (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale; Karthala: Paris, 2007).

<sup>51</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>52</sup> Aamir R Mufti, "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures." *Critical Inquiry*. 36.3 (2010): 458; and Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> Mahmood Mamdani 1996; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, eds. *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>54</sup> J.A. Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

multi-ethnic perspective, I draw upon a rich body of literature on African textiles. Of course, John Picton's seminal work remains foundational.<sup>55</sup> Like the exhibition *Au Fil de la Parole* of fifteen years earlier, Bernhard Gardi's recent exhibition and accompanying catalogue provide important comparative cases for my own work in Niger.<sup>56</sup> Richard Roberts's investigation of the historical cotton market in the former French Soudan illuminates related dynamics in Niger.<sup>57</sup> Two 2008 shows in the New York juxtaposed traditional textiles with contemporary art, an effort that complements my own insistence on interpreting traditional Nigerien weaving as a modern and dynamic artistic medium.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Chapter Outlines***

The first chapter, "A Living Museum: Boubou Hama, Nationalism, and Artisanal Education," foregrounds an analysis of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. I explore the philosophies of African thought, education, and development of the Nigerien politician and historian Boubou Hama (1906-1982), who is well known in Niger for his anti-colonial activism, his influential tenure as the president of the National Assembly during the first republic (1960-1974), and his prolific and varied writings. However, in part because of his conflicts with Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism, Leopold Sédar Senghor's *négritude*, and other more globally recognized African anti-colonial bodies of thought, he remains an obscure figure outside of Niger, where his reputation has just begun to be revived after Hama's long

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<sup>55</sup> John Picton, and Rayda Becker. *The Art of African Textiles: Technology, Tradition, and Lurex*. (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> *Au Fil De La Parole: Tissus de l'Afrique Noire* (Paris: Musée Dapper, 1995); and Bernhard Gardi, ed. *Woven Beauty: The Art of West African Textiles* (Basel: Museum der Kulturen, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Richard L. Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800-1946* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> Alisa LaGamma and Christine Giuntini. *The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008); Lynn Gumpert, Kofi Anyidoho, and John Picton. *The Poetics of Cloth: African Textiles, Recent Art* (New York, NY: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2008).

imprisonment and subsequent death during the military regime that followed the First Republic of Niger. None of his works have been translated into English, and this dissertation will be the first attempt in English-language scholarship to analyze Hama's cultural institution building in the context of his philosophical and historical writings. In a thorough reading of his oeuvre and by examining Henri Bergson and other twentieth century materialist philosophers with whom he was in dialogue, I suggest that Hama was mounting a challenge to European philosophical anti-materialism, and attempting a different conception of time and materiality.

Hama instigated the project of the national museum, and his influence remained important throughout the tenure of the first director, Pablo Toucet, a Basque archeologist with French citizenship. I excavate the early twentieth century culture of international expositions and regional *foires* in order to better understand the exhibitionary modes chosen by Hama and Toucet for the highly unusual and extremely successful museum. Of these expositions, I argue that the 1931 *Exposition Coloniale Internationale et Pays d'Outre-Mer* shows the most evident influence upon the *Musée National du Niger*. Juxtaposed with the functions and elements of colonial expositions and *foires*, the *Musée National du Niger*'s aspirations and social impact take on nuances illegible in Toucet's promotional writing about the museum. It was an audacious assertion of nationhood, and Nigerien artisanry was taken up as an important symbol for a new nation.

In Chapter Two, "Domestic Renderings of the Nation: Weaving and Weddings in Niger," I focus on the work of Ali Sinka and other weavers from the 1950s until the 1980s. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, the growing Nigerien cities of Niamey, Maradi, and Zinder attracted weavers from the Tillabéry region of Niger, the Timbuktu area of Mali, and the areas around Dori (in what is now Burkina Faso). After Niger's independence in 1960, urban Nigeriens and itinerant weavers used hand-

woven textiles to define a modern and multi-ethnic independent Niger through display in homes and in public spaces, such as the Musée National du Niger. Contrary to stereotypes of ethnically insular African art, weavers of Zarma, Sonrai, Tuareg, and Fulani ethnicities worked for equally ethnically diverse women who commissioned weavings for their daughters' weddings or for resale. Weavings received as wedding gifts were then hung on the walls for holidays and other special events. The exchange of blankets and other textiles were crucial ways for women to strengthen relationships with one another—and textile collections also served as protected wealth storage for women.

I examine both this domestic avenue of display and others inspired by it, which were used by politicians and journalists to portray Niger as a multi-ethnic African nation-state in both domestic and foreign contexts. During Hamani Diori's presidency (1960-1974), national leaders presented visiting foreign dignitaries with hand-woven blankets or used similar textiles in displays representing Niger. The Costume Pavilion at the National Museum of Niger was a key early element at the museum, and it featured a variety of textiles hung on the walls and dressing mannequins. After the end of Niger's First Republic in 1974, many blankets intended for domestic display featured the Nigerien flag and other motifs representing weavers' and blanket owners' participation and investment in a transforming nation-building project.

In Chapter Three, "Traditional Technology and Modern Artisanry: Art Exhibition and Education in Twentieth Century Niger," I seek out artisans' perspectives and artworks' social lives in a history of the educational and exhibitionary projects of the Afrique Occidentale Française government in the 1930s and 1940s, a period that left lasting effects on formal and non-formal artisanal education in Niger. I also examine how those effects manifested in Nigerien educational strategies during the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1920s, French colonial

pedagogues began to advocate for increased manual training in formal education in African colonies. They hoped to establish a network of schools of traditional artisanry, where French instructors would introduce modifications to African technologies while retaining certain traditional aesthetic qualities identified as valuable. Although some French colonial administrators wanted to found something akin to Bamako's Maison des Artisans in Niamey, they only managed to add a small program for shoemakers to the professional school for masons and construction workers in Niger in the 1930s. This fleeting French colonial enthusiasm for formalizing African artisanal education drew inspiration from French artisanal education, British colonial education, and North American educational projects.

The 1937 Exposition des Arts et Techniques Modernes, which took place in Paris, demonstrates the saliency and urgency of concerns about labor, technology, and aesthetics for both educators and artisans of the time. The organizers of the Afrique Occidentale Française section chose to emphasize artisanry in order to avoid what they felt were the errors of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale. This included a more careful recruitment of participating African artisans and stringent control of the sales of their work, even as many more artisans now sought the opportunity to attend the exposition. I analyze the conflicting interpretations of modernity on display in the African buildings of the Colonial Section in the context of the larger exposition, which staked aspirations for French modernity on the redemptive capacity of industrial technology. Here, African artisanry was a foil for the modern, and African labor was seen as one more resource for the infinite advancement of France. Yet, the organizational materials of French colonial officials demonstrate individual attempts to valorize certain African technologies and aesthetic principles in ways that abrade, if they do not counter, the overarching goals of the Exposition. Relying on archival documents, including letters written by some of the participating artisans themselves, I highlight

how artisans interpreted the event, and in some measure recover their perspectives as workers at the exhibitions.

Chapter Four, “Extracting Beauty: Nigerien Artisanry and Development Narratives,” traces the changes in aesthetics, organizations, and education that artisans have instigated, encountered, and altered from the 1970s to the present. I argue that artisans and their labor have been deployed both symbolically and in real terms to serve agendas of international aid organizations, multi-national corporations, and the Nigerien state, in the guise of these powerful bodies serving the artisans themselves. In the 1980s, the World Bank funded artisanry projects in Niger in collaboration with the museum, and in 1984, the artisans at the National Museum established an autonomous co-operative. Since the late 1980s, the Nigerien government has regularly declared the importance of artisanry and the need for a political plan for artisans and the “development” of artisanry. In the 1990s, the Nigerien government solicited the help of the Luxembourg foreign aid program, and the multi-faceted three-phase project carried out by Lux-Développement resulted in numerous nonformal educational programs, export-oriented sales opportunities and a network of thirteen artisanal cooperatives. Lux-Développement financed centers with artisans’ ateliers, shops, and classrooms for most of these thirteen cooperatives.

Foreign philanthropic projects promoting artisanry and artisanal education proliferated and responsibility for artisanal “development” shifted from one national ministry to another. Yet, artisans found their markets shrinking and destabilizing, even as numerous projects promised unprecedented opportunities. Many of the governmental and nongovernmental programs initiated specific aesthetic changes, and they frequently took up ethnic identities as significant tropes in their marketing schemes aimed at export markets. In this chapter, I historicize the drastic shifts that have taken place in Nigerien artisanry since the 1970s by highlighting connections to

colonial education and philanthropic projects. These initiatives frequently perpetuated the unjust economic dynamics that they aspire to ameliorate, for, despite all of their good intentions, they are based on the same extractive capitalist models of other enterprises in Niger, which seek to export what is of value in exchange for as little financial capital as possible. Over one hundred interviews with artisans in Niger inform my analysis of their art, education, and career choices during the last decades.

Chapter Five, “Hot and Haute: African Fashion, FIMA, and Globalization,” begins with an analysis of how traditional dress associated with certain ethnicities was visualized during the Second Republic of Niger, when renowned fashion designer Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly began his first career as a governmental official in the Ministry of Tourism. I consider how definitions of the “traditional” transformed in Niger over the twentieth century, especially the ways that waxprint cloth came to signify African fashion to both Africans and others around the world. After examining contemporary African fashion shows covered in the Nigerien media in the 1960s and 1970s, I analyze the ways Africa was portrayed in European fashion. The chapter then profiles Alphadi’s contributions as a fashion designer and as the organizer of the biannual Festival International de la Mode Africaine, or FIMA.

Alphadi refers to FIMA, especially that first audacious festival in the desert outside of Agadez, as a “folie créative,” or creative madness. This characterizes his defiance of the realities that constrained his visions. Like Boubou Hama, Alphadi saw beyond apparent realities to imagine other possible circumstances in which Nigeriens enjoyed their beauty and profited from it. Stereotypes of Niger’s poverty and peripherality are so deeply ingrained that the incongruity of an haute couture fashion in the middle of the desert remains a key way that FIMA is advertised in Europe. Despite support from international and national organizations and institutions, the festival is a massive undertaking each year, and requires all of Alphadi’s considerable

diplomatic skills and personal charm, in addition to the expertise of his staff in Niamey, Paris, and New York.

Hama's Musée National du Niger was, likewise, the creative madness of a visionary who created new conceptual and material visions using Western exhibitionary models. Fifty-three years after it first opened, artisans like Goumer Abdoulwahid continue to work at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. Richard Sennett writes that "Three basic abilities are the foundation of craftsmanship. These are the ability to localize, to question, and to open up. The first involves making a matter concrete, the second reflecting on its qualities, the third expanding its sense."<sup>59</sup> Sennett argues that craftsmanship, composed of persistent physical skills that require dwelling in frustration to achieve solutions to complex problems, offers a theoretical framework for reimagining contemporary global challenges. He suggests that this is not merely metaphorical, but that what we can learn from the skills of craftsmanship and the experience of making can be instructive for the complex challenges before the world today. I spent many hours in 2009 and 2010 looking down on cloth that I was weaving under the tutelage of Goumer Abdoulwahid in the "Songhay Village" at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. (Figure 0.8). In this image, the reverse side of diamond motifs made with a floating weft technique and smaller diamonds made with a simple tapestry method faced me as I wove forward. I take inspiration in Alphadi and Hama's creative madness and Abdoulwahid's expert craftsmanship. I intend for this dissertation to localize art history in Niger, to question previous assumptions about art in Niger, and in the spirit of creative madness, to expand how scholars, artisans, readers, and viewers imagine the future of art in Niger.

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<sup>59</sup> Sennett 2008: 277.



Figure 0.8:  
Amanda Gilvin, *Sakala* strip in progress, March 2010.

## CHAPTER 1

### A LIVING MUSEUM: BOUBOU HAMA, NATIONALISM, AND ARTISANAL EDUCATION

*The greatest asset that Africa can bring to our anguished common humanity is its great tardiness, that which the industrialized world needs to become human.*

*Boubou Hama*<sup>60</sup>

*This unity of our land blinds the eyes.*

*Boubou Hama*<sup>61</sup>

In 1929, a young Nigerien teacher returned to Niamey after encountering Europe. Boubou Hama was the very first instructor from that colony to graduate from the École Normale Supérieure William Ponty in Dakar, and he had not yet traveled to France or even left the African continent. Yet, for the rest of his life, Boubou Hama would look back to Dakar as where he had been “between the shadow of one continent and the reality of another,” and where he “could not, between their dissimilar natures, make a useful synthesis.”<sup>62</sup> His training and early vocation as a teacher would pervade each aspect of his multi-faceted career as a scholar, writer, and politician, a career during which he would continue to aspire to create a “useful synthesis.”<sup>63</sup> In his writings, he explored various didactic modes and blended genres of autobiography,

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<sup>60</sup> Boubou Hama, *Le Retard De l'Afrique Essai Philosophique* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972): 8.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>62</sup> Boubou Hama, *Kotia-nima: Rencontre Avec L'Europe* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1969).

<sup>63</sup> Other scholars have observed Hama's pedagogic aims in all facets of his career. See also Fatimata Mounkaïla and Mamani Abdoulayes's comments in Diouldé Laya, Boubé Namaïwa, and Jean-Dominique Pénel, eds. *Boubou Hama: Un Homme De Culture Nigérien : Le Séminaire De Mars 1989, Niamey* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007): 30 and 33.

philosophy, political science, literature and history.<sup>64</sup> In his institutional and political projects, too, he ignored institutional conventions and categories. The Musée National du Niger, perhaps his most famous educational experiment, remains one of Hama's longest lasting intellectual and popular contributions to Niger.

Hama's long years of schooling concluded, he arrived in a town undergoing rapid change. Niamey had been a small village founded in the nineteenth century, and infrequently visited by African neighbors, long-distance caravans, or European travelers until several years into the twentieth century. French authorities built a town, with a European section and an African section divided by a park, for Niamey's first stint as French headquarters of the Military Territory of Niger, from 1904 until the center of operations was moved to Zinder in 1909. A few years after Niger had become a colony in 1922, the Lieutenant-Governor Jules Brevié sought to undermine the authority of the Sultan of Damagaram in Zinder, and to establish better access to the Niger River. Supposedly at the urging of his wife, he transferred the capital back to Niamey in 1926, although few people lived there. He was promoted to Governor General of the entire Afrique Occidentale Française in 1929.

In 1930, only around 1000 Africans lived in Niamey, but that changed the following year, during the 1931 famine.<sup>65</sup> Hunger in the surrounding areas pushed people to Niamey in its first substantial wave of population growth. Later French reports would blame the colonial administration for contributing to the development of

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<sup>64</sup> See again Mounkaïla's comments in Laya et.al. 2007: 31, and see also Abdoul Aziz Issa Daouda, *Boubou Hama, Conteur et Romancier* (Niamey: L'Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey and the Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines, 2008): 32.

<sup>65</sup> Suzanne Bernus, *Particularismes Ethnique en Milieus Urbain: L'Exemple de Niamey*. (Paris: Institute d'Ethnologie, Musée de l'Homme, 1969): 12.

the famine through labor and tax levies and for failing to respond quickly enough because they were distracted by other duties.<sup>66</sup> Jules Brevié, by then the Governor General, had returned to Paris just before the famine began. Having begun his career in Niamey during this transitional and challenging period, Hama remained intrigued with the city as a phenomenon of social change. He began writing about Niamey as an urban phenomenon in the 1950s, and he would continue to write about related issues and to contribute to urban planning throughout his political career.<sup>67</sup> In 1958, the initiation of the museum was the keystone for his larger vision, the Vallée du Culture, which would also include the Centre Culturel Franco-Nigérien, the Institut de la Recherche des Sciences Humaines, and the African Union's Centre d'Étude Linguistique et Historique par la Tradition Orale. Hama proposed several other cultural institutions that were never built.

Perhaps another Niger was also at least occasionally on Hama's mind in those first few years of his teaching career in Niamey. The 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale et Pays d'Outre-Mer had been in the works for years, and certainly would have been common knowledge in student circles in Dakar, where his friends Leopold Kaziende and Hamani Diori were attending the École William Ponty around

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<sup>66</sup> Archives Nationales du Senegal, Dossiers 2G 31 108 and 2G 37 11. Mahmood Mamdani has observed that famine was often a result of colonially imposed shifts to export crop production, which necessitated a drop in labor devoted to food production. Because of its particularly difficult climate and ecosystem, this pattern may be especially pronounced in Niger. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>67</sup> Boubou Hama, *Etude Monographique Sur la Ville de Niamey*, (Niamey: IFAN Report, 1955); Boubou Hama, *Problemes Domaniaux et Fonciers de l'Ouest du Niger Français*, Unpublished, 1957; and Boubou Hama, *L'Exode Rural un Problème de Fond* (Niamey: Editions de la Croix-Rouge Nigérienne, 1969).

this time.<sup>68</sup> Also, it was Brevié's work on the Afrique Occidentale Française section of exposition that had called him away from his position as Governor General of Afrique Occidentale Française, which, according to later French officials, impeded his staff's ability to judge and respond to the food crisis in Niger.

Held in the Parisian park, the Bois de Vincennes, the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale et Pays d'Outre-Mer was a massive propagandist undertaking meant to legitimize French colonialism to its own citizenry and to the European and United States governments. The bulk of the exposition was sponsored by the French government, but Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United States each staged pavilions, as well. It included reconstructions of architecture from all over the world. Some individuals from colonized lands were hired, coerced, and tricked into living as part of the exposition. Others came as honored guests, such as the group of "chiefs and notables" from the Afrique Occidentale Française, whose itinerary in France not only included visits to the Exposition, but also guided tours of Versailles and French factories.<sup>69</sup> Lasting for six months from March until November, it was the major destination and social event for many in France, and indeed, Europe, in what was still the discouraged dawn of the Great Depression. People representing

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<sup>68</sup> The first president of Niger, Hamani Diori had been Hama's student, and they would work together closely until the First Republic that they led was overthrown by a coup d'état. Also active in the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain political party (RDA) during its anticolonial activism of the 1930s and 1940s, Diori would work closely with the first president of Cote d'Ivoire, Félix Houphouët-Boigny in the late 1950s and 1960s to collaborate with France in the establishment of their nation-states. The Conseil d'Entente, a group of nation-states assembled by Houphouët-Boigny is discussed at greater length in Chapter Two. For a celebratory biography of Diori, see André Salifou, *Biographie Politique De Diori Hamani, Premier Président De La République Du Niger* (Paris: Karthala, 2010). Leopold Kaziendé became a teacher in Niger shortly after Boubou Hama, and he served several important positions in Diori's cabinet. Upon the coup d'état, he was imprisoned along with Hama in Agadez until their release in 1978. His biography includes his childhood and the exciting years in which he and Hama were young teachers. Léopold Kaziende, *Souvenirs D'un Enfant De La Colonisation* (Porto-Novo Bénin: Editions Assouli, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> Archives Nationales du Senegal, Dossier 8Q 73 19.

many demographics in France traveled to the exposition, including the urban working class and the rural agricultural workers. Despite the protests of Surrealists and organized labor against colonialism and the exposition itself, French laborers themselves attended the Colonial Exposition in great numbers.<sup>70</sup>

Exhibits depicting Niger were part of the African section, which was dominated by a reconstruction of the famed mosque in Djenné, Mali.<sup>71</sup> (Figure 1.1) As argued by Herman Lebovics, the colonies became knowable, static, and controllable to visitors through dioramas, didactic displays, and art exhibits.<sup>72</sup> Imperial state claimed authority through the capacity to replicate and compress the colonies into miniaturized and contained symbols that could be visualized. To look at a photograph such as Figure 1.1 was to imaginatively enact French ownership of the Mosque of Djenné. Seeing was an inherent element of colonizing. The representations of colonized visual culture were explicitly contrasted to what Brian Larkin has coined the “colonial sublime,” or “the use of technology to represent an overwhelming sense of grandeur

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<sup>70</sup> For more thorough analyses of the the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, see Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) and Dana Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples: 1886-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). The Surrealists staged an alternative exhibition, “La Vérité sur les Colonies” in 1931 and 1932, in addition to publishing written critiques of the event. See André Breton et al., *Ne Visitez pas l'Exposition Coloniale* (Paris: 1931), which can be found in Maurice Nadeau, *Histoire du Surréalisme, Suivi de Documents Surréalistes* (Paris: Seuil, 1964). Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss cite Janine Mileaf to explain that although the French Communist Party would later take credit for the counter-exhibition protesting the Colonial Exhibition, it was essentially a Surrealist project.

<sup>71</sup> The mosque then extant in Mali was itself the result of French architectural intervention. See Labelle Prussin, *Hatumere: Islamic Design in West Africa*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986): 180-189. See also Lebovics’ brief commentary on the A.O.F. section of the 1931 exposition in Lebovics 1992: 76-78.

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter Two: “The Seductions of the Picturesque and the Irresistible Magic of Art,” in Lebovics 1992: 12-40.

and awe in the service of colonial power.”<sup>73</sup> The metropolitan section featured incomprehensibly complex and large machinery that transformed the raw materials from French colonies into the exponentially multiplying consumer projects of the early twentieth century—which were also on view in their own exhibits.<sup>74</sup> The exposition’s accomplishments as propaganda for the colonial project have been debated, but it was an unquestioned success as entertainment and as an assertion of French power. The colonies were overt entertainment in artisanal demonstrations, dance performances, camel rides, shopping opportunities, and themed restaurants. Africans and other colonized peoples performed their ostensibly authentic daily routines in what must have been a grinding monotony of life on display. The Sahara and the Sahel in Paris in 1931 were crowded with European visitors and they neighbored, in addition to the Afrique Equatoriale Française and Northern Africa, Indochine and the perimeter of the park at one Avenue de Gravelle. (Figure 1.2) Visualizing these contrasting aesthetics juxtaposed together facilitated, as the Avenue of Colonies in the photograph in Figure 1.2 depicts, the visualization of French power over farflung, foreign colonies. This Niger was static and repetitive, and easily conflated with any of the other Africas depicted in dioramas or referenced on restaurant menus. In this Niger, Niamey might have merited a brief mention in didactic material on colonial governance.

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<sup>73</sup> Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 7. See especially Chapter One, “Infrastructure, the Colonial Sublime, and Indirect Rule,” 16-47.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 35-39.

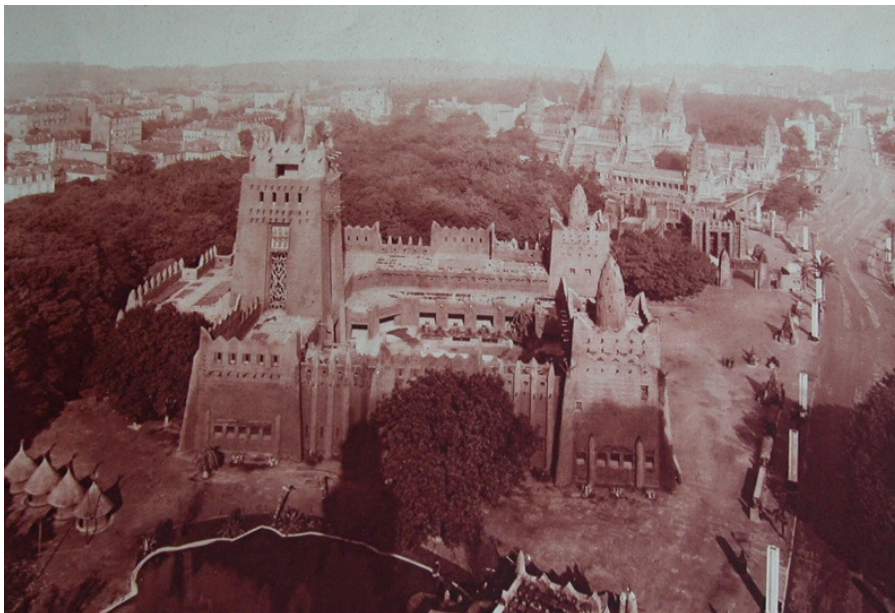


Figure 1.1: “Bird’s Eye View” of l’Afrique Française Occidentale section of Exposition Coloniale Internationale 1931.

Original Caption: “Vue à vol d’oiseau.”

*Exposition Coloniale Internationale: Afrique Occidentale Française.*

Paris: Librairie Larose, 1931.



Figure 1.2: “Avenue of the Colonies at the Exposition Coloniale Internationale 1931”

Original Text: L’Avenue des Colonies à l’Exposition Coloniale Internationale 1931”

*Vue 168 (1931): 774.*

Yet, that simulated Niger on the edge of Paris referred to yet one more Sahara, a third version of which Hama was only too aware: an imaginary little-populated desert of fierce nomads and uncivilized “primitives,” now tragically, but—according to colonial discourses—necessarily tamed by the inevitable progress of French civilization and technology. This Sahara existed in a contemporaneous past, and it served as the ultimate contrast to the forward-moving technological modernity envisioned by French government officials and scholars for changes in the French metropolitan provinces.<sup>75</sup> This was an Africa behind the time of France; in France’s shadow, it was a perpetually late continent. This Sahara was that of the first Raid Citroën, the Croisière Noire, which had a pavilion at the Exposition; it was a daunting expanse now conquerable by French-invented machinery and French-controlled African labor. It was full of the curious and the exotic—and titillating, but not ultimately life-threateningly dangerous for its European visitors.<sup>76</sup> Brevié implemented governmental research prizes for scientific research on the occasion of the exposition, and the unfamiliar peoples, fauna, and flora were ripe for cataloguing and documentation.<sup>77</sup> It was an aestheticized desert void of history, painted in

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<sup>75</sup> For discussions of ethnography and time, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For a discussion in the French context, see Lebovics 1992 and Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>76</sup> The first crossing of the Sahara in an automobile, or the Raid Citroën that was sponsored by André Citroën in 1922 and 1923, resulted in enormous publicity in France. The press attention was only to be rivaled by the subsequent Croisière Noire of 1924-1925, or the Expédition Citroën Centre Afrique, that tracked a far longer route across the continent. It was written about in scientific, political, and recreational terms, as initiated by the high-spirited adventure narratives associated with Henri Duveyrier. See Georges-Marie Haardt and Louis Audouin-Dubreuil, *The Black Journey* (1927) (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969): 27.

<sup>77</sup> Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude & Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 69-75.

Alexandre Iacovleff's Art Deco style.<sup>78</sup> (Figure 1.3). In *Dunes (Beni-Abbès)*, the Sahara is an empty expanse punctuated by the rare oasis like the one depicted, which has attracted a line of faceless robed figures leading their pack animals. Iacovleff's own presence as part of a large team using immense special automobiles remains outside the frame, for it is his assertion of what he saw that offered an aesthetically pleasurable colonial authority. The Sahara was a metaphor used to project a French future, and Niamey did not exist in this imagined Africa.

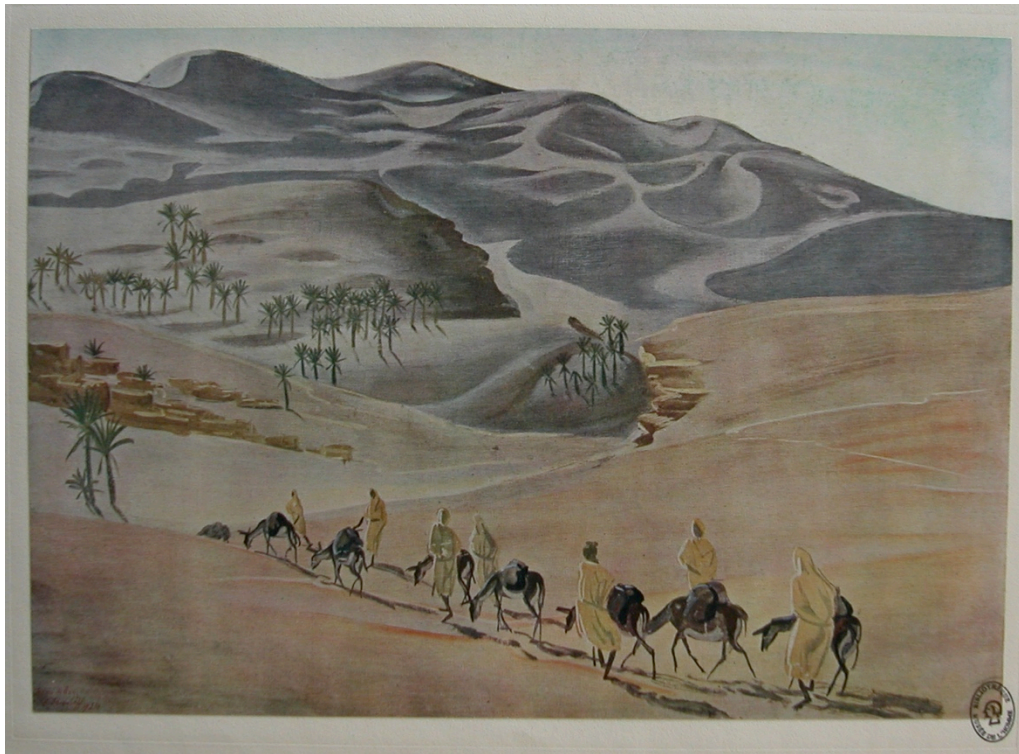


Figure 1.3:  
Alexandre Iacovleff, Plate 4: *Dunes (Beni-Abbès)*, 1927.  
*Dessins et Peintures d'Afrique* Ed. Lucien Vogel.  
(Paris: Jules Maynial, 1927).

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<sup>78</sup> The official illustrator for the *Croisière Noire*, Alexandre Iacovleff's work was widely praised, exhibited and mimicked on the occasion of the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in 1925, and remained influential by 1931. He also traveled as part of the *Croisière Jaune* in 1931 and 1932.

### ***Teaching, Research, and Politics: Work Toward a Nation and Its Museum***

While employed as a teacher by the French colonial government, Hama began pursuing all aspects of the multifaceted career that would have such influence on Niger's emergence as a nation-state. In 1929, most bureaucrats and all other teachers in Niger were French or Africans from other parts of the *Afrique Occidentale Française*, and so Hama's dedicated work as a Nigerien teacher was immediately influential. He brought his own wide-ranging education to the classroom, and encouraged the students to engage with the most contemporary European philosophy and anthropology. During World War Two, shortly after meeting Jean Rouch, who was in Niger for the first time as part of a bridge construction project, he invited the future filmmaker to speak in his class at the *Ecole Primaire Supérieure* on the theories of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, a theorist who he would engage in his writings as well.<sup>79</sup>

Hama's teaching career encountered several notable disruptions. In 1935, he was sent to Tillabéry from Niamey as punishment for and intended prevention of anti-colonial activism. This proved to be to his advantage, as he strengthened ties with leaders near his hometown of Foneko, a small village outside of Téra, in the Tillabéry region. He was then transferred back to Niamey in 1938 because he was suspected of organizing peasants in Tillabéry around social justice issues. In 1945, the repressive Governor Jean Toby transferred Hama to Dori as punishment for teaching that Africans had a history and that enslaved Africans had been freed after the American Civil War, curricular material that Toby considered anti-French.<sup>80</sup> If Hama had not been already aware of the powerful political nature of studying and teaching history,

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<sup>79</sup> Laya et.al. 2007: 38-39.

<sup>80</sup> Hama 1993: 64.

Toby demonstrated the fear French colonial authorities had for certain versions of the past. Hama was dismissed from teaching in 1947, again for political reasons, and spent the next five years concentrating on his political career.

During World War II, like many European and African leaders in Afrique Occidentale Française, he added various activities to his work responsibilities. While a teacher at the Ecole Primaire Supérieure and the director of the Ecole Professionnelle in Niamey, he organized artisans into a shoe-making enterprise in Niamey, one of the many efforts to produce goods for local consumption because of the war-related interruption, and in some cases the complete halt, of the importation of consumer projects.<sup>81</sup> In the 1950s, he mentioned this effort to organize artisans as an extremely successful experiment that should be replicated.<sup>82</sup> He had read Karl Marx's *Capital* and *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* as a student in Dakar, and although his relationship to communism and French communists evolved, he maintained great respect for Communism and drew from Marx the recognition of the mercantile nature of colonialism.<sup>83</sup> Transforming the economy in which Africans lived was at the center of many of his projects, and his passion about its importance only grew as he gained power within Niger. It was also from Marx that he learned of the exploitation of Europeans within the industrial capital system, and he thus always separated his critique of the imperial governments from what was often a real fondness for their citizens. In addition to Jean Rouch, he would work with many other French

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<sup>81</sup> See Hama 1955: 39-41 and Abdoul Aziz Issa Daouda, *Boubou Hama, Conteur Et Romancier*. (Niamey, Niger: L'Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey and the Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines, 2008): 27.

<sup>82</sup> Hama 1955: 39-41.

<sup>83</sup> Hama 1993: 33 and 103.

people on various kinds of political, cultural, and scholarly projects.<sup>84</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, he began researching and writing about Nigerien history and culture. He collaborated with a French medical doctor and amateur historian, Jean Boulnois, to write a history of the Gao Empire, which they completed in 1943.<sup>85</sup> Boulnois brought Orientalist and humanist perspectives to his studies in Niger, in which he asserted the historicity of African cultures. He and Hama both sought to counter many powerful French theorists and colonial officials, such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Georges Hardy, by dismissing the label of “primitive” for Africans, which Boulnois had already termed “inadequate” in a previous publication.<sup>86</sup> Hama sustained his argument against Lévy-Bruhl’s theories of the “primitive mind” through many publications, and he actively constructed pedagogies and institutions defying Hardy’s policy recommendations and applications based on Lévy-Bruhl’s work. He knew that Lévy-Bruhl’s theories continued to infuse French colonial (and later, neo-colonial) policies long after the author’s deathbed renunciation of the conclusions he had drawn about Africans.<sup>87</sup> Boulnois had published two books on

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<sup>84</sup> Along with his close working relationship with Pablo Toucet discussed in this chapter, another notable collaboration is his with Andrée Clair, with whom he co-authored eight children’s books based on Nigerien oral literature. The most famous of this is *L’Aventure d’Albarka*. Boubou Hama and Andrée Clair, *L’Aventure d’Albarka* (Paris: Julliard, 1972).

<sup>85</sup> Jean Boulnois and Boubou Hama. *L’empire De Gao: Histoire, Coutumes Et Magie Des Sonrai* (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1954). The authors completed the manuscript in 1943, but the book was only published over a decade later.

<sup>86</sup> Jean Boulnois, *La Caducée et la Symbolique Dravidiennne Indo-Méditerranéenne, de l’Arbre, de la Pierre, du serpent et de la Déesse-mère* (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1939): n.3, 86.

<sup>87</sup> The most famous and influential work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was *La Mentalité Primitive* (Paris; F. Alcan, 1925). Georges Hardy was most influential as a colonial official, but see also Georges Hardy, *Histoire de la Colonisation Française* (Paris: Larose, 1931) and Georges Hardy, “La ‘Librairie’ des Écoles Indigènes en Afrique” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 1.2 (April 1928): 145-156. On Georges Hardy and education in Afrique Occidentale Française, see Bob W. White, “Talk about School: Education and the Colonial Project in French and British Africa, (1860- 1960),” *Comparative Education* 32.1 (Mar., 1996): 9-25. See also Laya et. al. 2007: 39 n.64 and Laya et. al. 2007: 138.

Cote d'Ivoire and one on India, after posts in those places. As a doctor, he was particularly interested in medical themes, and one of his books on Cote d'Ivoire was on beliefs around healing.<sup>88</sup> In his monograph on India, he studied the symbolic history of the caduceus to demonstrate non-Aryan origins of ongoing practices in India, thus launching a challenge to much popular Orientalist literature of the time, which emphasized the effect of Aryan invaders on Indian cultures.<sup>89</sup>

Boulnois and Hama thus shared an interest in representing the complexity of history of African cultures and in the explication of mystical aspects of African religion. Boulnois brought some of his preoccupations with the body to the project; both *La Caducée et la Symbolique Dravidienne Indo-Méditerranéenne, de l'Arbre, de la Pierre, du serpent et de la Déesse-mère* and *L'Empire de Gao* contain long passages hypothesizing about the taxonomies of races and ethnicities in India and West Africa, respectively.<sup>90</sup> Hama's personal interests are also apparent in the text, as here he introduced themes that would appear again and again in the thirty-three books that he would individually author and the ten additional books that he later would co-author. The focus on Songhay polities foreshadowed the series of histories on Niger's ethnicities that Hama wrote and published in the 1960s and 1970s, including three more featuring the Songhay.<sup>91</sup> The authors stated that they sought to fill in gaps in

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<sup>88</sup> Luce Boulnois and Jean Boulnois, *Magie De La Forêt-vierge* (Paris: Fournier, 1930).

<sup>89</sup> This was a significant enough point to be made in the forward of the book by G. Jouveau-Dubreuil. Boulnois 1939: III.

<sup>90</sup> Boulnois 1939: 52; Boulnois and Hama 1954: 23-29.

<sup>91</sup> The other books on the Songhay are: Boubou Hama, *Histoire traditionnelle d'un peuple: les Zarma-Songhay* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967); Boubou Hama, *Histoire des Songhay* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1968); and Boubou Hama, *L'Empire Songhay* (Paris: Pierre-Jean Oswald, 1973). Some of Hama's other histories of ethnicities are: Boubou Hama, *Recherche sur l'Histoire des Touareg Sahariens et Soudanais* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967); Hama, *Contribution à la Connaissance de*

ethnographic knowledge of the Songhay, especially regarding religion and the origins of the ethnicity. Published almost ten years after they had completed it, when Hama was interim director at IFAN, the book lists Boulnois as the first author, but it is Hama's formal portrait that is included as a frontispiece, which seems some acknowledgment of his far greater cultural knowledge and expertise. Indeed, this book emphasizes aspects of Songhay religious belief and practice that resonate in his philosophical and biographical works, which often functioned in the realms of metaphor and imagination.

In particular, Hama often cited a person's Double in his works. At times, he wrote of the Double descriptively, as a Songhay religious concept. In *L'Empire de Gao*, the Double is defined as a paternal ancestor who is spiritually attached to an infant eight days after birth, which is also when a person receives their name.<sup>92</sup> In his posthumously published memoir, the conceit was a conversation between Hama, then imprisoned in Agadez under Kountché's military government, and his Double.<sup>93</sup> In *Le Retard de l'Afrique: Essai Philosophique, Le Double d'Hier Rencontre Demain*, and other works, he explores the concept of the Double and its broader metaphysical applications—its implications for an African philosophy that was of both matter and spirit.<sup>94</sup>

Hama described how both people and the elements of their surroundings have Doubles. In solitary confinement, Hama's Double assures him,

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*l'Histoire des Peul* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1968); and Hama, *Histoire Traditionnelle des Peul du Dallol Boboye* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1969).

<sup>92</sup> Boulnois and Hama 1954: 81.

<sup>93</sup> Hama 1993.

<sup>94</sup> Hama 1972; and Boubou Hama, *Le Double d'Hier Rencontre Demain* (Paris: Union Générale des Éditions, 1973).

Brother, I am motionless time, endlessly progressing. No matter what, time is there, and we go through its passageway. I am the calm of the night. In the half-light of day of your spirit, I am the faithful companion who comes to keep you company to remove your bitterness, a bitterness that is like an impious shame that kills with its violence. I am of you. From you, I exist in everything. I am the light, the spirit of that light that illuminates the silence of the stone, that of the plant, the repose of the animal, the solitude of the exiles, the setbacks, the man who, having lost everything, still looks in his own conscience a reason to love the adverse destiny that never hit anything, but of our own will, puts us on our way.<sup>95</sup>

The Double was, for Hama, a most crucial way that people were both materially and spiritually integrated into their lives in the world. Hama explained that

For the animist, ‘the object of thought’ is not only that which is delivered, concrete, to our curiosity. Above all, it is “the other state of that object,” its ‘double’ that, when it is inert, its spirit, that we see not so much in our imagination but with our interior eye, where our creating imagination concretizes. It is in this way that reality conditions our being and begins our destiny.<sup>96</sup>

His metaphysical understandings of even inert objects would have implications for his vision of a museum and its uses.

The biological aspects of Boulnois’s Orientalist understanding of civilizations were clearly accentuated by his scientific medical training, and these influenced how Hama would pose later arguments about Africa’s position within the world. Boulnois wrote of the growth and decline of civilizations, and as noted above, it was the so-called “pre-Aryan” ancient India where he located roots of widespread symbolism. The author and director of the Institut Français de l’Afrique Noire, Théodore Monod, cited the common mysticism of the “Hindu” and the “Black” as a needed challenge to

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<sup>95</sup> Hama 1993: 40.

<sup>96</sup> Boubou Hama, “Le Devin. Temps et Histoire Dans la Pensée Animiste de l’Afrique Noire,” *Le Temps Et Les Philosophies: Études Préparées Pour L’UNESCO* (Paris: Payot, 1978): 173.

European reason in his preface to the book.<sup>97</sup> Another famous doctor later seemed to describe specifically Hama's civilization-based histories as a decolonial strategy.

Frantz Fanon recognized that writing histories was an attempt to construct a contemporary national culture from a pre-colonial one:

I concede that whatever proof there is of a once mighty Songhai civilization does not change the fact that the Songhais today are undernourished, illiterate, abandoned to the skies and water, with a blank mind and glazed eyes. But, as we have said on several occasions, this passionate quest for a national culture prior to the colonial era can be justified by the colonized intellectuals' shared interest in stepping back and taking a hard look at the Western culture in which they risk becoming ensnared. Fully aware they are in the process of losing themselves, and consequently of being lost to their people, these men work away with raging heart and furious mind to renew contact with their people's oldest, inner essence, the farthest removed from colonial times.<sup>98</sup>

Fanon argued that a national culture is impossible without first achieving national sovereignty, and he would have been achingly aware of Hama's lack of popularity during Niger's First Republic, and the massive challenges before the Nigerien government. He may even have been making reference to Hama's famous temper, a symptom of his "raging heart and furious mind." He saw the merits of Hama's scholarship, but doubted its efficacy. Drawing on Achille Mbembe, Paul Stoller has written of the harsh realities of colonialism, neo-colonialism and early nationalism in Niger, and the effects of cyclical famine and violent oppression should not be underestimated.<sup>99</sup> However, Hama saw contemporary Songhay people as full of energetic potential. After all, he had been born to enslaved heritage, and what he

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<sup>97</sup> Boulnois and Hama 1954: 9.

<sup>98</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) Trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004): 148.

<sup>99</sup> Paul Stoller, *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

would call destiny had led him to challenges and opportunities that would have been unimaginable for previous generations. Throughout his substantial autobiographical writing, Hama's wonder at his life's physical and metaphorical journeys did not waver—and he had grand visions for Songhay and all Nigerien potential.

From 1954 until 1957, Hama was the interim director of the satellite location of the Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire in Niamey, which would prove a formative experience for him, and have lasting impact on his writing and on IFAN's institutional descendant, the Musée National du Niger. At IFAN, Hama observed first hand the processes of colonial collecting, and he began to appreciate the importance of collection and exhibition for expressing national identity and sovereignty. The IFAN in Niamey effectively served as a clearinghouse for archeological, natural, and artistic objects found to be of interest to visiting French visitors. Objects were only ever temporarily housed at the Niamey IFAN for transportation to Dakar, and sometimes on to Paris from there. Hama saw the potential symbolic importance of exhibiting Nigerien culture in Niger, and he appreciated the power of the museum as an institution in a way that few in the region did. Watching the extraction of cultural knowledge, flora, fauna, and art, Hama recognized the connection between the power to exhibit and the power to govern.

During this period, Hama attended the famous First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, from September 19 until September 22, 1956. Attended by Amadou Hampaté Bâ, Frantz Fanon, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Edouard Glissant, Cheikh Anton Diop, Richard Wright, and other prominent Black artists who were also active in politics, the conference had an important emphasis on the relationship

between culture and politics. In one of the opening talks by representatives of *Présence Africaine*, the journal and convening organization, authors stated that “Culture becomes, in effect, a redoubtable means of action for politics, at the same time it has the ambition and vocation of inspiring politics.”<sup>100</sup> Bâ, Fanon, and Hama stand together in the formal portrait of the participants, witnessing Fanon and Hama’s knowledge of one another’s work. Hama’s only recorded contribution took place during a discussion period, and his concerns foreshadow his investment in a national museum.

Another speaker had advocated a cultural inventory of Africa, and Hama heartily endorsed this study of Africa’s diversity. Noting that he came from the intersection of Black, Arab, and Berber cultures, he also warned against limiting this inventory by heeding colonially imposed boundaries as he ruminated on how cultures interacted with others while retaining their distinctiveness:

I can cite the example of the Fulani, who are in regions from Senegal to British Nigeria, to Chad, and at the borders of Ethiopia. This people has a culture that belongs to them. If one wants to include them in this or that national culture, the Fulani will come under several nations, in addition to being a people.<sup>101</sup>

Hama knew that colonial power dynamics and emerging national boundaries threatened to limit scholarship on African cultures and to produce distorted representations of them. His later written works, the national museum, and his other institution building sought to counter these concerns he expressed in 1956.

Hama launched his political career through anti-colonial activism in

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<sup>100</sup> *Présence Africaine. Le Premier Congrès International Des Écrivains Et Artistes Noirs, Paris, Sorbonne, 19-22 Septembre, 1956.* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956): 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid* 81.

cooperation with other teachers like Diori and Kaziendé—as well as those with whom he would fall out, such as Djibo Bakary and Abdoulaye Mamani.<sup>102</sup> All of these men worked within a broader network of Francophone West Africans involved with the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, other regional political parties, and the French political parties that sought their affiliation. Hama participated in the formative congress of the RDA in Bamako in 1946, and he was an important actor in the RDA. Along with others in this party that was for a time affiliated with the French Communist Party, Hama incorporated an anti-capitalist critique into his anti-colonial work.<sup>103</sup> He later remembered emphasizing economic independence in the early years of the RDA, and being told that it was premature.<sup>104</sup>

In 1952, the RDA lost elections in Niger, and Laya has described this loss's effect on Hama: “This failure had an important consequence: it obligated Nigerien supporters of PPN-RDA to reflect on their political work and it led Boubou Hama toward cultural activities, which, at the end of the day, constitute his true lasting contribution to his country, outside of ephemeral and controversial politics.”<sup>105</sup> In fact, Hama's scholarly and cultural work cannot be separated from his politics, however controversial, and at times contradictory, his work within all of these spheres may have been. The loss in the elections led Hama to focus on other aspects of a larger

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<sup>102</sup> Djibo Bakary, “*Silence! On Décolonise*”: *Itinéraire Politique et Syndical d'un Militant Africain* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992). Abdoulaye Mamani is best known for his fictionalized account of the battle of a Hausa traditional leader against French invasion, which was turned into a film. See Chapter Five for further discussion about the Sarraounia. Abdoulaye Mamani, *Sarraounia: Le Drame De La Reine Magicienne: Roman* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1980).

<sup>103</sup> He later attributed his decision to not become a Communist to the incompatibility of atheism with African belief systems. He would also accuse socialist nation-states of being capitalist—just on a national instead of an individual scale. Hama 1993: 103.

<sup>104</sup> Hama 1993: 88.

<sup>105</sup> Laya 2007: 210.

project of the valorization of African cultures and the economic liberation of African peoples, a project that included his political work, his research, his writing, his teaching, and his many other cultural contributions.<sup>106</sup>

By 1955, when Hama was elected the president of the PPN-RDA, very few Francophone West African politicians advocated for national independence, a fact all the more notable because of the active work toward just such an end in what was then called the Gold Coast.<sup>107</sup> Although Hama and others used the term anti-colonial in their writings and speeches, the RDA actually was demanding that France follow through on its own rhetoric of equality and humanism by granting Africans full citizenship and representation within the French state.<sup>108</sup> Djibo Bakary, one of the few activists in Afrique Occidentale Française who would demand national sovereignty until his death, saw his stringency on the issue bring him into dangerous conflict with the French colonial government and the Hama-Diori political team, a conflict that peaked during the referendum on the Fifth French Republic in 1958 and the first years of Nigerien independence.<sup>109</sup>

The seeming hesitance regarding independence among Hama, Diori, and the bulk of their political cohort in mid-twentieth century France-controlled West Africa

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<sup>106</sup> See Robert July, *An African Voice: The Role of the Humanities in African Independence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987) for a discussion of the importance of the humanities in African decolonization.

<sup>107</sup> In 1957, Ghana was the first African colony to declare independence.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Crowder cites Mahmemout Diop, explaining “that the main objective of the party was the ‘struggle for the political, economic, and social emancipation of Africa within the framework of the French Union founded on the equality of rights and obligations (duties).’” Michael Crowder, *Independence As a Goal in French West African Politics: 1944-60* (Berkeley: Committee for African Studies, Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1966): 25; See also Virginia Thompson, *West Africa's Council of the Entente* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1972) and Mamoudou Djibo, *Les Transformations Politiques au Niger à la Veille de l'Indépendance* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

<sup>109</sup> Crowder 1966: 35. See also Bakary 1992.

grew from the intense material and bureaucratic dependency that France had cultivated among its colonies there.<sup>110</sup> Calling national consciousness a “crude, empty, fragile shell,” Fanon observed that anti-colonial struggles frequently only gradually have become nationalist in character.<sup>111</sup> France nurtured colonial dependency through agricultural subsidies, bureaucratic labor, infrastructure building, and commodity imports. The position of Afrique Occidentale Française in the global economy of the 1950s was orchestrated from colonial offices in Paris, Marseilles, Dakar, and the regional capital—in just such an order of descending authority. Niger saw the least of these supports than any other colony, but at that time, it was also most reliant on French structures and French-controlled bureaucratic labor.<sup>112</sup> It also had the least capital and the fewest commodities to sell on the world market. It had been the last area of the Afrique Occidentale Française to have its status changed from protectorate to colony, and with its apparent lack of natural resources attractive to the French, the periodic armed Tuareg resistance, and the consistent nonviolent resistance through noncompliance and exodus, it was the lowest priority when it came to road construction, school-building, or other infrastructure projects.

Diori and Hama also knew too well the wrath of French colonial repression, and they saw it come down on Bakary as he led a 1958 campaign on behalf his SAWABA political party to vote “Non” to the fifth French constitution, a vote that essentially would have declared national independence. A “Oui” vote, which was all

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<sup>110</sup> In the same period, Aimé Césaire also famously supported only a qualified autonomy for Martinique, rather than immediate independence from France. See Romuald-Blaise Fonkoua, *Aimé Césaire: 1913-2008* (Paris: Perrin, 2010).

<sup>111</sup> Fanon 2004: 97.

<sup>112</sup> Djibo 2001: 47.

but required by the French officials in Niamey who harassed and threatened Bakary, acceded to Charles de Gaulle's Fifth Republic, which gave colonies semi-autonomous status in a French community. Following the regional RDA line, Hama and Diori supported the Fifth Republic, and in 1958, Diori became the president of the Council of the Government of the Republic of Niger and Hama became the president of the Territorial Assembly. In 1958, Hama was elected to the Grand Conseil de l'Afrique Occidentale Française in Dakar, and from 1959 until 1961, he was a senator and vice-president in the Senate of the French Community in Paris. In 1959, Niger chose to join the Conseil d'Entente instead of the Mali Federation. On August 3, 1960, in cooperation with the other three members of the Conseil d'Entente, and under the leadership of Ivoirian president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Niger became an independent nation-state.<sup>113</sup> As his political career gained momentum in a colony transitioning first to a republic, and then to a nation-state, Hama maintained his attention on cultural scholarship and institution-building.

### *The Musée National du Niger: A Young City's New Center*

As Hama himself documented, Niamey continued to grow in periodic waves from the 1930s until the 1950s, when it began a steady climb in population. In 1959, 28,400 people lived in Niamey.<sup>114</sup> Those initial waves were sometimes motivated by famine or other colonially induced problems, and the new opportunities attracted others. The delineations between European and African sections blurred and the city's

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<sup>113</sup> The Conseil d'Entente is discussed further in Chapter Two. See also Crowder 1966: 30 and 37; Thompson 1972; and Djibo 2001.

<sup>114</sup> Bernus includes a chart that demonstrates Niamey's growth in the 1950s. 1945 Population: 7,574. 1953 Population: 15,000. 1959 Population: 28,400. 1960 Population: 34,500. Bernus 1969: 12.

boundaries grew to both the east and the west.<sup>115</sup> African residents shaped the city to their needs, unheeding of the neat grids intended by colonial planners. Niamey retained its peripheral status in the French colonial system, but it had its own kind of nascent Sahelian urban modernity as early as the 1950s, as the population boomed. It was the area's most significant node in colonial and other international economic, political, and cultural networks. Many Hausas and others looked more toward Kano than Niamey, but Niamey was the colony of Niger's only city and served to cohere an incipient sense of nationhood by its existence as an invented colonial capital, which had never been the seat of an ethnically-based polities' power. Although he argued sovereignty must come first, Fanon observed that forming a national consciousness was key to anticolonial efforts to legitimate a claim for a nation.<sup>116</sup> To construct this national consciousness in the midst of the fractious and confused eve of nationhood, Hama sought to found a national museum in the changing capital city of Niamey.<sup>117</sup>

Still a friend, the by now prominent filmmaker Jean Rouch introduced him to a dynamic archeologist and curator, Pablo Toucet, a French citizen of Basque descent who had been a Leftist soldier in the Spanish Civil War and who, more recently, had been a curator at the Musée National du Bardo in Tunisia.<sup>118</sup> Likely attracted by

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<sup>115</sup> Bernus 1969: 29.

<sup>116</sup> Frantz Fanon 2004: 146.

<sup>117</sup> Anne Gaugue divides African national museums into two categories, those adapted from colonial museums and those founded post-independence, and her analysis is extremely relevant for the case of the Musée National du Niger. Anne Gaugue, *Les États Africains et Leurs Musées: La Mise en Scène de la Nation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997). See also Agbenyega Adedze, "Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa," *Museum Anthropology* 19.2 (1995): 58-64 and Mathem Kokou Aithnard, "Introduction: The African Museum in Quest of Its Future Direction," *Museum (UNESCO, Paris)* 28.4 (1976): 188-195.

<sup>118</sup> The Spanish Civil War was in many ways one of the most significant immediate preludes to World War II. After the fall of the monarchy, a largely middle-class democratic republic had been established in 1931. When an even more Leftist government was elected in 1936, a far-Right rebellion broke out under the leadership of Francisco Franco. Both sides received international support for their cause, with

Toucet's Leftist politics, in 1958, Hama invited Toucet to become the founding curator of the national museum for the nascent Republic of Niger. His long tenure as the founder and director of the national museum fit a pattern of the heavy employment of French citizens in Niger's First Republic, a pattern for which Diori and Hama were heavily criticized.<sup>119</sup> Although Toucet would expunge his former Spanish citizenship and his military past from his curriculum vitae, it was a significant fact about his history for many of the Nigeriens who knew him.

The association of the museum with Niger's complex emergence into nationhood should not be underestimated. With Toucet as the director and with Hama's close participation, the museum opened in December of 1959, a year after Niger had voted "Oui," to the French Fifth Republic, and thus it was a national museum for a semi-autonomous republic within the *Communauté Française*—not yet a museum for a sovereign nation-state. Less than a year later, in August 1960, Diori declared independence on the museum grounds. The first pavilion's attempts to adhere to European museum conventions are evident. Still referred to as the "Classical Gallery," and now named after Boubou Hama, it is neo-classical in intent, with its columns and vaulted roof and ceiling. (Figure 1.4) In this early postcard, it is framed by lush greenery, and a flowering branch almost conceals the lettering "Musée du Niger." The building uses elements of classical European architecture to convey its

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Benito Mussolini of Italy and Adolf Hitler of Germany coming to Franco's aid. When the Leftist Republicans finally conceded in 1939, and Franco's fascist regime received international recognition, Toucet and many others emigrated to France and elsewhere.

<sup>119</sup> According to Virginia Thompson, citing the journal *Europe-France-Outremer, L'Afrique d'Expression Française et Madagascar*, in 1969, 47% of the national budget was dedicated to paying the salaries of the 362 French employees of the Nigerien government. Thompson 1972: 217. See also Victor T. Le Vine, *Political Leadership in Africa: Post-independence Generational Conflict in Upper Volta, Senegal, Niger, Dahomey, and the Central African Republic*. (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1967): 31. See also Crowder 1966 and Djibo 2001.

purpose as a museum, and Djerma painted ceramic pots are the only visual signal of indigenous Nigerien cultures. Later buildings emulated Hausa architectural designs, although they did not use traditional building techniques. Inside the Classical Gallery, Toucet arranged a survey of Nigerien artisanry, agriculture, hunting, vegetation, and wildlife. The exhibition drew on display styles of European museums and expositions.



Figure 1.4: Postcard depicting the Classical Pavilion of the Musée National du Niger, ca. 1960s

Jean Rouch characterized the museum as one

that gave the Nigerien people a sense of dignity . In Niger, there aren't masks; there are few statues. So, they displayed engraved calabashes, ladles, ceramics, cloths, and things like that: and the visitors, I remember it, came to visit that, and they saw that their everyday objects were in a vitrine, and I think that they became conscious of precisely the identity we spoke of this morning. And so, I think that the role of the museum was very important, because above all, it was a place where people came to see who they were. <sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Laya, et.al. 2007 : 189.

Hama often sought to demonstrate the museum's success in teaching a national consciousness. In order to demonstrate broad Nigerien commitment to the museum in his book on African education, he cited a story of two young researchers that he had sent to remote villages.<sup>121</sup> Although in their account, they did not solicit him to do so, a Sorko chief ordered his nephew to capture a young hippopotamus for the Musée National du Niger, and the nephew managed to do so, despite the threats of the animal's mother and sister.<sup>122</sup> The researchers, Maïguizo Naïno and Alfa Mossi, conclude, in a nationalist, auto-ethnographic mode that "The young hippopotamus is now at the museum. That is a mystery, but isn't all of Africa a mystery? It is so that we can get to the bottom of that mystery that President Boubou Hama sends us around to investigate."<sup>123</sup> Hama sought to demystify Africa for both Africans and Europeans, but not through a singular focus on the material. The "mysterious" Sorko skills relied on a knowledge of dynamics that could only be seen by the inner eye of those initiated, but they were within the scope of Hama's vision of Nigerien national culture, and central to the museum, where Sorko caretakers have tended the hippopotamuses since the first one came to the museum.<sup>124</sup>

Toucet and others would tout the museum's originality for decades, emphasizing its open air, park-like plan. The museum distributed aerial views through promotional slide packets, in addition to articles in newspapers and journals. Such a

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<sup>121</sup> Boubou Hama, *Essai D'analyse De L'Education Africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1968).

<sup>122</sup> One of the major clans of the Songhay, the Sorko are known for their skill in fishing and capturing river animals. Their skill is often attributed to the supernatural. See 'Abd R. A. Sa'di and John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1999): xxxi, and Ziedonis Ligiers, *Les Sorko (Bozo), Maîtres Du Niger: Étude Ethnographique* (Paris: Librairie des Cinq Continents, 1964).

<sup>123</sup> Hama 1968: 83.

<sup>124</sup> The hippopotamus exhibit consistently has been one of the most popular ones at the museum. Neino Chaibou, "Le Musée National du Niger: Culturel et Environnement." *Le Patrimoine Culturel Africain*, ed. Caroline Gaultier-Kurhan. (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001): 54-56.

perspective gave emphasis to the variety of architectural styles of the museum, and it defined the museum as separate from the rest of Niamey, even as it was a defining feature. Aerial photographs allowed visitors and viewers to visualize the entire museum, and thus to visualize Niger as an entire nation. (Figure 1.5) Various authors called it a “Living Museum,” because of the caged animals like that young hippopotamus and because of the artisans who worked on display and made the works sold on site. Yet the moniker also referred to community participation and the consistent additions in its first decades. Toucet himself dissociated the Musée National from other national museums in claiming, “We have made no attempt to imitate the great museums of Europe and America, since that was beyond our means, from every point of view. We have created a museum commensurate with our possibilities.”<sup>125</sup> An editorial preface to his 1972 article in *Museum* explained that “the Niamey Museum is a unique and highly original institution,” and attributed most of the museum’s vision to Hamani Diori and Boubou Hama.<sup>126</sup> The editor went on to aver that the Musée National du Niger represents a “specifically African museology.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Pablo Toucet, “The National Museum of the Republic of Niger, Niamey.” *Museum (UNESCO, Paris)* 16.3 (1963): 191.

<sup>126</sup> Pablo Toucet, “The Museum of Niamey and Its Environment.” *Museum (UNESCO, Paris)* 24.4 (1972): 204

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 1.5: Aerial view of the Musée National du Niger. Slide from packet, *Musée National du Niger (I)* (Paris: Republic du Niger, Date Unknown). Diapositives Couleurs Véronèse.

After the 1959 inaugural exhibits of the Classical Pavilion and the reconstructions of traditional architecture, the artisans began working on the museum grounds and the Costume Pavillion was constructed in 1962. By the time that the First Republic ended with a coup d'état in 1974, the museum also had various caged animals, an artisanal shop, a workshop for blind and handicapped artisans, a traditional musical instrument exhibit, and more.<sup>128</sup> Throughout the First Republic, the museum was directly financed by the Nigerien state, and Toucet and Hama also solicited private donations. Hama was especially involved in the museum from 1958 until the mid-1960s, and he contributed in a variety ways: greeting newly arrived artisans, consulting Toucet, and donating zoo animals.<sup>129</sup> The second director, Albert Ferral, oversaw the construction of a building for temporary expositions in 1975. The museum was immediately popular, and in its first three years, the museum averaged

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<sup>128</sup> A building for the blind and handicapped artisans was in addition to the pavilion for artisans already present on the grounds. *Guide du Musée National*. (Niamey: République du Niger, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 1975): 4-5.

<sup>129</sup> Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, Uncatalogued.

345 visitors a day.<sup>130</sup>

Yet, like the very process of nation creation itself, the museum was fraught with conflicting and sometimes unclear agendas, which emerged from France's integral role in delineating the confines in which Nigeriens worked to establish statehood. Carol Duncan has characterized traditional European national museums as creating a nationalist ritual for visitors.<sup>131</sup> Toucet and Hama, and to a lesser extent, Diori, designed a ritualistic environment that demanded visitors embody nationalist discourses. The museum was meant to cohere a national identity by asking Nigerien visitors to recognize their and other Nigeriens' recent and contemporary traditions as a pre-nation past, a shared but diverse set of threads with which to weave their new nation-state. The ritual reified ethnicities, ignoring the "Sahelian brassage," or the mixing and interactions of cultures and ethnicities in the region.<sup>132</sup> It also failed to heed Hama's own caution that ethnicities ignored national boundaries, in order to classify objects according to European museum traditions, but it was also adhering to what Mahmood Mamdani explains was foundational to colonial rule: the identification of and if need be, creation of distinct "tribes."<sup>133</sup>

Yet, Hama and Diori also knew the pleasure and pride Nigerien visitors felt in recognizing symbols of ethnicity and tradition. Niamey grew and changed at an unprecedented rate in the 1950s, and the Djerma huts, Fulani nomadic tents, and other architecture represented on the museum grounds could be found throughout the city,

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<sup>130</sup> Toucet 1972.

<sup>131</sup> Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. (New York: Routledge, 1995): 7.

<sup>132</sup> For more on the Sahelian brassage, see Ousseina Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005): 8.

<sup>133</sup> Mamdani 1996.

as increasing numbers of migrants sought new social and economic opportunities. Some of these migrants were the artisans that Toucet and Hama invited to work at the museum. No fence existed at the museum, and, conveying the hazy boundaries between urban reality and national representation, some of the employees of the museum lived in huts and small adobe houses on the museum grounds.

Hama and Toucet drew from various exhibition practices and museological theories from the museum's founding until the end of the First Republic. They would have encountered the cultural theories and related work of André Malraux through several avenues. Malraux's *Le Musée Imaginaire*, first published in 1947, had an immediate significant impact on French understandings of the function of museums and how people related to the objects inside them.<sup>134</sup> Malraux's writings on art and museums would have been familiar to both Hama and Toucet.<sup>135</sup> Just as significantly, Malraux was the Minister of State of France during the crucial 1958-1959 period, and then served as the Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1959 until 1969.<sup>136</sup> Malraux wrote and spoke about African art as it was interpreted in Europe, such as in *La Tête Obsidienne*, where he argued that *l'art nègre* could only enter the Louvre as the material to which cubism refers.<sup>137</sup> Otherwise, *l'art nègre* would disrupt the Eurocentric teleological portrayal of art history:

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<sup>134</sup> André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Skira, 1947).

<sup>135</sup> See Agbenyega Adedze, "Symbols of Triumph: IFAN and the Colonial Museum Complex in French West Africa (1938-1960)," *Museum Anthropology* 25.2 (2002):50-60. Notably, like Toucet, Malraux fought for the Popular Front during the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>136</sup> By that time, the museum had gained most of its form, but Malraux's introductory talk at the colloquium on art and culture at the first *Festival Mondial des Arts Negres* in 1966 demonstrates his deep participation in the promotion and analysis of cultural activities and institutions in West Africa. Césaire used his talk to counter some of Malraux's problematic claims. Aimé Césaire, "Discours sur l'Art Africain. (1966)" *Études Littéraires* 6.1(1973): 99-109.

<sup>137</sup> André Malraux, *La Tête D'obsidienne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974): 158.

Black galleries put in question those of the great eras, which are ordered according to our historic evolution. African art doesn't have a history. No architecture. Almost no painting. Phantom empires like the nomadic empires of Asia. Benin, a veritable kingdom, casted bronze and woven velour? Its art is hardly African, and certainly not Black.<sup>138</sup>

Elsewhere, Malraux recognized that Europeans invented the category of *l'art nègre* and transformed objects made for other purposes into artworks admired for their formal qualities.<sup>139</sup> His dismissal of African art's history obviously draws upon Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's pronouncement that Africa has no history, which was also important in Jules Brevié and Georges Hardy's colonial policies.<sup>140</sup> For Malraux and his contemporaries, Africa had no history, because its present was a contemporaneous past required as a raw material for the expression of a European modernity defined by an imperial industrial capitalist system that was both tempered and explored through a modern art that likewise drew upon African art as a raw material. The Louvre presented a linear vision of genealogical progress that relied on Hegelian temporal myths. For Malraux, all aesthetic work by Africans was not African, much less *l'art nègre*. He delimited the French canon of *l'art nègre* in broad strokes. It was the obsidian heads, the Fang reliquaries, the Kongo *nkisi*, the Bamana *ci wara* masks: the wooden sculptures that so compelled Paul Guillaume, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and others, by inspiring vague fantasies of the distant, isolated, pre-industrial primitive that produced *l'art nègre* for mysterious purposes beyond the material world. The absence of work that met these formal criteria in Niger would have consequences for

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<sup>138</sup> Malraux 1974 : 158.

<sup>139</sup> Malraux 1947: 230-232.

<sup>140</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Jibree (New York: Dover, 1956): 93. See also V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

the Musée National du Niger.

Malraux ultimately accentuated the important functions of physical museums as he led readers through the Imaginary Museum, which is not limited by the happenstance of collection patterns, the vagaries of display fashions, or even the dangers of poor conservation or warfare. The Imaginary Museum ultimately still relied on how the institution of the museum was being so widely adopted and embraced in Europe and the United States in the early and mid-twentieth century. Malraux saw that this gathering of disparate objects together into viewing spaces emerged from deep-seated anxieties about modern temporality—and mortality. If World War I had produced great anxiety in Europe about the dangers of technology, World War II and the ensuing Cold War demonstrated the scale of those dangers—the possibility of human self-annihilation on a global scale entered the popular imagination throughout the world. He ascribed to the object transformed by its entrance into the museum a “power of immortality.”<sup>141</sup>

He acknowledged that artworks lost one life to be incorporated into physical museums, and that they retained all of their lives in his Imaginary Museum. Yet he denied that a museum was a necropolis, for it was immortality and not death that artworks found at the Louvre—or even at the American museums that were multiplying in that period.<sup>142</sup> Yet this did not banish the specter of death and mortality

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<sup>141</sup> Malraux 1947: 184.

<sup>142</sup> Malraux 1947: 240. For the growth in American museums and a discussion of their “object-based epistemology” that relates to Malraux’s argument that objects change when they enter a museum, see Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Notably, it was also during the 1920s and 1930s that American museums were incorporating African art into their collections and exhibits. See Kathleen B. Berzock and Christa Clarke, *Representing Africa in American Art Museums: A Century of Collecting and Display* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

that was so fundamental to the need for a space in which to preserve objects for future generations: “The true Museum is the presence in life of that which belongs to death.”<sup>143</sup>

By initiating the Musée National du Niger, Hama began a project that worked within some of Malraux’s theories, and in other ways, he and Toucet issued challenges to Malraux’s powerful influence and teleological time. Hama clearly saw the transformative potential of a museum—for the objects within it and for the people experiencing it. If the Louvre helped cohere France into a nation-state and trained laborers in bourgeois behavior, then Niger deserved as much. Dakar’s museum had opened in 1938 as part of the Institut Français de l’Afrique Noire, and it remained a symbol of French research and collection—and the timelines that came with them.<sup>144</sup> Hama sought to explore various temporalities and potentialities in museological space, and he intended to undermine the standard teleology in which Europe was portrayed as the impossible end goal for the rest of the world.

For Hama, this socio-evolutionary scheme had been so hegemonic throughout his education and career in French-controlled West Africa that he chose to critique it in ways that accepted some of its bases as partial truths. In *Retard De L’Afrique: Essai Philosophique*, he conceded that yes, Africa is behind. He introduced a Europe bent on world annihilation through a dehumanizing industrial capitalism that philosophically only comprehended matter, completely neglecting the spirit. For all of the ways that Hama appreciated Marx, Marxism, and Communism, he indicted Marx for also overemphasizing the material, and thus arriving at what he considered a fallacious

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<sup>143</sup> Malraux 1947: 256.

<sup>144</sup> Adedze 2002.

atheism. His arguments about time, matter, and spirit demonstrate deep engagement with other decolonial thinkers, such as Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédor Senghor, and Frantz Fanon. He remained in conversation with Henri Bergson and other European metaphysical philosophers that he read at Ponty long after they had lost popularity in Europe. Henri Bergson had won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927, while Hama was still at Ponty, and his metaphysics allowed for the validity of Hama's philosophical writings that the anthropological and materialist philosophical strains of thought that gained increasing currency in the 1930s did not. Bergson's moving objects, with their interior facets of existence, resonate with the Double as Hama described it. Bergson opened his famous *An Introduction to Metaphysics* by inviting his readers to enter into an object, "to attain the absolute."<sup>145</sup> Touting a suffering, affective, and *physical* kind of metaphysics, Bergson valorized intuition and intellectual sympathy as equal to and a necessary counterpart to empirical analysis.<sup>146</sup> Bergson also defied rational accounts of time, and he explored the incomprehensibility and multiplicity of *duration* in human life.

Hama also drew from Boulnois' distinct Orientalism to develop his pedagogical model.<sup>147</sup> In a theme to which he referred elsewhere, but developed most fully in *Le Retard de l'Afrique: Essai Philosophique*, Hama proposed that ancient India had advanced further than any other civilization in the progress of the spirit, but had ultimately degenerated because of inattention to the material. Here, he also clearly

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<sup>145</sup> Henri Bergson, T. E. Hulme, John Mullarkey, and Michael Kolkman. *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Basingstoke, Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 2.

<sup>146</sup> John Mullarkey, "'The Very Life of Things': Thinking Objects and Reversing Thought in Bergsonian Metaphysics," in Henri Bergson, T. E. Hulme, John Mullarkey, and Michael Kolkman. *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Basingstoke, Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): xi-xxxii.

<sup>147</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

took up Hegel's teleological vision of the unfolding of the Spirit, but he undermined Hegel by introducing multiple lines, which are far more biological in character, for they may grow, advance, and then wither—rather than advancing to some ultimate end. On the other hand, for Hama, Europe was then achieving unprecedented material progress, from the fantastical technological inventions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the new understandings of matter on an atomic level. However, he challenged the imperial evolutionist teleology by describing it as one of the several potential paths—and one likely to destroy humanity.

He re-contextualized scientific racist arguments by asking the question that claims for European biological superiority beg: Are Europeans mutating away from the rest of humanity? In an argument intended to appeal to Europeans accustomed to a portrayal of Africa as an antidote to European industrialization, and to Africans struggling to achieve personal and national autonomies in neocolonial circumstances, he posited Africa's "lateness" as its "greatest asset," as its humanity. Africa would offer to the world a balanced comprehension of matter and spirit, of the object and its

Double:

Animist thought, which is comprehensive, does not choose between matter and spirit. In this way of thinking, unity cannot result from only the spiritual or material analysis of an object, but from its entire significance within both the physical and spiritual universe.<sup>148</sup>

The objects in Hama's museum were their physical selves, but they also related to other versions of themselves. To extend a metaphor of Malraux's, and to use the example of the aquarium that was one of the early exhibits at the Musée National du Niger, the objects and animals at the museum were fish pulled from the water that they

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<sup>148</sup> Hama 1978: 171.

knew, but they enabled visitors to imagine the fish in the Niger River, and they referred to fish already existent in Nigerien's shared experiences.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the fish in the aquarium still had their spiritual Doubles, their Bergsonian interiors. Likewise, the miniature loom in the first Pavillion had all of the metaphorical significance of a full-sized one, and the large ceramic pots in the center of that room could be replaced with new ones when necessary.<sup>150</sup> During the first years of the Musée National du Niger, the acts of caging, mounting, and enclosing were not about achieving the immortality as Malraux described it, but for Hama, they were about expressing what was for him *already* immortal.

While the exhibits might have reinforced visions of Africa as existing in a contemporaneous past that could nurture a national identity, Hama's intention was to introduce multiple temporalities through his educational and scholarly experiments. He contrasted the animist experience of time with industrially measured time: "Time is marked by space, the environment, by the facts and phenomena that condition man's life and the comportment of his spirit: the duration of the day and the different moments of the sun during the course of that day; the duration of the night and the calm that comes with it."<sup>151</sup> Alluding to Bergson's *duration*, this is an "atemporal time," a concept also of great interest to Malraux.<sup>152</sup> Hama saw that hegemonic European temporality was situational and singular, rather than universal. The museum offered a space in which to engage with various modes of time by asserting both African history and African contemporaneity, both denied by the Hegelian theories of

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<sup>149</sup> Malraux 1947: 240.

<sup>150</sup> Laya et.al. 2007: 189-190.

<sup>151</sup> Hama 1978: 177.

<sup>152</sup> Hama 1978: 183. See also André Malraux, *L'intemporel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

Lévy-Bruhl, Brevié, and Malraux, all figures who exerted powerful influence on French education in Africa for Hama's generation.

Partha Chatterjee has described a conceptual divide between the material and spiritual as “a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.”<sup>153</sup> However, Hama explicitly argued against this dichotomy that he saw as a mistake in European philosophical and economic orientations, which, for him, overemphasized the material. Hama argued that African philosophy placed equal importance on matter and spirit, and was thus needed by all humanity to address the political and technological challenges of a mid-twentieth century globe in the throes of the Cold War.<sup>154</sup> Hama's elaboration of Africa's claims on both the material and the spiritual in the future and his periodization of world history speak to his ambition for Nigeriens to succeed not only economically, but also in less effable ways of the spirit, culture, and intellect.

Hama and Toucet aspired for the Musée National du Niger to be a changing project that has contributed to what Frantz Fanon would term a Nigerien national culture, but Fanon argued that national liberation and sovereignty must precede a national culture. The primary audience of the museum was not the future generations for whom the objects were being conserved, but those already living. It was not borrowing what belonged to the dead, for in Hama's cosmology, the dead were simply the living's Doubles, and already present. Hama and Toucet hoped it would be a living Museum for the living to use in decolonization and nation formation after years of

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<sup>153</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 6.

<sup>154</sup> Hama 1972: 8.

colonial rule. Yet, founded during Niger's semi-autonomous status and built up during a First Republic still beholden to French leadership, the museum reflected a phenomenon described by Fanon, in which "borrowed colonial techniques and language" are "cloaked...in a style that is meant to be national but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism."<sup>155</sup>

The Musée National du Niger derived rhetoric, methodology, organization, and symbolism from the European tradition of the world's fair, and the 1931 International Colonial Exposition was the strongest referent. In some ways, this appropriation of exhibitionary ritual obliquely challenged the colonialist system it represented by claiming Nigerien national ownership of these genres of space, looking, and moving. However, the gesture also demonstrated similar nationalist and capitalist aspirations to train the laboring body in the France of 1931 and Niger of 1959 and after. As argued by Neil Lazarus, Fanon illustrated that decolonization radically questioned capitalism's very future and stability.<sup>156</sup> Rather than reiterate that inherent challenge, the Musée National du Niger affirmed the colonial portrayal of Nigeriens by denying traditional ethnic identities coevalness with either urban Niamey residents or foreign museum visitors—despite the actual historical and contemporary fluidity in the experiences of ethnicity in the Sahelian region. The museum's wide-reaching ambitions were limited by the fundamental contradictions found in the nation it represented. Hama and Toucet challenged Eurocentric primitivist stereotypes at the museum, and they presented Niger as a cohesive nation. In using European methods,

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<sup>155</sup> Frantz Fanon 2004: 160.

<sup>156</sup> Neil Lazarus, "Disavowing Decolonization: Fanon, Nationalism, and the Question of Representation in Postcolonial Theory," in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini (New York: Routledge, 1999): 163.

they also perpetuated some of the power dynamics they intended to oppose. This does not nullify their great accomplishments, but it demonstrates the difficulties and paradoxes of the Nigerien decolonization project.

Toucet, addressing an international museum professional community, boasted that

one of our aims has almost been achieved—that of presenting an overall picture of the Republic of Niger on a few acres of ground. As one of our visitors said to us, after a long tour of the museum: “You have managed to present the whole of this vast country on a pocket handkerchief.”<sup>157</sup>

He also observed that this simulacrum of the nation might be understood as a “micro-city.”<sup>158</sup> These layers of geographical metaphors curiously pointed away from the museum’s material, geographic, and social relationships with the city of Niamey and the nation of Niger. The ongoing construction of the Musée National du Niger in the park at the middle of the city that had once divided the European and African sections, and that had been used for a period of time as a refuse dump, mirrored the growth of the city in which it rapidly became a central landmark and destination. Its bounded organization also contrasted the unplanned spreading shape of Niamey. Yet, the aspiration to compress the nation into a city park also belied the actual travel experiences of many Niamey residents throughout its brief history.

Michel de Certeau argued that both Renaissance aerial maps and twentieth century skyscraper views reflect an “atopia-utopia of optical knowledge...with the ambition of surmounting and articulating the contradictions arising from urban

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<sup>157</sup> Toucet 1963:190.

<sup>158</sup> Toucet 1972: 206.

agglomeration.”<sup>159</sup> The Musée National du Niger and the 1931 Exposition Coloniale should be understood within this tradition of looking at the city from above. Aerial views and maps of both were assumed essential for navigation and appreciation. (Figures 1.6 and 1.7) Such maps defined the parameters for the suspension of conventional understandings of time and space. In these parks, both dimensions were compressed to modify cultures for a pedestrian’s visual consumption. At the 1931 Exposition, the reconstruction of Angkor Wat represented a Southeast Asian twelfth century, and it was just down the avenue from the faux mosque of Djenné, modeled after the latest incarnation in Djenné itself, which had been constructed in the nineteenth century. The map of the Musée National du Niger depicts the reconstructions of homes from Hausa, Djerma, Songhay, Sorko, Tuareg, and other cultures clustered together, while the galleries depicted both contemporary and historic aspects of Niger. On the map, the extinct dinosaur (6) is given similar treatment as that for the lion (25). However, the scopes of the museums and their maps included the nation and empire, respectively. These images were even less conceivable than the city in everyday experience—and thus in greater need of compression onto, as Toucet’s visitor would have it, a pocket handkerchief. The representations of space were understood to be essential didactic materials in developing specific spatial practices.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 93.

<sup>160</sup> See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991): 38-9.

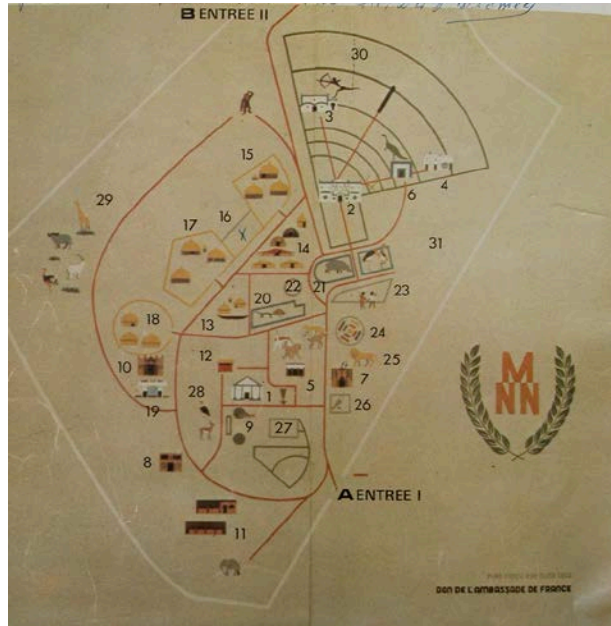


Figure 1.6: Map of Musée National du Niger, *Guide du Musée National*. Niamey: République du Niger, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 1975.

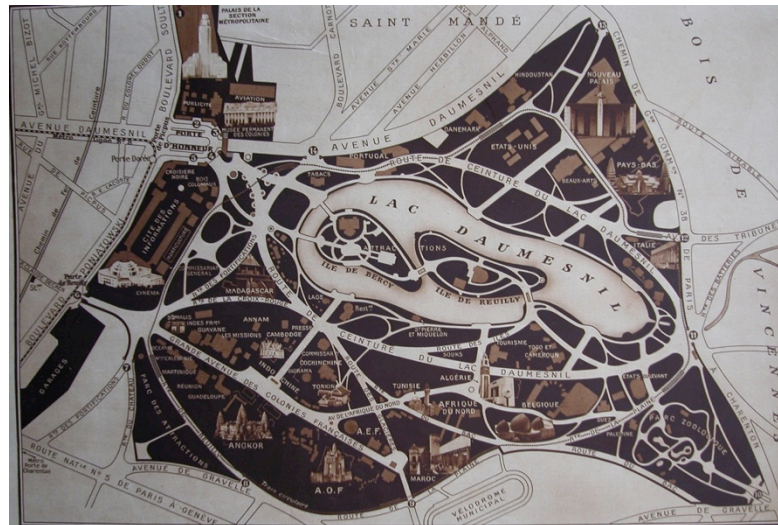


Figure 1.7: Charles Guérin, Map of the Exposition Coloniale Internationale Showing the Most Important Pavillions and the Principal Arteries. *Vue 168 (1931): 785.*

In her foundational study of the city of Niamey, Suzanne Bernus observed that many immigrants to Niamey came from urban areas or participated in trade networks that demanded familiarity with one or more cities. In addition to the substantial

Songhay and Hausa populations, Bernus noted the influential commercial positions of the small populations of Yoruba and Wolof in Niamey.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, the assertion of a need to make the traditional cultures of Niger more accessible through enclosed representations of dress, architecture, objects, and people, implied a disconnect between the traditional and the modern, between the urban and the rural. However, this disconnect did not necessarily exist for many Niamey residents or visitors, who may have lived in rural areas and traveled through others.<sup>162</sup>

Gaugue has observed that African museums generally have ignored actual geographies of ethnicity in favor of nationally circumscribed descriptions of ethnic groups.<sup>163</sup> Representation of Yoruba and Wolof Niamey residents was absent, because of the association of these ethnicities with other nationalities. What is more, the Tuareg depicted by the Musée National du Niger were first and foremost Nigeriens, and the large populations of Tuareg in Mali, Algeria, and elsewhere were absent. The same was true for the representations of the Hausa, despite conventional portrayals of Hausa culture as centered in Kano, Nigeria. Ethnicities were also portrayed as internally homogenous. The diversity of the Tuareg was effaced and the ongoing matriarchal practices of the Azna Hausa ignored. These museum displays were condensed ethnic stereotypes objectified for visitors' consumption. The museum asked Nigerien visitors to identify first as Nigerien and foreign visitors to conceptualize nationality before ethnicity. Ethnicity followed, and through the distance created by museological presentation, it was cast into a pre-independence past. Ethnic difference

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<sup>161</sup> Bernus 1969: 101.

<sup>162</sup> Adeline Masquelier, "Of Headhunters and Cannibals : Migrancy, Labor, and Consumption in the Mawri Imagination." *Cultural Anthropology* 15.1 (2000): 96.

<sup>163</sup> Gaugue 1997: 144.

and interethnic contact were not new to the region, but the illusion of discrete, isolated cultures and ethnicities reassessed ethnic boundaries in the urban milieu of a new capital of a new nation.

### ***Le Plus Grand Niger and the Colonial Exposition Form***

For all of its ambition and originality, when placed in a global history of exhibitions in the twentieth century, rather than just an abbreviated history of the form of the permanent national museum, the Musée National du Niger not only reveals specific precedents, but becomes familiar, even. It was an innovative and unusual national institution, and because of this, its colonial heritage has been ignored and underappreciated. The Afrique Occidentale Française had been deeply involved in a culture of large expositions and smaller fairs. Regional administrators in Dakar kept up regular correspondence with the metropole in Paris and Marseille and with officers in the various colonies to authorize and, at times, to organize the transport of people and objects to events across Europe and in North America. African music and dance troupes, generally engaged by European entrepreneurs, relied on these temporary venues for their tours. By 1931, African entrepreneurs, too, sought increased access to the sales opportunities at fairs. In 1951, the French government held the first Foire de Dakar.

The maps of the Musée National du Niger and the 1931 Exposition both reveal the ethnological approach, the architectural reconstructions, the working artisans, the animals, the aquarium, the pavilions: the Musée National du Niger, a celebration of nationhood, derived much of its form and substance from a celebration of colonialism

by its former metropolitan government just less than thirty years earlier. The Musée National du Niger's metaphoric representations of Niamey and Niger mimicked in both concrete and conceptual ways the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, which was an overtly nationalist and imperialist project. It also confirmed Niamey's new centrality in Niger. In one of the many associated publications of the colonial section of the 1931 Exposition in Paris, authors explain that "From a national point of view, it is natural that Paris wanted to be the frame of an event that, inspired by the memory of past ordeals, must present the world an image of France in its entirety and proclaim the fecund union of all of the territories that demonstrate French traditions and methods."<sup>164</sup> Niamey framed a museum that aspired to present Niger "in its entirety," and asserted the shared citizenry of a somewhat unlikely collection of neighboring groups.<sup>165</sup>

The temporary exposition, a form that grew out of nineteenth century European nationalist ventures, has inspired a significant body of scholarship.<sup>166</sup> This literature reflects and participates in museum and exhibition studies, which has recently addressed a wider breadth of exhibitions than had been conventional in earlier scholarship. The temporary international expositions often contained permanent elements, and they influenced the creation of open-air museums, which were be

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<sup>164</sup> *Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris: Colonies et Pays d'Outre Mer*. Ill. G. Goor. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1930): 5-6.

<sup>165</sup> Both Fuglestad and Olivier de Sardan make this point. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Les Sociétés Songhay-Zarma, Niger-Mali: Chefs, Guerriers, Esclaves, Paysans* (Paris: Karthala, 1984); and Finn Fuglestad, *A History of Niger, 1850-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>166</sup> For example, see Burton Benedict, "International Exhibitions and National Identity." *Anthropology Today* 7.3 (June 1991): 8; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs: 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

especially popular in Scandinavia and the United States.<sup>167</sup> Christopher Zeuner has indicated that open-air museums attracted more diverse audiences, class- and education-wise, than those contained in a building.

For organizers of the 1931 Colonial Exposition, the entertainment was a means to an educational end. The Governor General of the Colonies, Marcel Olivier, averred in the *Livre d'Or* that “In the company of this sensible guide, a visit to the Exposition is not simply an occasion to surprise yourself in front of new spectacles, customs, and ways than ours. One also discovers, and without effort, the reason for and legitimacy of colonization.”<sup>168</sup> The French Minister of the Colonies Paul Reynaud had explained a few pages earlier that “Millions and millions of French people visited the splendors of Vincennes. Our colonies are no longer names unfamiliar to us, facts overloaded into the memory of schoolchildren. Each of them feels themselves to be a citizen of ‘la grand France.’”<sup>169</sup> His wording is significant in that it indicates the expectation for a corporal integration of the colonialist and nationalist goals of the exposition. The 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale took up the call for La Plus Grande France, a France of varied populations that, if not French, were part of France. Yet, it was also an effort to symbolically enfranchise the urban and rural working classes, who were rightly skeptical of the benefits from colonialism for them. As mentioned earlier, issues of class were addressed by the Surrealists and Communist protests, but workers’

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<sup>167</sup> Christopher Zeuner, “Open-air Museums: Celebration and Perspective.” *Museum (UNESCO)* 175, XLIV.3 (1992): 147-148.

<sup>168</sup> Marcel Olivier, “Avant-Propos.” *Le Livre d'Or de L'Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris 1931*. Ed. Fédération Française des Anciens Coloniaux. Publié sous le patronage officiel du Commissariat Général de l'Exposition. (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1931): 11.

<sup>169</sup> Paul Reynaud, “Introduction,” *Le Livre d'Or de L'Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris 1931*. Fédération Française des Anciens Coloniaux, ed. Published with the official sponsorship of the Commissariat Général de l'Exposition. (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1931): 9.

struggles slip into even the official celebratory documents. *Vue* included a news article about a textile workers' strike in Roubaix, a town in Northern France, in one of its special issues devoted to the exposition.<sup>170</sup>

Likewise, many of the visitors to the Musée National du Niger were not convinced that Diori and Hama's First Republic had their interests in mind. Djibo Bakary's SAWABA party's attempt to stage a coup d'état in 1963 was only the most dramatic of the efforts of the Leftist trade unionist and his backers to demand a staunchly decolonized, sovereign Niger that was more Pan-African in vision than Franco-centric. After all, the Fifth Republic of France did not intend to dissolve "La Plus Grande France," and in 1958, the upcoming wave of declarations of independence across the former Afrique Occidentale Française seemed more unlikely than inevitable. Although droves arrived at the museum each weekend, Hama's pedanticism grated a population where so few people had access to formal education, and distrust of the French and their formal educational system ran high. His perceived role as the *éminence grise* of a government that was at worst, a corrupt pawn of France's neo-colonial designs and at best, an optimistic but overwhelmed attempt to manifest an independent nation-state with paltry resources and poorly stacked odds, gained him much derision among many sectors of the population, both formally educated and the unschooled. The concentration of national power in the Djerma ethnicity rankled both elite Hausa and Hausa peasantry, to whom Bakary had appealed when organizing trade unions. In this context, the museum's portrayal of ethnicity as aestheticized historic artifacts can be read as attempting an anesthetizing effect on

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<sup>170</sup> "La Grève du Textile dans le Nord." *Vue* 168 (1931): 809.

disgruntled visitors with grievances shaded by ethnic and class discrimination.

The accessibility and entertainment appeal for working and middle classes was a goal for organizers in Paris in 1931, although they derided previous expositions' ostensibly less erudite and more sensational depictions of colonized peoples (sometimes played by European actors).<sup>171</sup> Likewise, Hama and Toucet innovated in exhibition techniques meant to instruct a mostly illiterate population.<sup>172</sup> The attendance of working class citizens and their own cultural distinctions from the educated Parisians writing the texts provided moments meant to be humorous, but which revealed the artificiality of the exposition and its human categories. A collage in *Vue* entitled "Les Indigènes de l'Exposition" depicts both Europeans and non-Europeans, playfully identifying those who were indigenous to the park. In one image, a Parisian woman is described as "A malcontent. She does not recognize her Bois de Vincennes, where she has come everyday for many years, anymore."<sup>173</sup>

In his account of a day at the exposition, writer Paul-Emile Chadhilac orients himself after a dizzying tour with the sight of a working class family enjoying a picnic:

Exhausted, tired, dazzled, I cannot tell where I am: China, Tonkin, Africa? My eyes boil, my head wobbles. Only the sense of smell is still working. An aroma of garlic sausage tickles me and makes me sneeze. I open an eye. Where am I? In a clearing, some people sit on the grass—an entire family of petit-bourgeois or of workers—snacking with pleasure. The meats circulate, the bottles travel, a flowering of papers bloomed between the trees. The familiar spectacle reassures me—it is one of Paris, even one of Vincennes, and a classic one of this

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<sup>171</sup> Hale 2008: 62.

<sup>172</sup> Colette Monique Jourdain, "The National Museum of Niger: A Means of Popular Culture For Illiterates Too." *Museum (UNESCO, Paris)* No. 165, XLII.1 (1990): 27-28.

<sup>173</sup> "Les Indigènes de l'Exposition," *Vue* 168 (1931): 805.

place.<sup>174</sup>

Here, Chadilhac provided one of the rare verbal portraits of the working class visitors to the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, in addition to an illustration by Georges Scott. (Figure 1.8)



Figure 1.8: Georges Scott, "Luncheon on the grass in a clearing in the woods."

Original Caption: "Déjeuner sur l'herbe dans une clairière du bois."

Paul-Emile Chadilhac, "Promenade à Travers les Cinq Continents." *L'Illustration*. Album Hors Série. Édition Nouvelle Augmentée de 74 Pages. Unnumbered pages. 1931.

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<sup>174</sup> Paul-Emile Chadilhac, "Promenade à Travers les Cinq Continents." *L'Illustration*. Album Hors Série. Édition Nouvelle Augmentée de 74 Pages. Unnumbered pages. 1931.

Scott's illustration signals the petit-bourgeois or working class status of those included through their dress and their manners. A man in a bowler hat has a napkin tucked into his collar, and he forgoes a glass to drink wine straight from a bottle. Like the narrator, they have retreated from the unfamiliar and crowded exposition to this clearing in the woods. An unidentified tower in the right background is the only hint of the Colonial Exposition. The title inevitably plays upon Edouard Manet's *Dejeuner Sur l'Herbe*, which had shocked the Parisian public in its day, and was, in 1931, hanging in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. The cartoon comically re-domesticated the colonial exposition and the act of having lunch on the grass with the author's exertion of class privilege over a small family and their dog, as he depicted them for a publication he knew they were unlikely to ever see. Bois de Vincennes was a park, and his vignette also suggests the economization of many visitors, for whom additional performance tickets and African-themed restaurant meals may have been prohibitively expensive. In interactions such as camel rides or purchases of snacks from African vendors, economically disempowered workers were granted an illusion of power over the colonized, and their day in the park affirmed their citizenship, because it was contrasted to the subject status of the colonized.

The sensorially rich faux travel in Chadhilac's description of his jaunt across five continents represents a key commonality between the exposition form and the Musée Nationale du Niger. The unexpected juxtapositions of the novel and the unfamiliar, of the exotic and the banal, of recreation and scholarship, of aristocracy and working class, of machinery and the supposedly natural: these oppositions fueled

visitors' sensations of discovery at the 1931 event, which itself was meant to generate pleasure in state-mediated ownership. Yet, even faux travel was not without its dangers. Chadhilhac's exhausted disorientation is largely for comic effect, but does indicate the intense sensory stimulation and physical activity required by a day at the exposition. This corporal experience of colonialism was an essential ritual act in a project intended to cohere French identity and reshape French nationalism.

Jean Gallotti, also writing in *L'Illustration*, observed that "One feels oneself, here, in full savage life, and nowhere without doubt, those who seek at Vincennes the illusion of taking a long trip do not feel so far from the arid and brutal tumult that they want to avoid!"<sup>175</sup> The military officers organizing the 1931 Colonial Exposition, like Jules Brevié, knew that travel, particularly travel in service to colonization to places like Zinder and Niamey, could be difficult and time-consuming. Yet, it was precisely through adventure, medical, and military travel missions that they had asserted and felt authority over previously unfamiliar or unknown spaces. When confronted with the related project of sharing their sense of imperial mastery, they thus sought to recreate the sensation of travel. They invited visitors to reenact colonizing violence in a highly commodified and convenient way. They compressed the overwhelming sensory experiences of multiple locations in to a multi-faceted spectacle intended to disorient the visitor while inspiring wonder and pleasure.

The simulated travel it expects of visitors was an early defining feature of the Musée National du Niger:

The museum attracts crowds because it is aware of itself: the inhabitant

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<sup>175</sup> Jean Gallotti, "Somalis, A.O.F., Togo, Cameroon." *L'Illustration*. Album Hors Série. Édition Nouvelle Augmentée de 74 Pages. Unnumbered pages. 1931.

of Niamey is happy to discover the houses used by the people of the North and the East; the tourist makes a tour of Niger in miniature.<sup>176</sup>

It was a space for a ritualized imitation of travel that required and involved a wider spectrum of sensory and emotional work. Toucet emphasized the importance of walking in the museum's first decades, and ensured that it would be as pleasant as possible to tour the museum. Smooth rocks were used on the paths, and groundskeepers regularly sprayed them with water to prevent dust from being churned up into the air by all of the strolling feet. (Figure 1.9) In this photograph from the 1960s, a mostly Nigerien crowd strolls around the carefully maintained grounds. Some peer at animals in the cages, while others regard the designs in the Place of Nations, the circular area around the flag. There, the pebbles were arranged to represent national flags, asserting Niger's reflexive national representation as a significant, sovereign nation-state that interacted with others as a peer. A visit to the museum was intended as a very literally physical journey that consisted of an affective dimension. Pointing to the emotional quality of both curatorial intent and visitors' experiences, Toucet wrote of "the passion—and there is no other word for it—of the inhabitants for their museum."<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Saley 1984 : 93.

<sup>177</sup> Toucet 1963: 190.



Figure 1.9: Aerial view of Musée National du Niger. Slide from packet, *Musée National du Niger (I)* (Paris: Republic du Niger, Date Unknown). Diapositives Couleurs Véronèse.

Through artificial emplacement in a tangibly imagined community, Musée National du Niger visitors could embody their nation-state, just as French visitors to the 1931 Exposition could embody their empire. Yet, the projects were inherently different because Nigeriens in 1960 were meant to relate to and identify with the cultures on display as their heritage, rather than be struck by their fundamental, racially determined alterity. All the same, as Niger sought to implement citizenship for a nation bounded by colonially imposed divisions, the creation of a contemporaneous past, an ethnological spectacle in contrast to an urban modernity, persisted in the use of the exposition model. The experience was again constructed as a visceral absorption of a specifically nationalist awareness. The appropriation of colonial forms was meant to valorize this new national culture, to reverse the denigration of African cultures so ruthlessly and ubiquitously conveyed under colonialism. Yet, the exposition form reflected the museum and the nation's accommodation of neocolonial industrial capitalist interests—and necessitated creative and paradoxical choices on the part of

the ambitious founders of the museum.

### ***Authenticity and On-site Artisanal Production***

As early as the 1900 Exposition Universelle, African artisans working in their “habitats” were popular features in international expositions. Dana Hale suggested that the artisans were required to make all work to be sold on site because of an outcry after objects made in Paris by French workers were sold as Egyptian at the 1889 Exposition Universelle.<sup>178</sup> Artisans were a crucial part of the populations brought to work and live at the 1931 Exposition Coloniale. Chadhilac’s essay includes a rare portrait of a weaver, the caption of which explains that he is “working on a primitive craft.”<sup>179</sup> (Figure 0.3) This characterization points to several of the educational and commercial purposes of the artisans’ presence. They were an expected part of the general image of quotidian African life, to be sure, but the fact of their handmade aestheticized production had other significant symbolic and material dimensions.

The illustration to Chadhilac’s piece gives an inaccurate portrayal of the technique of weaving, and he omits most of the loom. The pedals move nonexistent heddles, and the weaver stands in an implausible working position. Although he is in the foreground, the observing crowd is an equally significant component of the drawing. Who the weaver is, where he is from, what he is weaving, and even *how* he is weaving are all irrelevant. The French visitors watch him, but like Chadhilac, they do not see much about him or his work, such as the basic structure of his loom, much less the intricacies of his tools and techniques. Instead, they see what they imagine they are

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<sup>178</sup> Hale 2008: 58.

<sup>179</sup> Chadhilac 1931.

not (“primitive”), and they see an African man working.

Their production of artworks-cum-souvenirs may seem an obvious banality and has thus merited little study. Yet, it was in these small commercial interactions that a large portion of exposition visitors could tangibly own their piece of the empire. The ephemeral exposition would end, and laborers would return to their fields and factories. The mastery of looking could only be enacted within a brief period of time, and as most French perceived few connections between the government’s colonizing efforts and their own lives, these purchases carried potent symbolic import. The desires and pleasure in colonizing writ large became aesthetically pleasing and economically priced. Souvenirs were a key way visitors were able to reenact the colonizing act.

Chadhilac’s labeling of West African weaving as “primitive” demonstrates the ways that academic discourses like Lévy-Bruhl’s theories of the “primitive mind,” Hardy’s policy applications of these social evolutionary theories, and popular interpretations of Africans and African technology intertwined and manifested at an event like the 1931 Exposition. He cast the artisan himself as primitive, implicitly invoking the modern European man.<sup>180</sup> In the vein of Lévy-Bruhl, by naming the primitive, he is invoking a specific modernity of European manufacturing techniques. As mentioned above, the French metropolitan pavilion’s massive machinery conveyed to the awed visitor the colonial sublime.<sup>181</sup> Georges Hardy knew that the artisan’s labor and production were in and of themselves significant. The exposition portrayed

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<sup>180</sup> For a discussion of the term “primitive,” being used to create a vision of European modernity, see the introduction to Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture* (New York: Norton and Co., 2000).

<sup>181</sup> See also Lebovics 1992.

African participants as a promising labor pool that would continue to contribute to French wealth, a process cast as philanthropic for presumably and eventually enabling African laborers to access the aforementioned technology.<sup>182</sup>

Like the architectural reconstructions, the presence of working artisans was integral to Hama and Toucet's early vision for the Musée National du Niger. Hama had been intrigued by experiments in artisanal education and touristic artisanry at least as early as World War II, and he began to propose new artisanal initiatives by the 1950s. Toucet attributed their inclusion to the desire to "to prevent traditional techniques from dying out, but above all so that craftsmen from different tribes, the Djerma and the Tuareg, the Songhai and the Hausa, the Beriberi and the Fulani, can work together, mingling their laughter and their songs."<sup>183</sup> The cooperative work of multi-ethnic nation-building was to be effected through proximity of workspace. Echoing Toucet and the official museum guide, Saley elaborated that: "Installed among the traditional habitats are artisans from all four corners of Niger. These artisans are the human 'document' par excellence."<sup>184</sup> He announced that "Thus, Nigerien artisans, for so long unknown, have left with radiance the oblivion and indifference where they stagnated."<sup>185</sup>

The inclusion of artisans must be read as one of the essential components in the Musée National du Niger's emulation of worlds' expositions. By the 1950s and 1960s, it was an assumed convention. It further demonstrates Toucet and Hama's

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<sup>182</sup> Hale emphasizes the portrayal of African as laborers for the 1922 Exposition Nationale Coloniale du Marseille. See Hale 2008: 41 and 100.

<sup>183</sup> Toucet 1975: 34.

<sup>184</sup> Saley 1984: 103.

<sup>185</sup> Saley 1984: 104.

quick turn away from European museums for inspiration after the first pavilion, as they began to envision a museum that could encompass the entire park.<sup>186</sup> Hama issued invitations to artisans all over the country, with the explicit aim of attracting the best. In the first years of the museum, when an artisan arrived in Niamey, often for the first time ever, they would meet with both Hama and Toucet. Yet, it was not merely a derivative exercise to include artisans.

Grouping artisans of different ethnicities together demonstrated the primacy of the nation over the ethnic community, even as the strict labeling of aesthetic forms by ethnicity underscored the significance of a singular ethnic identity for both artisans and their work. Nigerien visitors were meant to delight in their new national ownership over certain artisanal forms. Leather artisans who had worked for the Sultan's court in Zinder became Hausa artisans and Nigerien artisans first and foremost. They maintained a separate workshop area from the Hausa leather artisans from the Madaoua area, but were not otherwise distinguished. Weavers from near Timbuktu and Dori, by then in Mali and Burkina Faso, made wall-hangings that became Nigerien.

As Saley implied, Hama also intended to work against caste and class associations with manual labor. Hama's own life had been formed by his family's enslaved ancestry, and the potential popular resistance to a president without more socially elite ancestry may have been one reason that it was Diori who eventually

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<sup>186</sup> There was also a related tradition in European museums of bringing non-Western artists to work in museum galleries. Such arrangements were always temporary. See Ivan Karp, and Steven Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) and Ivan Karp, Christine M. Kreamer, and Steven Lavine, eds., *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

became president instead of him. Jean-Paul Olivier de Sardan obliquely referred to Boubou Hama's ancestry when observing the "necessary alliance" made across classes to form a nationalist, statist bourgeoisie composed of the children of slaves and those from noble classes, for those were the two populations who were first sent to formal French schools.<sup>187</sup> Kadir Abdelkader Galy worked from one unpublished essay by Boubou Hama and an unpublished biographical text on Hama by his friend and colleague Léopold Kaziendé to consider the effect of Hama's enslaved ancestors on his political and cultural outlook.<sup>188</sup> According to Kaziendé, Hama's father had been born in Foneko, where he was captured. He was held as a slave in the area of Sebba (in what is now Burkina Faso), before escaping to return to Foneko, where he married Hama's mother, who was enslaved to a family there.<sup>189</sup> According to Kaziendé, the cruel denigration of classmates traumatized a young Hama, whose father had not explained that he had become enslaved through capture.<sup>190</sup> To contest the validity of the linked social stigmas of enslavement and manual labor, Kaziendé explicitly links nobility with the willingness to work in his brief portrait of Hama:

Boubou Hama—he was a free man, just as noble and dignified as any other inhabitant of the Sahel. He proved it through his work, his comportment, and his honesty in all things at all times. He envied those who managed to make themselves known by the sweat of their brow. "I will work like them—I will give it my all." Thus spoke this figure, and, he presciently decided to abandon the ordinary as early as his first years as a teacher.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Les Sociétés Songhay-Zarma, Niger-Mali: Chefs, Guerriers, Esclaves, Paysans* (Paris: Karthala, 1984): 202.

<sup>188</sup> Kadir Abdelkader Galy, *L'Esclavage Au Niger: Aspects Historiques Et Juridiques* (Paris: Karthala, 2010): 96-98.

<sup>189</sup> Léopold Kaziendé, quoted in Galy 2010: 96.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Léopold Kaziendé, quoted in Galy 2010: 98. Translation mine.

Hama combined his readings of Marx and other theorists, his professional expertise as a teacher, and his personal experiences as a child of enslaved parents to propose a radical reinterpretation of what it meant to work in Niger. He recognized that economies required manual labor, especially economies like those in Niger, which were not industrialized and not well-integrated into the global chains of commodity distribution. He sought both equitable distribution of resources and equitable distribution of labor—and he wanted to destigmatize forms of work associated with low castes and enslaved status in some communities in the colony and then, the new nation-state.

Across ethnic groups, there were diverse ways of assigning certain kinds of work according to gender, caste, class, and enslaved status. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein have observed that in studies of slavery in Africa, “The word *slavery* has been used for a wide variety of relationships. It has been variously defined in terms of property relationship or in terms of the slave’s kinlessness. Whichever definition is used, the slave is involuntarily servile, has a marginal position within her social unit, and is subject to the control of another.”<sup>192</sup> The basic social categories of people in the Sahel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were the enslaved, the free, and the noble, but these categories were porous and dynamic.<sup>193</sup> Importantly, a large proportion of the Sahelian population was enslaved in the early twentieth century. Olivier de Sardan states that half of the Songhay-Djerma population was

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<sup>192</sup> Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, “Women’s Importance in African Slave Systems,” Robertson, Claire. *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983): 3-4.

<sup>193</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1982: 58.

enslaved just before colonization.<sup>194</sup> Klein estimates that in 1904, some areas may have had populations with twenty percent enslaved, but among the Tuareg and Fulani, the enslaved were in the majority.<sup>195</sup>

Even among the Djerma, there were variations in how slavery was understood and practiced. For the Djerma, there were slaves who were strictly objectified, and acquired through purchase or through violent raids, they could be sold and were susceptible to violence. The *horso* were people who were at least the third generation to be enslaved to a particular family, and who generally had specialized skills of production—usually weaving.<sup>196</sup> Although forbidden from marrying people who were not enslaved, the *horso* had a relatively privileged status compared to other enslaved people, and could even own other people as slaves themselves. They also could not be sold or mistreated.<sup>197</sup> It is not established whether the ancestors of Bellah Tuareg who weave in Baleyara and Bonkoukou now wove as slaves for noble Tuaregs, or if they learned the skill to support themselves after establishing themselves as free; it is likely that there are significant proportions of both. Some Djerma weavers and Peul weavers were free, and not associated with any castes. In Hausa communities in what is now Nigeria and in Niger, weaving was generally considered comparable to other artisanal

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<sup>194</sup> Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, “The Songhay-Zarma Female Slave: Relations of Production and Ideological Status,” in Claire Robertson, *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983): 130.

<sup>195</sup> Martin Klein, “Appendix 1: How Many Slaves?” in *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 252.

<sup>196</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1982: 80. Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>197</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1982: 214. See Moustapha Kadi Oumani’s brief generalizations of practices of slavery according to ethnicity in Niger. It is too general because of the variations within ethnicities and its ethnocentric bias against the Tuaregs, the Arabs, and the Toubou, but it remains instructive of the basic outlines. Moustapha Kadi Oumani, *Un Tabou Brisé: L’esclavage En Afrique, Cas Du Niger* (Paris, France: L’Harmattan, 2005).

skills and had no special effect on social status. In still other cases, weaving was a relatively high status artisanal activity, especially in the case of the related traditions of the *Mabuube* and Wogo Songhay, who wove the intricate luxury wedding gifts of the several genres of *arkilla* furnishing textiles.<sup>198</sup>

These most highly skilled weavers with relatively high social status, like Ali Sinka and Ali Mabo, were those first recruited to work at the museum, along with selected Djerma and Hausa weavers in order to have examples from various ethnicities. Bellah Tuareg weavers arrived as weavers of Djerma styles, such as the *téra-tera*, or as weavers of *sakala* wall hangings seeking further education. Specifically, weavers came to the museum to learn the tapestry techniques associated with the *arkilla*. Asmann Chiliaou described how he gained a position at the museum after learning to weave with his father in Bonkougou:

My father was a weaver and a farmer from Bonkougou. He was a Bellah Tuareg. He made very different work from what I do. You know, before, the Fulani wore white pagnes. He made clothing for Fulani women ... He did not make motifs. I came to Niamey to work in 1977, and I saw this [tapestry work at the museum]. I was working in houses of women, and when I saw Hamza's work in the museum, I decided I wanted to learn it. I learned by watching. I watched it at the museum, and then I went home and I tried a small sample. When I saw that it was pretty good, I showed it to the managers of the boutique, Saduku and Ibrahim. They said it wasn't good. I asked my brother at the museum why they'd rejected me, and he said because it wasn't well made enough. So I tried again, and when it was better, I took it back. And I gained a place here. I suffered—it was very difficult. It all happened in the same year, 1977. I wanted to work here because at that time, there was money to be made. At that time, there were many white people, and they always came. The prices were higher than other places in the town. There were all kinds of foreigners, but especially Americans and the Chinese. At that time, there were many. Oh, no, they were Japanese.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1984: 56.

<sup>199</sup> Asmann Chiliaou, Interview, November 16, 2009.

Thus, although they were not initially recruited by Toucet and Hama, Bellah Tuareg weavers who had woven for Fulani, Tuareg, and Djerma patrons, approached the museum as a vocational training and marketing opportunity. Goumer Abdoulwahid, who is of Djerma and Bellah Tuareg descent, also came to the museum in 1981 for these dual reasons of learning additional skills and gaining a broader, international clientele.<sup>200</sup>

Likewise, artisanry such as ceramics and leatherwork were passed from parent to child in most communities where they were found. In most Djerma communities, ceramics was considered women's work, but in certain Hausa villages, men were potters. The artisanal caste of the Tuareg was endogamous, and maintained a crucial but often ambivalent role in the social and economic lives of other Tuaregs. As numerous colonial officials and observers had observed and contested, manual labor was part of several complex, stratified social systems fraught with anxieties about maintaining status or improving it, in addition to maintaining and gaining wealth.

Hama and Toucet sought to promote artisanal labor as professional, respectable work to other Nigeriens. They also bore in mind their European visitors, who were much more likely to be habitués of museums and expositions. These visitors expected to see artisans working, and they expected to purchase souvenirs. Artisans recall the 1960s as the heyday of the museum, when Nigerien and French families would crowd the museum every weekend, and the French purchased as many necklaces, earrings, handbags, cushions, statues, tablecloths, and blankets as the small number of artisans could make. At that time, Toucet did not allow artisans to sell work directly to

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<sup>200</sup> Goumer Abdoulwahid, Interview, November 16, 2009.

customers, and he personally inspected all products sold in the shop.

Despite the precedents from which it drew, it was the onsite artisanal production and training that represented the most innovative use of the museum as an institution by the Nigerien government. It was treated as a vocational school in a region lacking educational opportunities to prepare young people for a changing, increasingly industrial and consumerist global economy. In another attempted challenge to caste and class-based labor, young Niamey residents with no artisanal heritage either could work with traditional artisans or participate in classes through the Education Center on topics such as mechanics or sewing after it was founded in 1970. The project to train blind or handicapped individuals in crafts was another separate project. Diop referred to these efforts when averring “as the Niamey experiment has shown, museums are capable of effectively combating social evils such as juvenile delinquency and vagrancy, begging, idleness, and even unemployment—evils to which the African countries are particularly subject.”<sup>201</sup>

Colonial disruptions to agricultural and trade systems conveniently forgotten, the results of the shifting terms of Africans’ roles in the global economy and France’s ongoing work to disempower Africans become obscured in such claims. This active mystification of larger social and economic processes requires the portrayal of irrational, passive African bodies in need of control, so that they may labor more efficiently. In another commonality with the 1931 exposition, Africans were defined as Nigeriens and laborers, and the French were French consumers. This is one of the kinds of dehumanization that Hama argued resulted from European-controlled

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<sup>201</sup> Abdoulaye Sokhna Guèye Diop “Museological Activity in African Countries: Its Role and Purpose.” *Museum* 25.4 (1973): :253.

industrial capitalism. Toucet's pedagogy, although meant to effect national independence, was strictly hierarchical and authoritarian and, like Diori and Hama's regime, was unable to effect liberatory political or social change.

Pablo Freire described a humanizing and liberatory pedagogy of the oppressed as one led by the oppressed, rather than a top-down pedagogy of false charity that sustained unequal distribution of power between the oppressors and the oppressed—even as certain of the oppressed may also become oppressors themselves.<sup>202</sup> Hama and Toucet recognized the dehumanizing quality of capitalism and colonialism, but they were unable to implement a humanizing pedagogy. This again indicates the grave challenges they faced more than it diminishes their striking accomplishments or their compassionate aspirations. Toucet built a space for artisanal production at the museum that has existed and grown in different incarnations over fifty years. He provided opportunities in the global economy that had not existed before, and his insistence on multifaceted education for artisans, one that included French language classes and product design workshops, demonstrated his desire to empower artisans. Toucet closely controlled all aspects of the museum, including the artisans' work. Artisans who worked with him emphasized that he had been a soldier, and that he expected his directives followed. He and Hama were both known for having tempers. The consequence of repeated insubordination was dismissal from the museum. He required artisans to attend French class. He introduced new designs in all media, which, as they were intended to do, successfully attracted French customers. He asked weavers to make light-weight tablecloths and matching place mats incorporating traditional Hausa

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<sup>202</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

motifs. He brought European handbags and shoes to leather artisans to copy, sometimes dissecting the handbags in front of them, in order to emphasize aspects that required their special attention. He also brought Baba Doumbia, a woodworker from Guinea who had accidentally become stranded in Niamey, to work at the museum.

The canon of African art that grew out of avant-garde modernist primitivism into an academic art historical subfield consisted primarily of wooden sculptural objects. As Malraux so neatly described, the Benin bronzes and Kongo kuba cloth were just barely African art and definitely not *l'art nègre*. He quoted Picasso's assertion that "all of the fetishes, they do the same thing. They are weapons. To help people to not be subjects of spirits, to become independent."<sup>203</sup> In the modernist French imagination, wooden sculpture symbolized Africans' perpetual struggle against subjection to spirits. Owning authentic *l'art nègre* expressed power over the primitive and the spirit, and the pleasure resulted from the imaginative play that fantasies of the primitive encouraged and that ignorance of African perspectives sustained.<sup>204</sup>

In 1959, the traditional artwork of Niger included some carving, but the works were primarily small and of ivory or precious woods. The strongest artisanal traditions were in other media: textiles, metals, leather, basketry, and ceramics. This is partly due to the relative paucity of wood in a nation mostly composed of desert and degrees of transition away from desert. Some historicans, curators, and artisans often cite the long presence of Islam in the region as the reason for a broad disapproval of the kinds of animist religious abstracted figural sculpture favored by early- and mid-twentieth century American and European African art enthusiasts and scholars. As the

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<sup>203</sup> Malraux 1974 : 17.

<sup>204</sup> Malraux 1974: 123.

combination of figural and abstract motifs on regional textiles suggest, such assumptions about Islamic iconoclasm are likely anachronistic and inaccurate. Niger's arts were part of broad exchange networks, and like other Sahelian and Northern African cultures, wooden sculpture was simply not a significant medium when compared to the roles of textiles, architecture, leatherwork, and metalwork.<sup>205</sup>

Toucet understood that in order for a significant center for African art-making to satisfy European tourists, it required wood-working, regardless of the provenance of the tradition—or even the artist's training. Even more specifically, he knew that they needed some obsidian heads. One of the first artisans to begin work at the museum in 1962, Doumbia claimed to have been the first wood sculptor in Niger. In the mostly Muslim Niamey, where iconoclastic beliefs were increasing in the late twentieth century, Doumbia later felt obligated to justify his work to Saley by explaining woodworking as a “craft like any other.”<sup>206</sup> He explained that there was nothing wrong with sculpting figural works because they were for Europeans, assumed to be non-Muslims, to ornament their houses. He specified that it was a European who taught him woodworking, and that he learned not in Guinea, but at the Maison des Artisans in Bamako, Mali.<sup>207</sup> Toucet encouraged Doumbia to produce what the artist called “figurines,” and what Toucet called ethnic busts, representing the various ethnic groups of Niger in both wood and ivory, such as a portrayal of a Toubou Woman. (Figure 1.10) These busts were intended for a tourist market, which expected the

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<sup>205</sup> See Barry Finbarr Flood, “Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum.” *The Art Bulletin* 84.4 (December 2002): 641–659; and Labelle Prussin. *Hatumere: Islamic Design in West Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>206</sup> Saley 1984: 130.

<sup>207</sup> Saley 1984: 130. See Chapter Three for further discussion on the Maison des Artisans in Bamako.

ethnicities portrayed throughout the museum galleries to be objectified and packaged in the conventional colonial patterns. They were portable manifestations of static ethnic identities. Purchasing one granted ownership in a fashion all too similar to a colonial exposition's ritual enactment of the colonizing process.



Figure 1.10: Baba Doumbia, Toubou Woman, c. 1974, Ebony

In these busts, Doumbia intervened in several traditions and markets. At Toucet's request, he interpreted and reified ethnicities in the tradition of European and American anthropologists, travel writers, and artists. An immigrant to Niger, he approached each culture as an outsider himself. This bust of a Toubou woman also evokes the masks and sculptures favored by French collectors of *l'art negre*. While distinguished by the depiction of a cloth scarf worn on the head and detailed jewelry, the bust's dark color and narrow face allude to certain Fang reliquaries, including an iconic one once owned by Paul Guillaume, and which was on permanent loan from Nelson Rockefeller to the Museum of Primitive Art in New York from 1962 until

1978, where Toucet may have seen it.<sup>208</sup>

Fanon specifically addressed woodworking in his essay “On National Culture.” He averred that when a national culture emerges, “in artisanship, the congealed, petrified forms loosen up. Wood carving... which turned out set faces and poses by the thousands, starts to diversify. The expressionless or tormented mask comes to life...By bringing faces and bodies to life... the artist inspires concerted action.”<sup>209</sup> These ethnic busts, or figurines, were newly invented congealed and petrified forms. They were the deadening of faces and bodies to consign vibrant dress traditions to a commodified, romanticized colonial past, and discouraged concerted action. The museum aspired to foster a Fanonian national culture, but like so much of the First Republic, leadership from a French man, however well-intentioned, belied the persistent colonial character of the Franco-Nigerien relationship. The ethnic busts spoke to French military officers, diplomats, and volunteers, who also constituted the primary market of artisans who worked at the museum. Although Nigerien attendance at the museum was remarkable for its high numbers, Africans were never the buyers envisioned by curatorial personnel or the artisans themselves.

A fundamental difference was understood by the museum officials, artisans, and buyers to exist between the object in the Classical Ethnography Pavilion and the one in the Artisans’ Shop, a difference that revealed the paradoxical functions of the artisans and their work. One could not be bought because it was *more* authentic—it was the original, the ostensibly pre-colonial, pre-industrial, pre-capitalist, and certainly pre-nation. In other words, the examples of sandals worn by various ethnicities in

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<sup>208</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art Object Accession Number 1979.206.229.

<sup>209</sup> Fanon 2004: 175

Niger displayed in the Classical Ethnography Pavilion existed in a completely different dimension of time than those for sale next to the leather backpacks, handbags, jewelry, and ethnic busts in the shop. Authenticity remained bound to colonial conceptions of time and ethnicity, despite the museum's simultaneous challenges to colonial primitivist temporality. The authenticity of an object identical to one in the collections was inherently compromised by its entrance into the global commercial space of the museum's shop.

The artisans and the museum necessarily appealed to that global commercial space to sustain them, even as they nurtured the pastness of the spaces in which they worked. The presence of the artisans at the museum couched concern about labor and commodified cultural forms in a way meant to demonstrate the national government's efforts to benefit the citizenry. It also made the capitalist aspect of Nigerien nationalism explicit at the Musée National du Niger. As Anne McClintock has argued regarding women, the artisans were "constructed as symbolic bearers of the nation but... denied any direct relation to national agency."<sup>210</sup> The artisans and their work linked the nationalist project to forms of viewing meant to control, train, and exploit the very artisanal labor that brought life to the "Living Museum."

A most fundamental difference between the Musée National du Niger and the Expositonal Colonial International is the museum's decades-long duration, in comparison with those fleeting six months in Paris. Toucet continued to develop and promote the museum while Hama began to question the efficacy of the nation-state as

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<sup>210</sup> Anne McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race and Nationalism," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* Eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 90.

a way for Africans to negotiate the neo-colonial Cold War world order. Referring to the multiple dangers resulting from industrial capitalism, he averred that “no one will find a national solution.”<sup>211</sup> In fact, he repeatedly cited the “egoism of nations” as an impediment to solving the problems in what he observed to be an increasingly interconnected world.<sup>212</sup> When Seyni Kountché led a coup d’état on April 15, 1974, Hama resignedly followed the soldiers who came to place him under arrest. When Albert Ferral became the director at the museum, he faced immediate severe budget cuts from Kountché’s military government, although he would later successfully garner international and government funding to add to the museum. From his cell in Agadez, Hama concluded that nationalist economic projects and national consciousness education by a government still controlled by France ultimately had contributed to the very industrial capitalist tyranny that he had denounced so many times.<sup>213</sup> However, his initiation and support of the Musée National du Niger has left a complex philosophical and cultural legacy that resonates far beyond both the insular nationalism of the First Republic or the more widespread but carefully policed nationalism of Kountché’s Conseil Militaire Supreme. Containing objects vibrating with their Doubles in history and the present, the museum would serve as an innovative educational site throughout Ferral’s tenure and beyond. The museum offered spaces in which Nigeriens and other visitors could imagine Niger, but also ways of imagining themselves within Africa and the rest of the world. The competing temporalities at the museum put hegemonic colonial time in question, and the

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<sup>211</sup> Hama 1974: 80.

<sup>212</sup> Hama 1974: 62-3 and 92.

<sup>213</sup> Hama 1993: 115.

museum, like its primary conceptual architect, Boubou Hama, suggested that the world needed what Nigeriens, and all Africans, had to offer.

## CHAPTER 2

### DOMESTIC RENDERINGS OF THE NATION: WEAVING AND WEDDINGS IN NIGER

*I weave because it is a good vocation and it is my heritage. Textiles are important because they are our custom.*

Saadou Amadou <sup>214</sup>

*I love weaving.*

Tchimba “Djula” Alka <sup>215</sup>

In 1954, Ali Sinka, then a young man living in a small village outside of Timbuktu, heard that in the rapidly growing city of Niamey, Niger, weavers were in high demand. West African looms are constructed so as to be portable, so he packed up his heddles, heddle pulley, batten, and other tools, and he headed to Niamey. Identifying as Songhay and trained in the weaving traditions of the Fulani caste of the *Mabuube*, his expertise was in the famous *arkilla kounta* and *arkilla kerka* wool furnishing textiles that were made for Songhay patrons. (Table 1) In Niamey, he wove *arkilla* and other complex designs into brightly colored cotton wall hangings for women with textile trading businesses or for private patrons who gave textiles to their daughters and other young women relatives as gifts during weddings. This detail of a sample strip at the Smithsonian Museum, which was purchased from Sinka in the early 1980s, includes several of the tapestry motifs that Sinka and other weavers trained in the *arkilla* traditions commonly transposed to cotton. (Figure 2.1) The use of

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<sup>214</sup> Saadou Amadou, Interview, November 17, 2009.

<sup>215</sup> Tchimba “Djula” Alka, Interview, March 11, 2010.

tapestry is the primary technical feature that distinguishes these *arkilla*-derived cotton wall hangings from other cotton weaving in the region.<sup>216</sup>



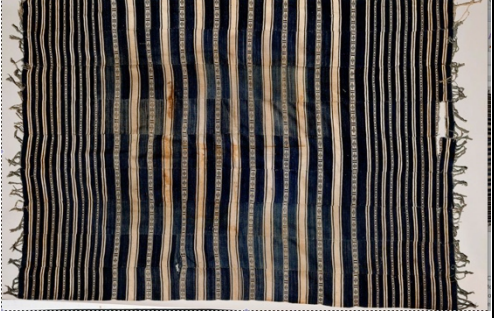
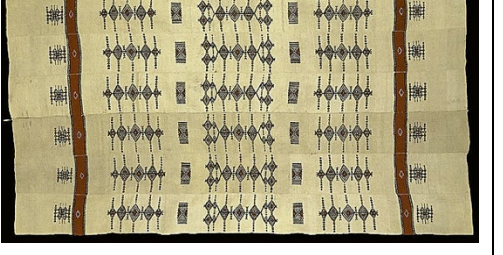



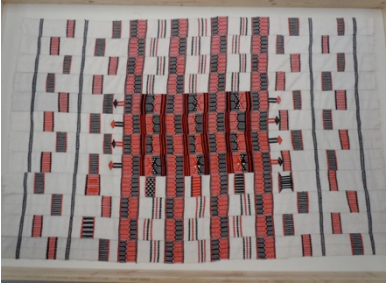


Figure 2.1: Ali Sinka, Sample strip of *Kounta* wall-hanging, Cotton, c. 1977  
Collection of the Smithsonian Museum  
EJ10286-0



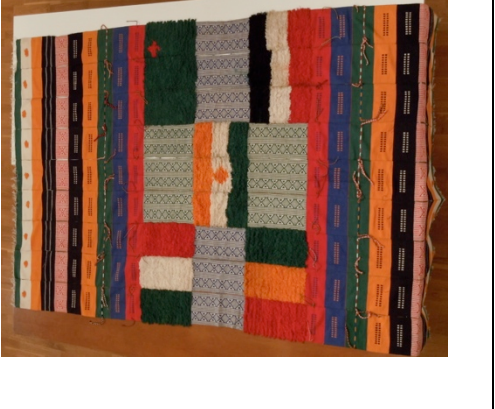
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<sup>216</sup> Tapestry weaving requires the weft threads be inserted by hand. It is weft-faced, and the weft threads are discontinuous.

TABLE 1:  
SELECTED TEXTILES CIRCULATED IN NIGER

Textile Name	Example of Textile	Example in Museum	Technical Features	Cultural Contexts
Arkilla kerka		Musée du Quai Branly 70.2002.19.1	Weft-faced. Wool weft. Warp may be cotton or wool. 6 patterned strips, optional 7 <sup>th</sup> striped strip. Strip width: Approx. 22 cm.	Produced by the Fulani for Fulani and Songhay patrons.
Arkilla kounta		British Museum Af 1978.21.1	Weft-faced. Wool weft. Warp may be cotton or wool. 5 strips. Strip width: Approx. 30 cm.	Produced by and for Wogo-Songhay.
Munyuure		Musée du Quai Branly 73.15608.27-3	Cotton warp and weft. Plain weave. Floating weft decoration. Strip width: Approx. 15 cm.	Associated with Dogon and Fulani cultures in Mali and Niger. Similar patterns have been documented for the 11 <sup>th</sup> century.
Khasa		Metropolitan Museum of Art 1997.446.3	Wool warp and weft. Warp sometimes cotton. Weft-faced. Floating weft and tapestry decoration. Strip width: Approx. 22 cm.	These blankets were produced by <i>Mabuube</i> and other Fulani weavers. They were circulated and used throughout West Africa.

Suban		Musée du Quai Branly 71.1930.61.5 68	Cotton warp and weft. Plain weave. Floating weft decoration. Strip width: Approx. 12 cm.	Considered a forerunner and lesser genre to the <i>téra-tera</i> , the <i>suban</i> features similar motifs, but it lacks the central section, the <i>babba</i> .
Téra-tera		Museum der Kulturen, Basel, Switzerland III17600	Cotton warp and weft. Plain weave. Floating weft decoration. One feature is central rectangle of concentrated motifs, the <i>babba</i> . Strip width: Either between 9-13 cm or approx. 18 cm.	Produced by Djerma and Bellah weavers for weddings of people of various ethnicities, but most strongly associated with Djerma ethnicity.
Krou-krou		Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger 1667 AG : 5677	Cotton warp and weft. Plain weave. Floating weft decoration. Identical to <i>téra-tera</i> , except for small black dots on all white sections.	Exchanged at weddings and once used as garments, the <i>krou-krou</i> is a subgenre of the <i>téra-tera</i> .
Sahel Vert		Private Collection	Cotton warp and weft. Plain weave. Floating weft decoration. Identical to <i>téra-tera</i> , except the white warp and weft thread is replaced with green.	Another subgenre of the <i>téra-tera</i> , the <i>Sahel Vert</i> is usually also a <i>krou-krou</i> . Invented to mark President Seyni Kountché's anti-desertification campaign in 1975.

Kounta		Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger 1661 AG: 5985	Cotton warp and weft. Weft-faced. Plain weave, floating weft, and tapestry weave. Strip width: Approx. 25 cm.	Translation of the <i>arkilla kounta</i> in machine-spun cotton thread. Exchanged at weddings in Niger.
Tcharka		Author's collection.	Cotton warp and weft. Weft-faced. Plain weave, floating weft, and tapestry weave. Strip width: Approx. 25 cm.	Translation of the <i>arkilla kereka</i> in machine-spun cotton thread. Exchanged at weddings in Niger.
Sakala		Author's Collection.	Cotton warp and weft. Plain weave. Floating weft decoration. Strip width: Approx 20 cm.	Produced by Bellah Tuareg and other weavers in Niger for ethnically diverse clientele. Influenced by Hausa, Fulani, and Djerma weaving traditions.

Both exceptional and exemplary, Sinka's career serves as an important thread in this chapter, which maps out changes in Nigerien weaving from the 1950s through the 1980s and analyzes how those changes emerged from weavers and their patrons' negotiations of quickly changing political and economic circumstances. Sinka's career represents the paths of many weavers, who were drawn to burgeoning cities across the region. His long tenure at the Musée National du Niger offers an opportunity to explore that institution's specific uses of textiles in its representations of the Nigerien nation-state. His instruction of apprentices who were not Songhay or *Maabuube* speaks to the ethnic *mélange* of twentieth century Nigerien weaving, and his continuous modifications to his designs reflect shifting market demands. Sinka is also exceptional. His renowned skill allowed him great flexibility in choosing the most reputable patrons in Niamey in the 1950s and 1960s, and then it attracted the attention of museum director Pablo Toucet. At the museum, Sinka's mastery of weaving, combined with an openness in personality, positioned him to influence other weavers and to speak with many foreign visitors.<sup>217</sup>

I take up the word "domestic" in two ways in this chapter. The first is to signal the centrality of the home in the display of textiles. It is also to consider how homes, and the lives lived in them, were changing in the Colony of Niger in the 1950s, as increasing numbers of people began migrating to Niamey, and diverse consumer products, including machine-spun thread and machine-woven cloth, became widely

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<sup>217</sup> For example, Sinka is one of the few weavers active in Niger whose name is associated with an object in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum. Venice Lamb recorded him as the weaver of a sample strip of a *kounta* cotton wall hanging now in the Lamb Collection of African textiles that is shared between the National Museum of African Art and the National Museum of Natural History (Accession Number: EJ10286-0). He was the primary informant for Renée Boser-Sarivaxevanis and Bernhard Gardi during their visit to Niamey in 1974.

available in Niger for the first time in the 1950s. These theorizations of textiles in family and other shared compounds are direct challenges to externally imposed binary constructions of gendered public/private spheres. Naming ceremonies, religious holidays, and marriages, not to mention casual visits, brought sometimes numerous people into certain parts of a compound. The domestic space can be a kind of public space. Women's mobility in the city varied, but regardless of their own movement, their patronage of weavers in their homes had vast economic and representational effect. With this emphasis on women as patrons, I heed John Picton's call for further research on women's roles in West African textile production, as well as their interpretations of textiles' use.<sup>218</sup>

The word domestic also refers to the strategic defining of the nation-state carried out by Hamani Diori, Boubou Hama, and other members of the First Republic of Niger, in concert with the many French men employed by their government, which itself was at first largely financed and heavily staffed by the French nation-state.<sup>219</sup> Like the other recently formed nation-states around it, Niger strived to distinguish itself, which necessarily occurred in opposition to an idea of the foreign, which also needed to be defined and clarified. I look at elements that the Nigerien state claimed and invented for itself—how it defined its unique, domestic identity in its First

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<sup>218</sup> John Picton, "Tradition, Technology and Lurex: Some Comments on Textile History and Design in West Africa." In *History, Design, and Craft in West African Strip-Woven Cloth: Papers Presented at a Symposium Organized by the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, February 18-19, 1988*. Washington, D.C.: National Museum of African Art, 1989.

<sup>219</sup> In addition to Chapter One, see Mamoudou Djibo, *Les Transformations Politiques Au Niger À La Veille De L'indépendance* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001); Virginia Thompson, *West Africa's Council of the Entente* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972); Victor T. Le Vine, *Political Leadership in Africa: Post-independence Generational Conflict in Upper Volta, Senegal, Niger, Dahomey, and the Central African Republic*. (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1967). See also Michael Crowder, *Independence As a Goal in French West African Politics: 1944-60* (Berkeley, Calif: Committee for African Studies, Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1966).

Republic and the subsequent military regime, and the processes of domestication it use to do so. As Salah Hassan has argued, African modernities of the twentieth century were both inherently nationalist and experientially very transnational.<sup>220</sup> I thus use the theoretical frame of the domestic to orient our vision of Nigerien modernities toward the neglected Nigerien relationships between women and weavers and the nation-state.

Madhava Prasad argues that post-colonial nationalisms are necessarily counter-nationalisms insisting upon subjecthood. He points to the ubiquity of nationalism in the postcolonial context in which “the indigenous bourgeoisies of Third World nations do achieve the private/public, libidinal/political division characteristic of Western social formations.”<sup>221</sup> As these binaries were put in place for a miniscule bourgeoisie, how did Nigerien women express their experiences of modernity in their homes, in their nations? Textiles demonstrate the slippage achieved by women as patriarchal capitalist binaries of the private/public, domestic/foreign, and the libidinal/political were imposed. Hand woven textiles were taken up as symbols of nationalism precisely because of their intimacy; as objects associated with women and marriage, their domestic significance authenticated Niger’s ties to an imagined pre-nation past and distinguished Niger from all other nation-states.

By focusing on garments, blankets, and wall hangings, this line of inquiry also responds to Achille Mbembe’s characterization of the “logic of familiarity and domesticity” in the relationship between the dominating post-colonial state and the

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<sup>220</sup> Salah M. Hassan “African Modernism: Beyond Alternative Modernities Discourse.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109. 3 (June 20, 2010): 451–473.

<sup>221</sup> Madhava Prasad, “On the Question of a Theory of (Third) World Literature,” in Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, eds. *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 158.

people negotiating their lives under and through its domination.<sup>222</sup> He avers that analysis must take account of the multiple spheres through which people move, rather than a simple, fictional “public sphere,” and in Niger, homes prove themselves to be crucial exhibitionary spaces for state power, in all its ubiquity and its complexity. As commodities frequently exchanged as gifts, these hand woven textiles also index ways that women accessed and distributed capital and power in political and economic systems designed around patron-client relationships rather than waged labor.<sup>223</sup>

Anne McClintock warns that “All nationalisms are gendered; all are invented, and all are dangerous...dangerous...in the sense that they represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence.”<sup>224</sup> She goes on to say that, “Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit.”<sup>225</sup> Or, as Deniz Kandiyoti argues, “Nationness is thus equated with gender, parentage, skin-color—all those things that are not chosen and which, by virtue of their inevitability, elicit selfless attachment and sacrifice. The association of women with the private domain reinforces the merging of the nation/community with the selfless mother/devout wife.”<sup>226</sup> Through the collaborative creation and domestic display of textiles, women and weavers, who both faced circumscribed opportunities as citizens and residents as compared with men of high social status, worked together on their own expressions of

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<sup>222</sup> J. A. Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 104.

<sup>223</sup> See Mbembé 2001 and Robert B. Charlick, *Niger: Personal Rule and Survival in the Sahel* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

<sup>224</sup> Anne McClintock, “‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Gender, Race, and Nationalism.” In *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 89.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and its Discontents.” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* March 20 (1991): 434.

citizenry and nationhood, which have hitherto not been analyzed as such, for they were ignored by most scholars, appropriated by men in positions of power for their own nationalist agendas, and collected or rejected as examples of traditional African art.

This participation did not alleviate the inherent dangers of African nationalist modernities in Niger, but by analyzing these art forms, we can better comprehend those dangers—as well as the concurrent opportunities for many. Partha Chatterjee has observed that

the story of nationalist emancipation is necessarily a story of betrayal. Because it could confer freedom only by imposing at the same time a whole set of new controls, it could define a cultural identity for the nation only by excluding many from its fold; and it could grant the dignity of citizenship to some only because the others always needed to be represented and could not be allowed to speak for themselves.<sup>227</sup>

In Niger, defining a domestic nation in contrast to the foreign world required the representational domestication of women, artisans, nomads, and certain entire ethnicities. Through the creation and display of textiles, the unevenness and unpredictability of this project becomes evident.

### *A Changing Textile World in the Early Twentieth Century Sahel*

Prior to the twentieth century, most weaving in the Sahel produced plain, white cloth composed of uniform strips sewn together. Jean-Paul Olivier de Sardan and others have emphasized that this was true for the Djerma, for whom such cloth was

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<sup>227</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 154.

called *fatala*.<sup>228</sup> Much of the cloth production in the nineteenth century in Marka, Songhay, and Songhay-Djerma cultures was performed by enslaved weavers, although Hausa weavers and Fulani weavers of intricate luxury textiles were generally free and had relatively high social status.<sup>229</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, much of the population in the Sahel was enslaved in the nineteenth century, and free propertied Djerma and Tuareg people of high social status considered weaving appropriate labor for enslaved workers.<sup>230</sup> There were different kinds of slavery, and in Djerma culture, a weaver became synonymous with a *horso*, which was a category of slave that had higher social status compared to other slaves. While they lacked autonomy, they were not to be violently mistreated or sold. Variations on this practice existed, and some *horso* men had property rights that extended to allowing them to own slaves themselves.<sup>231</sup> In the twentieth century, many Bellah Tuareg, or the descendants of those enslaved by Tuareg nobles, were weavers and subsistence farmers. It is unclear whether most of their ancestors were weavers when enslaved, or if freed Bellah adopted the craft as a way to support themselves independently of the collapsed Tuareg social structure in Niger's colonial and neocolonial realities.

The largest centers of production for plain white cloth were located outside of what is now Niger. In terms of scale, the most important weaving was inarguably

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<sup>228</sup> Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Les Sociétés Songhay-Zarma, Niger-Mali : Chefs, Guerriers, Esclaves, Paysans* (Paris: Karthala, 1984) : 55 ; Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Caakey," *Concepts Et Conceptions Songhay-Zarma: Histoire, Culture, Société* (Paris: Nubia, 1982): 80.

<sup>229</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1982: 80; Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Métiers Manuels: Division Du Travail Et Classifications Sociales." In *Systèmes De Signes: Textes Réunis En Hommage à Germaine Dieterlen*, 393–412. Actualités Scientifiques Et Industrielles (Paris: Hermann, 1978): 404.

<sup>230</sup> Martin. Klein, "Appendix 1: How Many Slaves?" in *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 252; Olivier de Sardan 1982: 214.

<sup>231</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1982: 214. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Métiers Manuels: Division Du Travail Et Classifications Sociales." In *Systèmes De Signes: Textes Réunis En Hommage à Germaine Dieterlen*, 393–412. Actualités Scientifiques Et Industrielles (Paris: Hermann, 1978): 404-405.

Kano and its environs, where Heinrich Barth documented various kinds of cloth being made in 1850s.<sup>232</sup> It was also through Hausa-controlled trade networks centered in what is now Northern Nigeria that much industrially produced cloth first reached many Sahelian residents, including the Djerma and the Tuareg, in addition to other Hausa.<sup>233</sup> There was a great output of plain white cloth, but Hausa weavers were also famed for the very fine weaving and indigo dyed cloth preferred by the Tuareg and the Wodaabe. Barth also remarked that there was “plaid of various colors,” which was used for women’s wrapping garments.<sup>234</sup> There were also varieties of blankets, many of which were exported. The Hausa term for blanket is “sakala,” and these would have great impact on weaving in Niger in the mid-twentieth century. In addition to the Maabuube Fulani weaving tradition, the non-casted, enslaved or formerly enslaved Fulani weavers around Dori and Liptako produced a variety of important textiles.

Even apprentices in the more complex weaving traditions of the Sahel began by learning to weave plain white cloth. The relative rarity of textiles meant that all were very dear, and thus strips of cotton were used as currency. Barth complained of their unwieldiness, but this demonstrates the importance of the control over weaving labor. Several of my interlocutors in Niger laughingly recounted stories they had heard of their ancestors who might have shared one piece of cloth among all of the women and one boubou among all of the men in a single compound. The exact accuracy or applicability of this scenario is less important than the collective memory of a scarcity

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<sup>232</sup> Heinrich Barth and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Barth's Travels in Nigeria; extracts from the journal of Heinrich Barth's travels in Nigeria, 1850-1855*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962: 114-115.

<sup>233</sup> See “Hawsance” in Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Concepts et Conceptions Songhay-Zarma: Histoire, Culture, Société* (Paris: Nubia, 1982); and Mahdi Adamu, *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1978).

<sup>234</sup> Barth and Kirk-Green 1962: 114-115.

of textiles to which it attests.

Richard Roberts has explained how French interventions into cotton farming in the French Soudan (now Mali) in the early twentieth century did not result in the colonially planned goals, but actually *increased* hand weaving for a time.<sup>235</sup> Bernhard Gardi observed that as late as World War II, local production of cloth was so significant that the French colonial government requisitioned two thousand kilometers of cloth from the French Soudan in 1945.<sup>236</sup> Imported cloth began to become more widespread in Niger in the 1930s and 1940s, as both French and Hausa businesspeople worked to sell it to people there.<sup>237</sup> However, the interruptions in the supply chains during World War II revived the broad need for hand-woven cloth.<sup>238</sup> The French colonial government implemented two large weaving centers on the Hausa model at that time, one in Zinder and the other in Tessaoua.<sup>239</sup> By this time, there was a perception among Africans in French formal schooling that imported industrially woven cloth was superior, as remarks to that effect can be found in the memoirs of Amadou Hampaté Bâ, Boubou Hama, and Albert Ferral.<sup>240</sup>

Highly intricate weaving traditions produced by specific families and communities co-existed with the production of plain white cotton strips and cloth.

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<sup>235</sup> See Richard L. Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800-1946* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>236</sup> Bernhard Gardi, "Two Million Meters of Cloth," in Bernhard Gardi, ed., *Woven Beauty: The Art of West African Textiles* (Basel: Museum der Kulturen, 2009): 15.

<sup>237</sup> In addition to de Sardan 1982, see Dossier 6Q 117 74 at the National Archives of Senegal.

<sup>238</sup> Roberts 1996: 80.

<sup>239</sup> Finn Fuglestad, *A History of Niger, 1850-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 140.

<sup>240</sup> See Amadou Hampaté Bâ, Théodore Monod, and Alain Gheerbrant. *Amkoullel, L'Enfant Peul Mémoires* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1992); Albert Ferral, *Histoire des Foyers des Metis de la Colonie du Niger* (Niamey: Issa Béri, 2007): 16; and Boubou Hama, *Kotia-Nima, Rencontre Avec l'Europe* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1969): 105. Hama mentions that a pair of pants and a shirt from locally woven cloth made up part of the "rudimentary materials" issued to each student at his school in Ouagadougou, while Ferral notes that in the 1940s, clothing from imported cloth was imperative for the students at the elite school for the children of French men and African women in Zinder, Niger.

While Sinka identifies his ethnicity as Songhay, his grandfather was a *Maabo*, or part of an endogamous group that was renowned as far away as the Asante kingdom for their grand wool furnishing textiles, as well as the popular wool blankets, *khasas*.<sup>241</sup> These textiles are the only instances of wool weaving known in West Africa. The patronage and exchange networks spanned ethnicities. As a young man, Sinka produced textiles for Songhay patrons in the region of Timbuktu. Some *Maabuube* in that area produced *arkilla jenngo* for Tuareg patrons.

Songhay patrons around Timbuktu commissioned *arkilla kerka* for their daughters, and this example at the Musée du quai Branly shows many of the defining features of the genre. (Figure 2.2) It includes the most common motifs, including the central section of symbols representing the moon and stars.<sup>242</sup> The top band (referred to as *cigareti* because of its small black and white stripes) was used to hang it, and the bottom band is less intricately woven, because it brushed the floor and would show greater wear. The *arkilla kerka* and *arkilla kounta* both often included the eyes of the bull motif, which would become the most significant in the cotton *kounta*, while the moon and stars motif marks the *tcharka*. A Wogo-Songhay patron near Tillabéry would commission two *arkilla kounta* in advance of a daughter's wedding. The finer

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<sup>241</sup> The capital of the Asante kingdom was Kumasi, in what is now central Ghana. The export of *arkillas* and other textiles to Ghana remained important well into the twentieth century, as evidenced by the provenance of many important Sahelian textiles in American and European collections. Many textiles made in Niger and Mali that are in major collections were purchased in Ghana or Benin, including some collected by René Gardi at the Museum der Kulturen in Basel, Switzerland, and objects in the Lamb Collection at the Smithsonian Institution. For a concise discussion of *arkilla* textiles, see Bernard Gardi, "Mali: Weaving with Wool and Cotton," Museum der Kulturen Basel, Bernhard Gardi, Kerstin Bauer, and Rogier Michiel Alphons Bedaux. *Woven Beauty: The Art of West African textiles* (Basel: Museum der Kulturen, 2009): 61-70. Bernard Gardi also provides an extensive analysis of the *Mabuube* in his dissertation: Bernard Gardi, *Ein Markt Wie Mopti: Handwerkerkasten Und Traditionelle Techniken in Mali* (Basel: Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum für Völkerkunde ;In Kommission bei Wepf, 1985): 25.

<sup>242</sup> Gardi et. al. 2009: 86-87.

work went to the bride, and the other was sold to a Hausa trader who would, in turn, sell the work in Ghana. Admired for their skill, the *Maabuube* occupied an ambivalent social status. Comparable to other endogamous artisanal castes in Africa, their technical skills were associated with other ones, especially spiritual, and they were thus somewhat feared although their work was so desired.<sup>243</sup> The social status associated with weaving was thus highly variable, as in some cases, like the *Maabuube* and the Hausa, weavers were fairly well-regarded socially, but in other cases, such as the Djerma and in some Tuareg communities during the nineteenth century, almost all weaving was done by enslaved men.



Figure 2.2: *Arkillia Kerka*, Cotton and wool, Mid-Twentieth Century  
Collection of Musée du Quai Branly, Accession Number: 70.2002.19.1

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<sup>243</sup> Gardi 2009: 69.

Gardi has distinguished the Fulani weaving industries around Dori and Liptako from those of the *Maabuube*, but they were no less significant for their reputations as centers of skilled complex weaving.<sup>244</sup> In the nineteenth century, many weavers were enslaved and others took weaving up as a trade, and so while their skill inspired admiration and ambivalence, they were not part of the same endogamous caste as the *Maabuube*. Fulani oral traditions gave great metaphoric importance to weaving, and hand-spun thread, loom implements, and hand-woven cloth were essential to some religious and healing practices in communities in the Sahel.<sup>245</sup>

French invasions in the region upended many aspects of the local economy. The French abolition of slavery in 1904 had many implications for an industry almost entirely dependent on enslaved labor or longstanding patronage relationships. Many formerly enslaved people became entrepreneurs and gained far greater mobility, as they moved from one patron's home to another.<sup>246</sup> Roberts also has observed that colonialism in the French Soudan resulted in an expansion of women's opportunities to generate income, and this included their flexibility as patrons of itinerant weavers. French colonial incursions also resulted in disruptive migrations for many. The reasons for the abolition of slavery were economic and political, and officers shortly corralled some of the formerly enslaved into camps with the unintentionally ironic names, *Villages des Libérés*, where they were forced to work on French infrastructure

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<sup>244</sup> Gardi 2009: 66.

<sup>245</sup> This symbolism has only been heightened by the increased association of cloth hand-woven from hand-spun thread with ancestors, since it is contrasted to the massive quantities of industrially-produced cloth.

<sup>246</sup> Roberts 1996: 94.

projects.<sup>247</sup> Many others in the West of what was then the Military Territory of Niger simply left. Many, many people emigrated to the South, to what were then known as the Gold Coast and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>248</sup> The violent terror and theft of the Voulet Expedition, the transformation of indigenous hierarchies, and the heavy cash-based tax burden of the early twentieth century began a pattern of both seasonal and permanent migration that has persisted to the present day.<sup>249</sup>

Weaving was and is largely a hereditary vocation, with fathers teaching their sons the craft. While this may seem obvious in the case of the *Maabuube*, it was and is true among other groups as well, although interethnic apprenticeships and working relationships between weavers also occurred. Boubou Hama emphasized the collegial loyalty among weavers in the region by recounting that “When a weaver quarrels with a patron after having arranged the warp for her commission, the strict rule in the region forbids another weaver from weaving on that warp. The absolute rule, even now, allows no exception. This custom is stronger than Western labor unions.”<sup>250</sup> Hama also underlined the fact that a weaver’s patron is “always a woman.”<sup>251</sup> In 2001, weaver Dauda Gudi of Bonkougou explained to me in a mildly impatient tone of stating the obvious, “We are workers *for* women.”<sup>252</sup> In the same work on education in Africa, Hama quoted from an interview with the weaver Djoumari Kindo, who he identified as the most senior weaver in Say, where other Djerma and Fulani weavers

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<sup>247</sup> See Fuglestad 1983: 68 and Stoller 1995: 64-66. Forced labor was not abolished in the Afrique Occidentale Française until 1945.

<sup>248</sup> Fuglestad 1983: 87.

<sup>249</sup> Jean Klobb, *A La Recherche De Voulet: Sur Les Traces Sanglantes De La Mission Afrique Centrale, 1898-1899*. Nouv. éd. (Paris: Cosmopole, 2001).

<sup>250</sup> Boubou Hama, *Essai d'Analyse de l'Education Africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1968): 184.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Interview, April 3, 2010, Bonkougou, Niger.

were working at that time in 1968. Kindo learned from his grandfather and uncle, explaining that it was only after a very long apprenticeship throughout his childhood of running errands and adolescence of weaving plain white cloth that he learned how to weave more ornate designs, or the *suban*. He characterized weaving as deeply influenced by magic and spirits, and was evidently a primary source for Hama's description of solidarity among weavers.<sup>253</sup>

It was in the early twentieth century that a basic practice for a woman's patronage of a weaver took form in the region outside of the context of widespread, legal slave labor.<sup>254</sup> It grew out of precedents and there were exceptions, of course, such as the larger industries of Northern Nigeria, with their unique sourcing and employment practices, but this basic system for the domestic commissioning of cloth was widespread.<sup>255</sup> In many Djerma communities, enslaved *horso* weavers had woven for customers in similar patronage agreements, which allowed them to accumulate capital, sometimes making them more wealthy than those who claimed to own them.<sup>256</sup> A woman was responsible for providing the weaver with sufficient yarn.<sup>257</sup>

For the first half of the twentieth century, she and other members of her household

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<sup>253</sup> Hama 1968: 384. The earliest documentation I have located of an artisanal cooperative in Niger was a colonial record of a weavers' collective in Filingué in 1952 (National Archives of Niger, Unnumbered Document). This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four, but this informal vocational solidarity may be one element that contributed to weavers' relative disinterest in the artisanal cooperatives that began multiplying in Niger in the 1990s.

<sup>254</sup> Slavery continues to exist in Niger, and although it is certainly not as widespread as it was in the early twentieth century, it continues to impede democracy in Niger. In addition to contemporary slavery, the descendants of former slaves encounter various kinds of discrimination. See Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Quand Nos Pères Étaient Captifs: Récits Paysans du Niger* (Paris: Nubia, 1976); Moustapha Kadi Oumani, *Un Tabou Brisé: L'Esclavage en Afrique, Cas du Niger* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 2005); and Kadir Abdelkader Galy, *L'Esclavage au Niger: Aspects Historiques et Juridiques* (Paris: Karthala, 2010).

<sup>255</sup> See Bernus 1968: 53 for an account of this system in 1968.

<sup>256</sup> Olivier de Sardan 1982: 216; Olivier de Sardan 1984: 55.

<sup>257</sup> Some weavers may have relied on their wives and other female family members to produce enough yarn over their family's needs to be able to sell excess cloth.

generally spun this yarn. Patrons' participation in the design process seems to have varied greatly, but again, the vast amount of cloth being produced up until the mid-twentieth century was plain white cloth or clothes with simple stripes for people's quotidian and holiday wear. For more complex blankets, wall-hangings, and garments, patrons made suggestions in some cases and in others, the weaver had full aesthetic authority. The patron was responsible for supplying a weaver's food, kola, and cigarettes (or tobacco for making cigarettes) for the duration of his work for that patron. At the end of the commission, the patron gave the weaver a small sum of money, but as weavers were frequently also subsistence farmers and women had limited means of gaining cash (not coincidentally, one of those means was commissioning more textiles than her family needed and selling those), neither women nor weavers operated in an economy greatly reliant on French-produced cash. As explained earlier, textiles *were* currency.

Roberts has explained that in the French Soudan, the unsteadiness of importation of industrially produced cloth resulted in reliable, and even at times growing, demand for locally hand-woven cloth, and thus, weavers, spinners, and patrons "escape[d] direct participation in the colonial economy."<sup>258</sup> The formerly enslaved, other artisans, and women also were not populations targeted by French formal education, which was even scarcer in Niger than it was in other parts of the A.O.F. Ousseina Alidou observed that this impeded women's access to a colonially-mediated globalizing capitalist economies. Instead, women and weavers collaborated together in a parallel, less cash-based textile economy that would thrive in various

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<sup>258</sup> Roberts 1996: 196.

incarnations through most of the twentieth century.<sup>259</sup> Or, as two leaders of the Association des Femme du Niger explained in 2010, “Before, life was not as expensive.”<sup>260</sup>

According to Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger acquisition records, in 1959-1960, a new cotton blanket by a Djerma or Bellah weaver with some floating weft designs cost between 2000 and 2500 francs, while the museum paid 3,500 for a *téra-tera* during the same period. A cotton version of an *arkilla kounta* was purchased from weaver Ali Mabo, who was the first weaver recruited to work at the museum, for 7500 francs, and the wool *arkilla kounta* were unsurprisingly the most valuable acquisitions, with two new ones being purchased for 17,000 francs (8,500 each) and an old one for 10,000 francs. According to Bernus, in 1968, a patron paid a weaver between 400 and 700 francs for a simple blanket and several thousand for ones with more complex designs.<sup>261</sup>

The more ornate weaving traditions were important aspects of marriage ceremonies in many communities. Olivier de Sardan has observed that there were countless variations on the long process of marriage just among the Songhay-Djerma, and a survey of precise marriage traditions among the diverse populations in what is now Niger is beyond the scope of this project. In some pastoral and sedentary Fulani communities, the bride’s parents were expected to present the groom with a blanket that the couple would use. A Songhay-Wogo bride received an *arkilla kounta* that she would then use as decoration and protection from mosquitos in her home in her

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<sup>259</sup> Ousseina Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005): 61.

<sup>260</sup> Interview, May 7, 2010, Sadou Aichatou Komelo and Cissé Boucano.

<sup>261</sup> Bernus 1968: 53.

husband's compound. Among the Songhay-Djerma, the bride's family also presented blankets to the bride and groom, and some other members of the wedding party, especially key women in the groom's family. For this, most Djerma women preferred the *suban* and the *téra-tera*, which were used as garments as well as blankets.

### ***Weaving in the City: Itinerant Weavers and Elastic Genres***

As discussed in Chapter One, Niamey began to grow into a city in earnest in the 1950s. It was at this time that women began to migrate to cities across West Africa. This was the market that Sinka heard about when he decided to move to Niamey. Why Niamey? Bamako, which was a historic city rather than a colonial invention, had plenty of weavers at that time—twenty might have worked side by side, Sinka told me.<sup>262</sup> But in the new city of Niamey, it was a seller's market. Larger numbers of people in a city had many implications for women's lives, in addition to this initial shortage of weavers. As argued by Alidou and Roberts, there were new economic opportunities, but much of the migration was also in response to difficulties in rural areas, which included drought and taxation. Hama offered early analyses on urbanization, and while his enthusiasm for the opportunities of urban living are clear in his monograph on Niamey in 1955, after almost a decade leading the National Assembly of a nation-state, he insisted on the significance of crises in rural Niger as contributing factors to the still accelerating urbanization in the region in 1969.<sup>263</sup>

If living in a city did not guarantee access to novel imported consumer goods

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<sup>262</sup> Ali Sinka, Interview, October 13, 2009.

<sup>263</sup> Boubou Hama, *Etude Monographique: Textes et Documents Sur la Ville de Niamey* (Niamey: IFAN, 1955); and Boubou Hama, *L'Exode Rural: Un Problème de Fond* (Niamey: Editions de la Croix Rouge, 1969).

and houses with electricity and running water, it certainly familiarized its residents with these things and with notions of development that were based on consumption.<sup>264</sup> Most Niamey residents continued to live in indigenous architecture, such as compounds made up of huts or small adobe buildings. But distinctions between the domestic space and the city were inevitably different from the spatial configurations of the nomadic encampments, small villages, and towns from which most residents were arriving. Niamey was also a far different city than Kano, Dakar, Bamako, and other cities some immigrants were leaving to set up shop in the new city. For example, Tuareg women's mobility and self-control were seriously circumscribed upon sedentarization because of new, constant proximity of strangers, especially those from other ethnic groups, and they thus resisted sedentarization as or more strongly than many Tuareg men.<sup>265</sup> This dynamic possibly occurred for other women as well, but others found increased business and life opportunities.

This proximity amplified the Sahelian brassage between ethnicities, too. Bernus focused on endogamous marriages, but briefly discussed the fact that she documented an equal number of interethnic marriages. She also noted that these did not represent a novel urban phenomenon, but were already common, depending on class and ethnicity.<sup>266</sup> The joking relationships between ethnicities became only more important in the new urban context, but stereotypes and discrimination were serious impediments for many, especially those who were enslaved or whose ancestors had

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<sup>264</sup> Chatterjee 1993: 208. Chatterjee discusses the ways that the notions of development introduced in India in the 1950s emphasized accumulation of new commodities.

<sup>265</sup> In the 1930s, a French colonial medical doctor characterized Tuareg women as "very resistant to progress and to modern ideas. It is the women are the most serious obstacle to the sedentarization of the Tuareg." Henri Foley, *Moeurs et Médecine des Touareg de l'Ahaggar* (Calvisson, France: Editions Jacques Gandini, 1995): 51-2.

<sup>266</sup> Bernus 1968: 182.

been enslaved. However, the population of Niamey in the 1950s was overwhelmingly of the Djerma ethnicity, and they would remain a majority in the city.<sup>267</sup>

Many people wore garments of hand-woven cloth in the 1950s—and in the city, everyone needed their own garments! A compound full of people sharing a couple of garments became unthinkable, as certain Islamic and Western concepts of modesty grew associated with modernity, propriety, and prosperity. Additionally, the town was now right outside the compound door, instead of a day or more of travel away. It is this shift in understanding of privacy, nudity, domesticity, and the public that my Nigerien interlocutors found so amusing in 2010. This market for clothing created an increased need for plain white cloth, striped cloth, cloth with minor decorations, indigo- or synthetic-dyed cloth, and elaborate cloth used as garments (like the *téra-tera*). However, this influx of diverse women inspired an influx of equally diverse weavers who met many other textile needs. Patrons did not commission Sinka, other *Maabuube* weavers, Fulani weavers from Dori, or the most highly skilled Djerma weavers for their daily needs, which many of them began meeting with industrially-produced cloth in the 1950s, in any case. These highly-skilled weavers were regarded as producers of luxury goods that families needed as part of ever more elaborate wedding ceremonies. Patronage of weavers, the trade in textiles, and the collection of weavings were primary ways that women could create, access, and control wealth. Commissioning beautiful, intricately woven blankets and wall hangings for a young bride, her husband, and others, asserted a family's high status, a gesture that was especially important in a new city where social relations were in flux.

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<sup>267</sup> For early studies on Niamey, including Bernus' emphasis on ethnicity, see Hama 1955 and Bernus 1968.

At weddings in Niamey from the 1950 through 1980s, guests wanted to know how many blankets the bride had received.<sup>268</sup> It was also a deeply felt expression of love and affection, as it permitted the young woman to decorate her home and provided her with capital that she could liquidate when needed.

Industrially produced yarn became widely available in Niamey at this time in the 1950s, which transformed women's roles in textile production. Women who could afford to purchase industrially spun yarn were released from the many hours of labor required to spin sufficient yarn for a garment or blanket. This also meant that groups of women no longer had this shared task as a reason to gather and chat in the evenings, but new, urban forms of visiting and socializing emerged. The blankets that they commissioned revel in the new palette of colors, the novel flexibility in patronage relationships, and the abandonment of some design strictures. The *arkilla kounta*, in cotton form, became the *kounta*, and while it retained many of the most significant motifs, especially the *gite ngaari* or "eyes of the bull," many others are excised, the composition is simpler, and the visual effect of the bright oranges and reds were utterly different.<sup>269</sup> (Figure 2.3). The greater contrast in colors suited the tastes of women who were also buying the brightly colored wax-print cloth to wear.<sup>270</sup> As with the strip in Figure 2.1, this example at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger includes the fringe that was popular in wall hangings in Niger in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. It added dimensionality to the work, and it attested to a patron's capacity to

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<sup>268</sup> Sadou Aichatou Komelo and Cissé Boucano, Interview, May 7, 2010.

<sup>269</sup> Gardi 2009: 86-91.

<sup>270</sup> Both the MNBH acquisition records and Bernus use "kounta" as an umbrella term for blanket, which indicates the central significance of the *arkilla* tradition as a reference point for Niamey residents. However, I follow the definition of *kounta* given to me by weavers in 2010, which is a cotton wall hanging for which the methods and motifs are derived from the wool *arkilla kounta*.

purchase the additional yarn required. Some of the motifs have also grown larger and less detailed than their wool predecessors, and there is more use of floating weft designs in combination with tapestry.



Figure 2.3: *Kounta* Wall Hanging, Cotton, ca. 1970  
Collection of the Musée National du Niger.

Although the wall hangings were lighter in weight than wool *arkillas*, weavers used many of the same basic weaving techniques, and they are strongly weft-faced and include masterful tapestry sections. The *arkilla kerka* became the *tcharka*, which shares some motifs with the *kounta*, but seems to be most distinguished by the presence of the *lewruwal* and *kode* tapestry motifs (the moon and stars, respectively) and a complex tapestry zigzag design. Some wall hangings freely borrowed from various genres and traditions, and one fine example in the collection of the Musée

National Boubou Hama du Niger draws motifs from both *arkilla jenngo* and *arkilla kerka* models, and through a strong use of black, white, and the primary colors, invents a novel but cohesive aesthetic statement. (Figure 2.4) Its overall symmetrical form leads the eye to the assymmetric central tapestry design of concentric diamond shapes, which suggest both abstracted eyes and energetic movement.



Figure 2.4: *Arkilla*-derived wallhanging, Cotton, c. 1960s or 1970s  
Collection of the Musée National du Niger

The adoption of industrially produced yarn, which was far stronger than the handspun yarn that was prone to frequent breakage, also contributed to changes in the weaving styles to the north of Niamey, largely composed of Bellah Tuareg, but the area is also populated by Fulani, Djerma, and Hausa. Defying the common knowledge that the “Tuareg” do not weave, Bellah weavers who identify as Tuareg also suggest

the need for a reiteration of Barbara E. Frank's arguments that the links between ethnicity and style must be understood as elastic and that careful attention must be paid to patrons' and artists' aesthetic input.<sup>271</sup> Many of their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers had produced white cloth, and likely *suban* and *téra-tera* wedding blankets, when in bondage to members of the Tuareg noble class. In the 1950s, numbers of weavers in Bonkougou and Baleyara began migrating seasonally to Niamey to work in patrons' homes. Unlike weavers like Sinka who arrived in Niamey in 1954 and remained based there, most Bellah weavers in Bonkougou, Baleyara, and other nearby villages returned every year to raise their family's food for the year. These wall hangings are referred to as *sakala*, which is the Hausa term for woven blankets, and they shared certain formal characteristics, such as strips with a diameter of approximately twenty centimeters.<sup>272</sup> They also have an emphasis on horizontal stripes interspersed with relatively simple floating weft designs, although because the Bellah *sakala* designs are derived from *arkilla*, *munyuure*, and *téra-tera* motifs, they tend to be more complex than most on Hausa blankets. Notably, these same formal qualities are very similar to the *munyuure*, a kind of blanket in widespread use among Fulani groups in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. The emphasis in some *sakala* on black backgrounds was an apparent nod to the Fulani market, whose taste was shaped by the dark, traditionally indigo-dyed *munyuure*. The *munyuure* has roots in one of

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<sup>271</sup> Frank pointed this out in an analysis of leatherwork in the Sahel. Barbara Frank, "Open Borders: Style and Ethnic Identity," *African Arts* 20. 4 (1987): 48.

<sup>272</sup> Bernus gives "sakala" as the Fulani word equivalent to the Djerma word "kounta." Both were and are used to refer to a wide formal variety of blankets, with certain identifying characteristics each. Her ascription of the Hausa word "sakala" to the Fulani and the essentially Fulani word "kounta" to the Djerma is instructive as an indication of the resistance of Niamey textiles to easy ethnic classifications for Bernus' study of ethnicities in Niamey. Bernus 1968: 74.

Africa's oldest weaving traditions.<sup>273</sup>

### ***Woven Nationalism: The Téra-tera, the Kounta and the First Republic of Niger***

Perhaps the most important genre of weavings to be produced in Niamey in the twentieth century was the *téra-tera* blanket, two of which were considered imperative for a wedding of a Djerma person. (Figure 2.5) This intricate *téra-tera* shows the most common colors used in the genre (black, white, and red), along with especially elaborate versions of some of the favored motifs created with floating weft yarns. The central section in a *téra-tera* is called the *babba*. Gardi has observed that many of the motifs in *téra-teras* have been transposed to the much narrower strips (strips vary between eight and fifteen cm in diameter) from *arkilla* motifs.<sup>274</sup> The *téra-tera* is essentially a more elaborate *suban*, a decorated blanket and garment that uses many of the same motifs on bands of similar widths, but lacks the central section with a greater concentration of complex floating weft designs. A *téra-tera* is considered superior to a *suban*. With so few examples of West African textiles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in museum collections, it is extremely difficult to conjecture when the *téra-tera* genre known today emerged.<sup>275</sup> Some complex weaving tradition was already in place in the form of the *suban* and other genres, especially for the elite

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<sup>273</sup> See Renée Boser-Sarivaxévanis, "An Introduction to Weavers and Dyers in West Africa," Rita Bolland, Rogier Michiel Alphons Bedaux, and Renée Boser-Sarivaxévanis, eds. *Tellem Textiles: Archaeological Finds From Burial Caves in Mali's Bandiagara Cliff* (Amsterdam: Tropenmuseum/Royal Tropical Institute, 1991): 41.

<sup>274</sup> Bernhard Gardi, "The Research Expedition 1973-1975," in Bernhard Gardi, ed, *Woven Beauty: The Art of West African Textiles* (Basel: Museum der Kulturen, 2009): 34.

<sup>275</sup> The analysis that follows does not focus on the influences the Djerma weavers in Téra used to invent the *téra-tera*, nor do I attempt to pinpoint a date for its emergence as a form. Extensive research in Western Niger would be necessary for such hypotheses, and due to the activities of Al Qaeda in the Maghreb at the time, that was not feasible during my stay in Niger in 2009 and 2010.

Djerma who were marshaling large amounts of slave labor in the nineteenth century, but it is certain that affordable industrially produced yarn, and weavers' greater control over their own labor formalized the genre and made it available to more of the Djerma population in the first half of the twentieth century, especially beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, with the Djerma weaving centers in Tillabéry and Téra.<sup>276</sup>

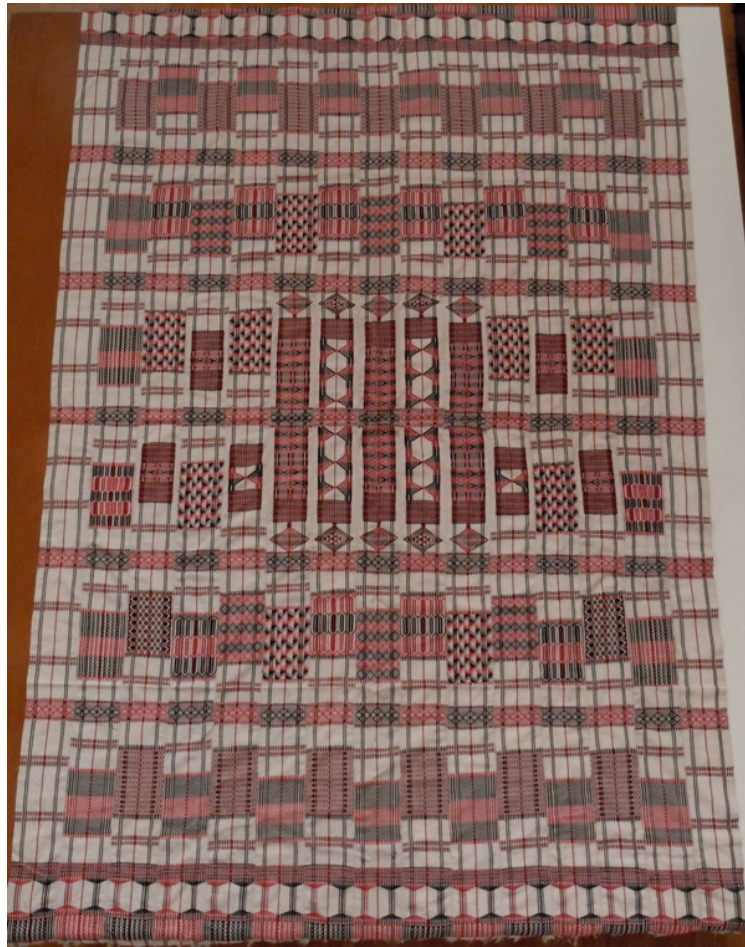


Figure 2.5: *Téra-tera*, Cotton, c. 1950s  
Collection of the author.

A *téra-tera* can be composed of fifteen, seventeen, or twenty-one strips. There are horizontal border motifs on the top and bottom, and four continuous horizontal

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<sup>276</sup> Thanks to Bernhard Gardi for sharing his insights on the emergence of the *téra-tera* as an important form during the “Independence era,” broadly defined as the period from the conclusion of World War II until the 1960s.

stripes composed of a floating werte motifs are also placed in the center. The motifs on most of the work are contained small rectangular stripes contained by each strip, which are visually balanced through alternation or through apparently random but evenly distributed placement. All *téra-tera* blankets have a large central section, the *babba*, in which more complex motifs are balanced both horizontally and vertically. Symmetry is an important design element, although there is some flexibility with the interspersed motifs outside of the *babba*, providing that they follow a logical rhythm. They may or may not have warp stripes, and several sub-categories exist. Most notably, in the *krou-krou*, white sections are replaced by sections with small black dots on a white background, as in this example at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. (Figure 2.6) This example has a prominent *babba*, and it features the *kulnej gumumo* and the *garbey kopto* motifs.



Figure 2.6: *Krou-krou*, Cotton, c. 1960s or 1970s  
Collection of the Musée National du Niger

Numerous motif designs appear on *téra-tera* blankets, but variations on two occur most frequently, the *kulnej gutumo* and *garbey kopto*. *Kulnej gutumo* represents bird's eyes, and it relates to widespread practices of eye motifs that ward off the "evil eye," and this is also an example of Gardi's observations that most motifs reflect objects in nature.<sup>277</sup> (Figure 2.7) Likewise, *garbey kopto* can be made from different formations of triangles, which represent the leaves of a kind of acacia tree common in the region.<sup>278</sup> (Figure 2.8) Protective of the person sheltered in it and exuding symbolic vegetational fertility, *téra-tera* textiles were sumptuous items gifted to a young couple from the bride's family in an act of ritual beneficence, as well as a statement to the groom's family and the community at large of the family's capacity to commission works of great quality.



Figure 2.7: Detail of *krou-krou* in Figure 17. Example of *kulnej gutumo* motif.

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<sup>277</sup> Gardi 2009: 87.

<sup>278</sup> The acacia albida is called *garbey* in Zarma and *kopto* is the Zarma word for "leaf."



Figure 2.8: Detail of *krou-krou* in Figure 17. Example of *garbey kopto* motif.

After the wedding, a *téra-tera* could be kept in storage. Women’s textile collections were sometimes stored visibly in glass-cased shelves holding pots that were also part of their dowries—as the shelves often were, too. In Djerma tradition, women and men retained separate ownership of the textiles given to them, and either could also choose to sell or re-gift theirs. Others used them as conjugal blankets during chilly Sahelian nights. Women wore *téra-tera* textiles as garments during the day, and men used them as wraps to wear in the compound at night. *Téra-tera* textiles were not intended as wall-hangings. As Gountou Soumana explained to me, *téra-tera* were and are considered too precious to hang on the wall, and by doing so, a person would invite criticism and intrigue about their wealth, as in “She is so wealthy that she can

hang even a *téra-tera* on her walls.” The middle section, the *babba*, is a defining feature of the *téra-tera* genre, and if a family could not afford a *téra-tera*, they would strive to purchase at least a *suban*, which had many of the same formal characteristics (strip width, rectangular motifs, border, sometime warp stripes, plain weave with floating weft designs), but lacked the central complex section.

These blankets and garments fit into a broad formal category of West African textiles that demonstrate the aesthetic intention of the strip weaving technique, in that motifs across the bands are carefully balanced with a sense of improvisatory rhythm. Robert Farris Thompson traced most West African stripweaving to the Mande “country cloth” tradition, and he included Senegambian, Djerma, Songhay, Djula, Akan, and Ewe weavers among the inheritors of a textile aesthetics he described in musical terms, a style “surcharged with visual syncopation.”<sup>279</sup> By this, he describes the “tendency toward metric play and staggering of accented elements” that can be observed in the *suban*, such as in the textile in Figure 2.9, and the areas outside of the *babba* on a *téra-tera*, as can be demonstrated in Figures 2.5 and 2.11. The motifs do not line up exactly, but remain balanced, conveying an unexpected dynamism that suggests but does not wholly deliver symmetry.

As itinerant workers seeking patrons or other entrepreneurial opportunities, weavers as a group experienced the social and economic changes in the twentieth century Sahel as or more intensely than most others. They also viewed the gendered spatial configurations of villages, towns, and cities in ways that defied colonial, and later, nationalist, patriarchal assignments of public and domestic control entirely in

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<sup>279</sup> Robert Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1983).

men's hands. For weavers wove in "women's houses," and recognized that women controlled their employment in these domestic spaces.<sup>280</sup> As evidenced by the frequent export of *arkilla* textiles to Ghana, and the wide reach of Hausa textiles, all weavers in Niger were self-consciously part of a wide network of African textile production that stretched from Senegal to Algeria to Nigeria—and that related to an even wider global network encompassing India, Britain, and France.

As noted above, many weavers were among the men seeking waged labor in coastal areas, but it is unclear how much they wove when working other waged jobs there or if they adopted many specific designs or motifs from weavers in those regions.<sup>281</sup> Weaver Mohamadou Hama, known as Mota, spent two years and three months in Ghana between 1957 and 1960 over the course of three different trips. He saw weavers working, but he explained that "I saw them, but I didn't do it. I knew I already knew how to do it. I went to look for work, I wasn't looking for other weavers."<sup>282</sup> The waged labor in Ghana, unlike subsistence farming or weaving, provided much needed capital, and was a categorically different kind of labor for many weavers.

Weavers and their weavings were moving about the region with unprecedented

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<sup>280</sup> When discussing working in patrons' homes in Hausa, weavers always referred to the "*gidanmata*" or the "house of a woman."

<sup>281</sup> More work is needed on this topic. Limited interviews with weavers who emigrated to Ghana in the late twentieth century (from the 1960s until the 1980s) demonstrate a complete lack of interest in aesthetic exchange with Ghanaian weavers. However Kari Yau Gbinsa cites a specific Djerma weaver, Bio Ourou Gani, who introduced innovations to both Baatombu weavers in Benin and Djerma weavers in Niger, as an example of how textiles demonstrate longstanding intercultural exchange there, beginning with nineteenth century Djerma invasions and most recently, the ongoing presence of Djerma men seeking waged labor. Kari Yau Gbinsa, "Le Tissage, Témoin des Liens Historique entre Baatombu et Zarma aux 19e et 20e Siècles," Elisée Akpo Soumonni, et. al. eds. *Peuplement et Migrations Actes du Premier Colloque International de Parakou* (Niamey, Niger: Editions du Centre, 2000): 151.

<sup>282</sup> Mohamadou "Mota" Hama, Interview, November 16, 2009.

intensity. As discussed in Chapter One, numbers of weavers participated in world's fairs and smaller expositions, the heyday of which was the 1920s and 1930s, and the potential for travel rapidly expanded. The possible kinds of transportation multiplied, and this was a theme that weavers embraced. Representational weaving was popular in the region at least as early as 1928, which was when a Djerma textile with representational weaving was acquired in the region purchased by the Newark Museum.<sup>283</sup> In 1930, Françoise Zelter purchased a similar women's garment in Mali, which is now in the collections of the Musée du quai Branly. (Figure 2.9) It is recorded as Hausa, but that may refer to the weaver, an intermediary seller, or the woman who wore it. It is very formally related to Djerma weaving from the areas around Tera and Dori, and it includes images of people standing together, people next to cattle, ostriches, and a man on a horse. Both the examples would be defined as *suban* in Niger. A partial *kounta* from the 1960s or 1970s in the Musée National Boubou Hama collection includes representations of airplanes. (Figure 2.10) This *kounta* combines floating weft techniques with tapestry motifs borrowed from *arkilla* traditions.

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<sup>283</sup> Newark Museum Object Accession Number 28.838.



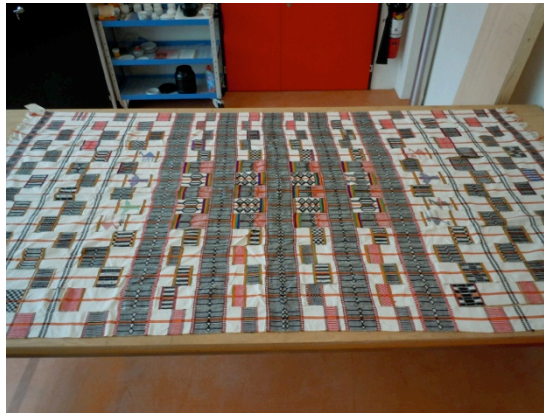
Figure 2.9: Woman's wrapping garment (*pagne*), Cotton,  
Attributed to the Hausa, c. 1930  
Collection of the Musée du Quai Branly, Accession Number 71.1930.61.568



Figure 2.10: Detail of *Arkillia*-derived wallhanging depicting airplanes.  
Cotton, c. 1960s and 1970s.  
Collection of the Musée National du Niger

In 1973, Boser-Sarivaxévanis and Gardi collected a *téra-tera* made by Abouba Ganda in Dosso that explores transportation in mid- to late-twentieth century Niger. The *babba* central section and the alternating rectangular designs of the outer sections include *garbey kopto*, *kulnej gutumo*, and other conventional *téra-tera* motifs. What makes this blanket unusual are the eight images on either side of the *babba*. (Figure 2.11) Like the Newark and Musée du quai Branly examples, the images are woven and not embroidered. Especially considering the significance of cars in experience and popular imagination by the 1970s, their absence is notable, but this weaving insists on the simultaneity and modernity of the modes of transportation portrayed. Modes of transportation, especially cars, were an important theme in the films of Jean Rouch, and anthropologist Julien Bondaz has explored Rouch's anxious portrayals of Nigerien

modernity and the ambivalent roles of cars.<sup>284</sup> In one strip, two camels are shown, each with a calf. There are three airplanes, and a man on a horse. There are two more adult camels, each with a man posed beside it. Ganda demonstrates great formal mastery through careful placement of diverse interrelated conventional motifs, in combination with the less common figural images. The people, animals, and machines travel on the textiles that marked a transitional occasion for the man or woman who would receive it. It evoked the potential travel and the changing relationships between people, each other, and the objects around them in the 1970s.



Detail:



Figure 2.11: Abouba Ganda, *Téra-tera*, Cotton, c. 1974.  
Collection of the Museum der Kulturen, Accession Number: III20442

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<sup>284</sup> Julien Bondaz, “Crise de Voiture et Panne de Folie: Itinéraire Thérapeutique dans *Cocorico! Monsieur Poulet* de Jean Rouch,” *Psychopathologie Africaine* XXXIV.2 (2007-2008): 243-255.

As they were associated with marriage ceremonies that invoked ancestral traditions and wishes for fertility, *téra-tera* textiles expressed familial and cultural continuity for many in the 1950s and 1960s. As the Nigerien nation-state began to take shape and internalize colonial ethnic definitions, *téra-tera* and other textile traditions were crucial identifying factors of being Djerma, even as people of other ethnicities began adopting their use in urban areas. The adoption of Djerma status symbols was especially important in a young nation-state with a government dominated by ethnically Djerma men. For the men making *téra-tera* textiles and the women commissioning, selling, giving, and using them, they were experimental, modern, and luxurious objects that reflected their status and aspirations in an unpredictable world. In addition to figural motifs, abstract motifs favored from the 1950s through the 1980s, such as *Niameyeze*, reflected patrons and artists' preoccupation with urbanization and their nationalist pride in their growing capital city. (Figure 2.12) Growing in economic and experiential importance, Niamey was reflected in the small, neat diamond shapes stacked upon one another. Although small and less strictly urban than other cities in the region, Niamey was a city, full of unfamiliar objects, experiences, and people for the women and men migrating there. Red, black, and white remained the most important colors in the genre—with the significant addition of green and orange stripes to many *téra-tera* textiles in the 1960s. These colors represented the Nigerien flag.<sup>285</sup> Blanket designs were also named after de Gaulle, Diori, and other heads of state, as well as notable events.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Bernus 1968: 53.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.



Figure 2.12: Detail of *Téra-tera*: *Niameyeze* Motif, Cotton, c. 1960s and 1970s. Collection of the Musée National du Niger.

The First Republic of Niger took up hand-woven textiles as central symbols of Nigerien national culture in the Fanonian sense of the term.<sup>287</sup> This national culture was intended as anti-colonial, but as Chatterjee and McClintock explain, it introduced additional gendered and class strictures even as others disappeared or became more flexible. With its lack of sculptural traditions among ethnicities that without exception spread across the new national boundaries, representations of textiles and dress asserted both the shared uniqueness of Nigeriens and objectified their ethnic diversity in ways both foreigners and Nigeriens themselves found pleasurable. By bringing women's domestic objects into state display, politicians and bureaucrats successfully imbued the state with a sense of familiarity, an aura of a home. This was one

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<sup>287</sup> See Chapter One.

expression of what Mbembe would call the socialization of state power.<sup>288</sup>

Ali Mabo, whose cotton *kounta* was an early acquisition of the Musée National du Niger and whose surname suggests that he was *Maabo*, was one of the first artisans that Pablo Toucet and Boubou Hama invited to work on site. A small vitrine featuring a detailed handmade miniature loom was among the exhibits in the inaugural gallery in 1959. It is worth noting that many of the weavers in Niamey came from the areas around Timbuktu, Dori, and Liptako—and not from the territory that would become the nation-state of Niger. As artists who worked for women across the region, these weavers were nonetheless asked to make weavings to represent the nation-state of Niger once they came to work at the museum, as many of them did, including Ali Mabo, Ali Sinka, Amadou Oumarou (Fin), and Mohamadou Hama (Mota).

The Costume Pavilion, constructed in 1963, was dominated by mannequins in ethnically identifying ensembles and the large hand-woven textiles that were hung on the walls and installed in the vaulted ceiling. (Figure 2.13) By naming it the “Costume Pavilion,” Toucet, for whom the gallery is now named, indicated the colonial ethnographic perspective embedded in the exhibition. In both English and French, “costume” indicates dress outside of the everyday, and in colonial and postcolonial ethnography, popular journalism, and exhibition, it was conventionally applied to all nonwestern dress to indicate its Otherness.<sup>289</sup> The gallery demands a visitor look up to the textiles. In this installation photograph, the *téra-tera* faces the camera, and the mannequins stand in their vitrines on either side of the image, as well as in the center.

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<sup>288</sup> Mbembé 2001: 46.

<sup>289</sup> See Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, and Joanne B. Eicher. “Dress and Identity.” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 10, no. 4 (June 1, 1992): 1–8.

A large cotton *kounta* hangs on the wall in the background. The weavings featured in the pavilion, and later, in 1975, in effect became the canon of weaving for international representation, despite the far greater extant diversity of wall hangings, blankets, and garments. The genres of this canon were the *téra-tera*, the *krou-krou*, the *munyuure*, and the *kounta*. In his efforts to feature the artists considered most skilled, Toucet recruited Fulani weavers such as Ali Sinka to work at the museum alongside Djerma and Hausa weavers, and the museum became synonymous with the production of *arkilla* motifs in cotton. Sinka left women's houses and began working at the museum in 1968. In addition to other recruited experts such as Ali Mabo and Hamza, other weavers approached Toucet by way of relatives or friends already at the museum, and they were either accepted or not, according to Toucet's assessment of work samples that they submitted to him.



Figure 2.13: Interior view of Costume Pavilion, Musée National du Niger, c. 1963.

Textiles were predominant at the National Museum for several years after 1963, with the Costume Pavilion being the second of only two galleries and the presence of as many as fifteen or twenty weavers in the reconstruction of a Songhay village. The French ambassador to Niger and former governor of the Colony of Niger, Don Jean Colombani, donated a wool *arkilla kounta* for a reconstruction of a Wogo Songhay home at the museum, and the museum owned at least three others. The First Republic also chose textiles as gifts for visiting diplomats and other official gifts. (Figure 2.14) In this image, South Korean diplomats study a *téra-tera*, which was selected as representative of a shared, identifying Nigerien culture. It has not been sewn together completely, as was and is conventional when giving a textile in Niger. By only tacking the bands together, a weaver saves time, and either her or his client can hire a tailor to sew the piece by machine. It also indicated that the piece was new and had not yet been used as a blanket or garment. Toucet encouraged innovations that were meant to appeal to the museums' primary buying market, the French, American, and other foreign diplomats, consultants, and volunteers working in Niger. He asked weavers to make tablecloths and napkins that incorporated *arkilla* and Hausa motifs, which were popular with visitors.



Figure 2.14: South Korean Diplomats receiving a *tera-tera* in 1967.  
*Le Niger*, Archives National du Niger.

Just as they were used to decorate the walls of homes and the museum, textiles were essential components of Niger's sections of international expositions and fairs during the 1960s. Niger's exhibit at the 1965 International Fair in Niamey, an image shows how integral textiles were to defining the nation, but so integral that they are not highlighted as individual objects, as they would be two years later in Montreal. This follows conventions of European fairs and museums and their portrayals of Africa, which used textiles as decoration instead of art objects. In this installation photograph, a wall hanging of alternating black and white rectangles hangs behind a faux door in the Hausa style to draw the eye to the center of the display. In the foreground, a cotton *tcharka* serves as a tablecloth for the podium of a television. (Figure 2.15) Photographs of the installations at the Expo 67 in Montreal show the exhibitionary stress on textiles, which were often related to being a background to

other objects, which itself speaks to their ubiquity. Hamani Diori's portrait hangs on a Nigerien cotton *kounta*. Weavers joined other artisans to travel to expositions. (Figure 2.16) In 1972, Mahamadou Hama, or Mota, won a contest for his *téra-tera* and *kounta* when he traveled to Paris, where he spent a month weaving at the Galeries Lafayette.<sup>290</sup>



Figure 2.15: View of the 1965 International Fair in Niamey. *Le Niger*, October 4, 1965. Archives National du Niger (AG: 9939)



Figure 2.16: View of the Niger Stand at Expo '67 in Montreal, Canada.

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<sup>290</sup> Mohamadou "Mota" Hama, Interview, November 16, 2009.

While Pablo Toucet worked closely with the artisans at the museum during his tenure as director there, Nigerien men went to prominent businesswomen to purchase textiles, thus conforming to traditional gendered patronage and labor practices, and reaffirming the link between textiles and the Nigerien woman and mother as the atavistic bearer of authentic national identity.<sup>291</sup> Far from interpreting cotton versions of *arkilla* designs as inauthentic because they were made from brightly colored machine-spun cotton or as non-Nigerien because of weavers' origins, the First Republic embraced elements of Niger's inherent ethnic, cultural, and technological brassage to depict Niger as rich in both artisanal tradition and innovative potential. Women and weavers both played important artistic and economic roles, but had limited control over how their work was represented or interpreted in governmental nationalist gestures, both for domestic and foreign audiences.

The social and economic roles of women in the First Republic preoccupied many politicians, educators, and French "technical consultants." Having largely been excluded from French education and having just arrived in urban areas in great numbers within a decade, women did not have clearly defined active, direct roles in the founding of the nation-state. The state-run newspaper ran a weekly column, "Notre Page Feminine," which explored issues considered most pertinent to women, including domestic skills trainings in the tradition of European mission education and American home economics.<sup>292</sup> By 1973, the column resignedly stated in its headline

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<sup>291</sup> Sadou Aichatou Komelo and Cissé Boucano, Interview, May 7, 2010; See McClintock 1997.

<sup>292</sup> For an excellent study of the implementation of domesticity as a marker of feminine modernity in another context, see Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

that “The Condition of the Nigerian Woman Evolves Slowly.”<sup>293</sup> (Figure 2.17) As it often did, the column featured a flattering photograph of the famously beautiful Aïssa Diori, understood to be the evolved Nigerian woman to which the column aspired. To “evolve” was an especially loaded term in Francophone West Africa, where Africans who had adopted certain French cultural and educational customs were referred to as “evolués.” Aïssa Diori’s vision of a modern Nigerian woman demanded control over capital and over mobility. The resentment and anger that she inspired in Niger represents one extreme example of what Dorothy L. Hodgson, Sheryl A. McCurdy and others have identified as a discourse around “wicked” women in colonial and postcolonial Africa. They argue that investigating moments when women are condemned, or simply labeled as “wicked,” offers opportunities to better understand how women negotiate and challenge gendered systems of power.<sup>294</sup>



Figure 2.17: “Notre Page Feminine: Progres au Feminin: La Condition de la Femme Nigérienne Évolue Lentement,” *Le Niger* 1 October 1973.

<sup>293</sup> “Notre Page Feminine: Progres au Feminin: La Condition de la Femme Nigérienne Évolue Lentement,” *Le Niger* 1 October 1973.

<sup>294</sup> Dorothy Louise Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy. “Introduction: ‘Wicked’ Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa,” in Hodgson, Dorothy Louise, and Sheryl McCurdy, eds. *“Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001): 1-26.

Aissa Diori led the first nationalist women's political organization in Niger, the Union des Femmes du Niger. Barbara Cooper explained that in Maradi, Diori recruited among unmarried women considered suspect by many other women, but who represented for her and certain state actors a kind of modern woman whose labors could be geared toward the state, instead of exclusively to smaller family, ethnic, or community formations.<sup>295</sup> Their contemporary, British researcher Susan Bernus, included a scathing critique of the UFN in her study of ethnicity in Niamey in the late 1960s.<sup>296</sup> She accused them of lacking an awareness of their own culture, which was, for the most part, Djerma. She observed that their educational projects to teach cooking, sewing and childcare lacked an awareness of the "real needs" of Nigerien women. Although founded as an apolitical body in 1956, in the 1960s, it essentially became a women's wing of the P.P.N.-R.D.A. and the First Republic. Its priorities reflected a femininity emerging from French education, which in Africa encouraged women to learn skills such as European cooking, sewing, and knitting.<sup>297</sup>

In 1962, the UFN presented 720,000 francs to the Musée National du Niger, with a headline proclaiming that "What Woman Wants, God Wants: Women of Goodwill Want to Make the National Museum of Niamey a High-Class Museum. They Have Given It 720,000 Francs."<sup>298</sup> (Figures 2.18-2.20) The museum was a rare public recreational destination where women and children could visit without inviting moral criticism. Although not explicitly cited as such, the objects exhibited in

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<sup>295</sup> Barbara Cooper, "The Politics of Difference and Women's Associations in Niger: Of 'Prostitutes,' the Public, and Politics," in Hodgson, Dorothy Louise, and Sheryl McCurdy. *"Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001): 259

<sup>296</sup> Bernus 1969.

<sup>297</sup> Interestingly, there is a small sleeveless hand-knit sweater in the textile collections of the MNBH. Object 1696.

<sup>298</sup> "Ce que Femme Veut Dieu le Veut." *Le Niger*. 5 March 1962.

conventions of European ethnographic style in the Classical Pavilion, at that time the only building at the museum, were largely those either produced or used by women. As mentioned in Chapter One, the wooden busts, two of which can be seen in the foreground of Figure 2.19, primarily portrayed women. A cotton *kounta*, on which those busts sit, serves as a background in the gallery's central display. The museum valued the materials that women created and employed in their lives, and offered a space in which they could enjoy urban life outside of homes, which were the sites of all other leisure activities, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and holidays. The museum did this, in part, by bringing the elements of a home: representations of Nigerien home lives in the form of ceramics, textiles, and more to the gallery.



Figures 2.18-2.20: Images accompanying article

“What Woman Wants, God Wants: Women of Goodwill Want to Make the National Museum of Niamey a High-Class Museum. They Have Given It 720,000 Francs.”

*Le Niger*. 5 March 1962. Archives National du Niger.

Figure 2.18: Translation of caption: “Mrs. Fatou Djibo, who gave the check of 720,000 francs to President Boubou Hama, shakes the hand of Mr. Pablo Toucet, Curator and Director of the Museum.”



Figure 2.19:  
Translation of Caption:  
Inside the museum. Mr. Boubacar Diolo, Minister of Justice, is in the foreground.



Figure 2.20:  
Translation of Caption:  
On the side of the women.

The newspaper photographs convey the excitement of the UFN ceremony, and attendees wear different kinds of dress, which signal their participation in regional and global economic and aesthetic networks. In Figure 2.18, a youthful Pablo Toucet wearing a dark suit shakes the hand of Fatou Djibo, who wears a stylish tailored ensemble, which appears to be made of waxprint cloth, with a large scarf. The wrap skirt and blouse were both variations on garments popular across the region in the twentieth century.<sup>299</sup> The women smiling behind them wear fitted, sleeveless dresses with hems that hit just below the knee. In Figure 2.19, Boubacar Dido, the Minister of Justice wears a long robe, along with a style of hat often associated with Northern Africa and political authority in Niger. Behind him and again in Figure 2.20, women wear boubous, waxprint ensembles, and tailored dresses, as they attentively look at the exhibits and listen to the speakers.

However, just as the UFN had no formal political power, women had no direct control over the Musée National du Niger, the pet project of Hama that was firmly under the hand of Toucet for fourteen years. Nigerien women who visited the museum did not find reflections of themselves in their ensembles tailored from *bazin*, their mini-dresses, or their high-heeled shoes, which is what some women wore to the presentation of the funds to the Museum in 1962, as seen in Figures 2.18-2.20. At that time, they found the ethnic busts, with their rigid stereotypical portrayals of cultural groups, distilling complex social groups into one woman's hairstyle and some key

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<sup>299</sup> Suzanne Gott has written of the similar Ghanaian *kaba* as a “creative fusion of indigenous and European elements of female dress.” She explains that European blouses and wrap skirts were current in Ghana as early as the 1830s, but grew into a wider popular fashion in the mid-twentieth century as they came to be associated with nationalism and Panafrikan pride. Suzanne Gott, “The Ghanaian Kaba,” in Suzanne Gott and Kristyne Loughran, *Contemporary African Fashion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010): 11-27.

adornment each. A year later, presumably with the aid of their donation, the Costume Pavilion opened, and here, too, the portrayal of women (and men) defied the mercurial modernity of Niamey in the 1960s. The most populous ethnicities each received two mannequins (one woman, one man) depicting “traditional African dress.” While this, too, followed, as closely as Toucet could manage within his budget, European conventions of displaying African ethnographica, its reception was inevitably different. In the context of a colonial fair, a white visitor was meant to be struck by the sheer alterity of a mannequin—or person—in traditional dress, and to sense her own modernity, which was conflated with a sense of identification with a capitalist West that provided the industrially produced prêt-a-porter clothing she wore.

Meanwhile, in an urban space where the Sahelian brassage may have seemed to be intensifying and even the pleasurable aspects of urbanization and consumerism represented real ruptures in modes of life, Nigeriens greatly enjoyed the neat categorizations of indigenous beauty in the Costume Pavilion. Precisely through using European museological methods that conveyed honor for the object, the museum praised African aesthetics of the body. Visitors appreciated this institutional assertion of value. Yet, it also relegated these forms of dress to the realm of the past—of the “costume,” a term that in both French and English implies dress outside of the norm. In fact, in Niamey in 1963, the dress portrayed in the vitrines could be found on the streets outside, along with people dressed in suits and ties, short skirts, and wax-print ensembles. These were not “costumes,” but vibrant dress traditions that linked people to their ethnicities, cultures, and histories just as they represented vast exchange networks, Sahelian brassage, and African modernities.

Strategic control over their appearance and objects in their homes was a key way that women could negotiate the changing terms of their social and political lives. Aïssa Diori's biography exemplifies the possibilities, limits, and dangers for a woman seeking and wielding power and capital during Niger's First Republic. Her obituary in *Jeune Afrique* described "her haughty silhouette, draped in sumptuous boubous in sparkling colors."<sup>300</sup> (Figure 2.21) The same obituary delicately explained that she had two goals, "to help her husband in his task and to assure her children's security in the future." Diori famously used her position, and by all accounts, state funds, to conduct several businesses and amass great wealth. She, as Mbembe explains of many participants in post-colonies, turned "economic things...into social and political things."<sup>301</sup> Press accounts emphasized her Fulani ethnicity, and true to ethnic traditions and stereotypes, she owned great herds of cattle. She purchased many houses in Plateau, then the most chic neighborhood in Niamey, and rented them to the French technical assistants and volunteers at inflated prices. Notably, she and the Malian first lady were rumored to have a monopoly over the trade in indigo textiles between the two countries. Great resentment grew toward Diori, with blame being put on her for her husband's government's inability to assure food security.

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<sup>300</sup> D. "LéLouma, "Nécrologie: Aïssa Diori." *Jeune Afrique* 694 (April 27, 1974): 33.

<sup>301</sup> Mbembe 2001: 46.



Figure 2.21: D. "LéLouma, "Nécrologie: Aïssa Diori." *Jeune Afrique* 694 (April 27, 1974): 33.

Yet, this image of an exoticized fierce Fulani woman ruthlessly controlling a nation's economy conveniently obscures many of the dynamics at play. Hamani Diori had struck his Faustian bargain with the French government in 1958, exiling his cousin Djibo Bakary, and with him, Bakary's leftist anticolonial aspirations for democracy, from Niger.<sup>302</sup> Undemocratically installed by France, Diori's government

<sup>302</sup> See Fuglestad 1983; and Djibo Bakary, *Silence! On Décolonise: Itinéraire Politique et Syndical d'un Militant Africain* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992).

was financed and staffed in large part by French men, and despite the well-intentioned labor of Toucet and many others, the French State still treated Niger as a colony, a site that would soon provide France with most of the uranium it needed to supply electricity to its citizens.<sup>303</sup> Chatterjee has written how postcolonial governments generally retained the extractive approaches of their metropolitan forebears, and Stoller, Charlick, and others have detailed the exact elements that Diori borrowed and enhanced from the *Afrique Occidentale Française*: intense taxation of destitute subsistence farmers being the first among them.<sup>304</sup> Aïssa Diori was a successful capitalist who, by virtue of her marriage to the president, escaped the control of the nation-state and further, could manipulate aspects of the government. As a woman, she could not be president herself, and she saw the national government for the flimsy structure that it proved to be, and thus concentrated on capitalist projects that were bound up in her goals as a mother. Diori is no folk hero, but a facile demonization of her provided justification for the structural disempowerment of Nigerien women, even as the French nation-state was practicing neo-colonialism at its most blatant, and it progressively decreased its financial support for former African countries.

In a retrospective analysis of the events leading to the coup d'état, journalist Saleh Kebzabo went so far as to absolve Hama, portrayed as having retreated into his scholarly projects, for the failures during the 1973 famine, and stating that Hama had

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<sup>303</sup> There is extensive writing on uranium mining in Niger, and general histories necessarily discuss its influence on the nation. For example, see Charlick 1991. See a journalistic discussion of uranium in Tom Zoellner, *Uranium: War, Energy, and the Rock that Shaped the World* (New York: Viking, 2009). See also Chapter Four for further discussion of uranium and other extractive practices in Niger.

<sup>304</sup> Charlick 1991: 60; Chatterjee 1993: 203; and Stoller 1995: 147.

approached Diori insisting that they find a more effective strategy.<sup>305</sup> According to the article, Diori agreed and started to do so—until stopped by his wife and the team of young politicians she had gathered to aid in her business and influence on the president. Citing Achille Mbembe, Stoller characterized the First Republic as zombified—solipsistically hardened against the basic needs of Nigerien citizens, who were themselves resignedly zombified in the face of Diori’s authoritarian regime.<sup>306</sup>

Aïssa Diori’s actions came into such severe condemnation because she revealed the mythologies of the nation-state as just that. Niger was not an independent entity, and Nigerien women were not passively laboring protectors of Nigerien tradition while men built a patriarchal, independent modern nation-state. Instead, Diori offered a different archetype—a mother who sought control over globalized networks of wealth, traveled the world, and took up arms if need be. Thus, Kebzabo, D. Lélouma, and other critics concluded that Aïssa Diori's crimes resulted from her confusion between familial domesticity and national domesticity.<sup>307</sup> As a woman, a symbolic bearer of national history and tradition, she was read as cognitively incapable of comprehending the nation-state, but her betrayal was that much more wicked because of her power over flows of capital meant to be controlled by that nation-state.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Saleh Kebzabo, “Niger: Pourquoi Diori Est-il Tombé?” *Jeune Afrique* 694 (April 27, 1974): 30-33. The publication of many of Hama’s works were financed by the Nigerien state, and to recognize this, he insisted that the Nigerien flag be featured on the covers of all of those works. There were rumors that Hama and/or his associates insisted people purchase his books—including people among the majority of Nigeriens who could not read French. Diouldé Laya, J.D. Pénel, Boubé Namaïwa, eds. *Boubou Hama: Un Homme de Culture Nigérien* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2007): 192.

<sup>306</sup> Paul Stoller, *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1995): 141 and 164.

<sup>307</sup> Kebzabo 1974: 32; Lélouma 1974: 33.

<sup>308</sup> For a discussion of the assignation of “wicked women,” see Hodgson and McCurdy 2001.

When the military coup d'état took place, Hama cooperated with the soldiers who came to collect him. Again according to *Jeune Afrique*, at some point during the four-hour late night standoff at the presidential palace, Hamani Diori, renowned for his skills in negotiations abroad, was ready to surrender. Instead, Aïssa Diori shot two of the soldiers, and quickly was mortally shot herself in response, thus becoming the only high-profile casualty of the coup d'état when she passed away a few hours later in the hospital. Diori's notoriety is instructive regarding the widespread resentment toward "women with means" among the weavers that they hired. Weavers repeatedly cited difficulties with patrons as reason for having sought a position at the museum, or for other systems that bypassed patronage by women, such as selling blankets to businessmen of the Grand Marché in Niamey. Sometimes this slid into the discourse of "wicked women," but other weavers recognized the precariousness of the wealth of women—even those "with means"—in the growing cash economy in the last half of the twentieth century, in which Nigerien men with formal education or from noble backgrounds had increased control over cash flows and political power.

Bernus noted that from the declaration of independence until 1968, the number of women employed by the state in salaried positions had increased from a few dozen to 209, which was still a miniscule portion of the population.<sup>309</sup> In this patronage system, neither women nor weavers' labor and expertise was waged. It also required a relatively low cost of food, so that the addition of a weaver, and even perhaps members of his family, would not be a hardship for a patron. It further assumed a high valuation of the resulting blanket or garment, so that a patron could make a profit if

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<sup>309</sup> Bernus 1968: 93-94.

she wanted to sell it. The introduction of industrially-spun yarn in the 1950s relieved women of countless hours of labor, but it also increased the amount of cash needed to commission a textile.

Thus, weavers explored new options for doing business, and some, like Ali Sinka, settled into the Songhay village at the museum and cultivated foreign clients, while many more worked through variations of patronage relationships. After all, working independently required purchasing thread, and many weavers preferred to find clients who would be responsible for that. In Bonkougou and Baleyara, Bellah weavers remained based in and around the small towns, especially during the farming season, and like others, they traveled to find patrons in locations in Niger during the cool, dry season (November-February). Like weavers in Say, Tillaberi, and Tera, they made *téra-tera* and a variety of other styles, and it seems to be these weavers who codified and then innovated the Nigerien *sakala*. The *sakala* is a broad category referring to textiles that can be used as either blankets or wall-hangings. Their aesthetic influences (Fulani *munyuure*, Djerma *téra-tera*, and Hausa *sakala*, among others), their weaver's ethnic origins (Fulani, Djerma, Hausa, and most predominantly, Tuareg Bellah), and their users' ethnic identifications (Djerma, Hausa, Fulani, and several others) reflect the shared artistic heritage of women in the growing Nigerien cities and towns of the 1970s, but also the accelerated ethnic *brassage* of the urban environment.

***Nationalist Domesticity and Domestic Nationalism:  
The Sakala and the Second Republic***

Industrially produced cloth allowed more people to own more clothing, and by the 1970s, it was a far cheaper alternative to commissioning a weaver to make a family's clothing. However, the relatively cheap machine-spun thread, also by then produced in Niamey, put the acquisition of multiple wall-hangings and blankets within the reach of many more women. When a young woman's mother commissioned multiple textiles for her marriage, most were *sakala*, with which she could decorate her home for special occasions. Only the wealthiest could have acquired cotton wall-hanging after an *arkilla* by the few weavers as prominent as Ali Sinka, and *sakala* weavings addressed large segments of the market in cities, towns, and villages.

*Sakala* weavings were especially important in Niamey and its environs dominated by the Djerma population, but Bellah weavers migrated all over Niger to find work in the 1970s. *Sakala* weavings were important expressive canvasses with which weavers and women worked through national changes in which they were deeply implicated and simultaneously denied direct participation. Weaver Idé Banjere wove a blanket depicting the Nigerien flag after the 1974 coup d'état, while Seyni Kountché's government was officially provisional. He wove this blanket to assert national unity and his own citizenry—to express, as he told me, that “We are Nigeriens.”<sup>310</sup> (Figure 2.22) He then sold it to the mother of his neighbor, who received it as a wedding gift and kept it for the next thirty-five years. Red stripes serve to highlight the two Nigerien flags, which are bordered by black weaving with blue pile. The flags and the red stripes have pile in matching thread, and the yellow circle

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<sup>310</sup> Interview, April 4, 2010.

has been created with pile. Most of the blanket is composed of plain weave stripes, emphasizing the bold, large size of the central flag motifs.

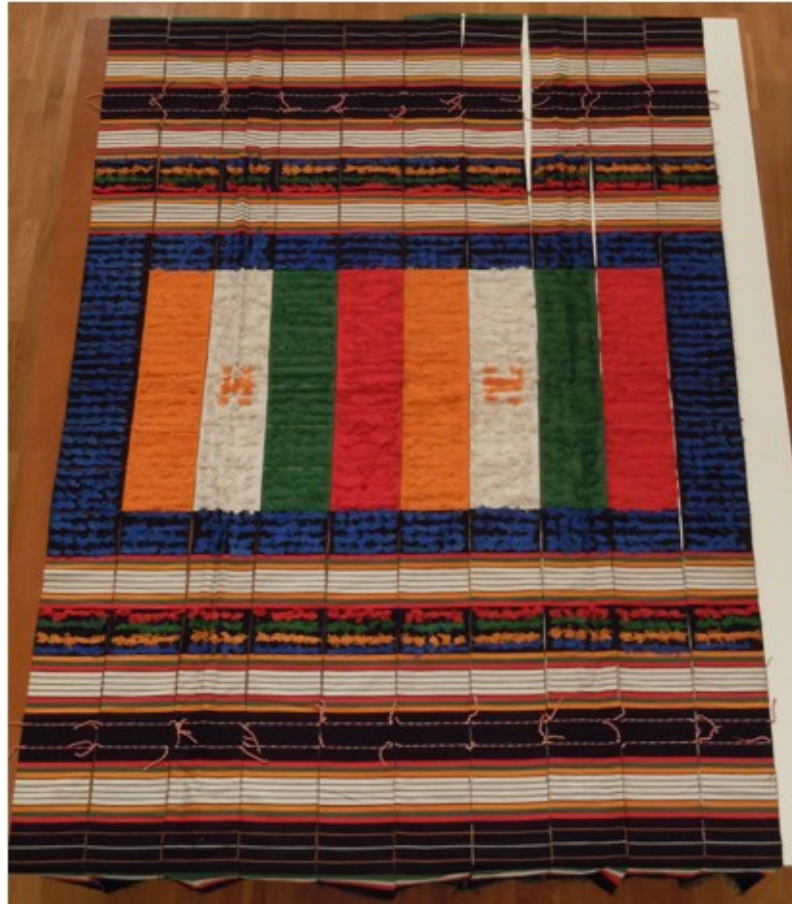


Figure 2.22: Idé Banjere, *Sakala* wall hanging depicting the Nigerien flag, Cotton, 1974. Collection of the author.

Wedding *sakala* wall-hangings in the 1970s and 1980s commonly depicted Nigerien flags. Small flags were also incorporated into *téra-tera* textiles and into garments. In neighboring countries, notably Mali and Burkina Faso, weavers included those national flags, thus reflecting the shared design frameworks in the region. *Sakala* and other textiles depicting flags increased in popularity after Niger's first coup d'état, reflecting increased nationalist aspirations for Niger as a state—and for individuals

such as Banjeré who, despite their exclusion from many aspects of citizenry under the First Republic, wished to speak *as a Nigerien* citizen. While many *sakala* and other textiles in West Africa included images of national flags, not all of them were *about* the flag. In Banjere's piece in Figure 2.22, the striped designs are relatively simple, and he used a thread pile to add depth to the flags and their frames, as well as to add the center yellow circle. Centrally placed and large, these two flags are the subject of this *sakala*.

This proliferation of flags on blankets is significant evidence of the ways that Nigerien men like weavers, who had little or no formal education and were often from low-casted or enslaved ancestors, and women, who also generally had little or no formal education or political representation, no matter what their social class was, embraced the nationalism engendered by the military junta's rhetoric and immediate shifts in famine response and international relations. Dismissing the Union des Femmes du Niger, Kountché's wife became the symbolic head of the Association des Femmes du Niger. Kountché's government constructed a headquarters for the AFN in Niamey in 1975 and sponsored many of their activities, in which the value of women was explicitly wrapped up in their duties as wives and mothers. As Deniz Kandiyoti has pointed out,

Nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as 'national' actors: mothers, educators, workers, and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set nationalist discourse.

Kountché promoted the AFN, which was composed of relatively wealthy women,

which in turn conducted development projects in rural areas and trained young women in cities and towns. It was strikingly similar to the UFN, except for an even greater focus on motherhood and an increasing emphasis on Islam. Their headquarters included one of the most prominent *foyers feminines*, which were skills-training centers that focused on vocations considered appropriate for a wife and mother, such as cooking and sewing. Students were encouraged to develop one skill with which they could earn money, but it was assumed that they would need all of the skills to conduct their household in a modern manner befitting the developing nation.

McClintock argued that nationalism has had a global “capacity to organize a sense of popular, collective unity through the management of mass, national *commodity spectacle*.”<sup>311</sup> In her discussion of a nationalism that “inhabits the realm of fetishism,” wherein the fetish, or impassioned object, “embodies crises in social value,” she portrays the “management” of the commodity spectacle as a very top-down affair, granting women only the options to “consume, refuse, or negotiate the male fetish rituals of national spectacle.”<sup>312</sup> Likewise, Mbembe argues that the fetishistic raw power of an autocrat infuses the agents of the *commandement*, or the arbitrary authoritarian social and political complex inherited from French colonialism. He states that such a fetish, whether in the form of a person or an object, reflects only upon itself.<sup>313</sup> Nigerien *sakala* wall-hangings demonstrate that it is not only the patriarchal state that manufactures nationalist impassioned objects to which others then respond. As Mbembe argues, post-colonial power is represented in the most

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<sup>311</sup> McClintock 1997: 102

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Mbembe 2001: 111.

intimate of ways, and even the most dominated participate in the aesthetics of power.<sup>314</sup> In Niger, women commissioned wall-hangings for near ubiquitous nationalist displays in their and their daughters' homes. I aver that they designed homes that were not only representative of the nation—but constituted it. Most Nigeriens had been denied citizen status under the Diiori regime, and there was much optimism in the rush of nationalism in the mid-1970s. To assert, as Banjere did, that “We are Nigeriens,” was to assert participation as a citizen in a modern nation-state. It was also an early sign of the extent of state control that Kountché would engineer and that Nigerien citizens themselves would facilitate.

Kountché and his military regime assumed power of a government of a nation-state that *Le Monde* claimed other embassies considered a private hunting ground of France.<sup>315</sup> Since Diiori had finally begun to assert himself in negotiations over uranium with France, rumors that France had engineered the coup, or at least had to have known about it, were (and remain) rampant. Kountché responded by labeling such ideas as “fantastical rumors.”<sup>316</sup> Kountché attempted to gain what Stoller has called “the first real Nigerien independence from France.”<sup>317</sup> *Le Monde* noted that after the coup d'état, French residents and business interests in Niger were, indeed, nervous, but Kountché repeatedly assured journalists that Niger would hold to previous international agreements, inserting a caveat that did not reassure many of the French in their private hunting ground: “on the condition that they recognize the interests of the

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<sup>314</sup> Mbembe 2001: 121.

<sup>315</sup> *Le Monde* (April 18, 1974): 9, “Un Action Menée Habilement.”

<sup>316</sup> Jos-Blaise Alima, “Niger: Et Maintenant?” *Jeune Afrique* 695 (May 4, 1974): 20-25.

<sup>317</sup> Stoller 1995: 174.

dignity of the Nigerien people.”<sup>318</sup>

Kountche sought to redefine Niger for Nigeriens and foreigners—in fact, this meant firmly defining the categories for the first time, because previously almost all Nigeriens had retained a colonial subject status, while the French men and women serving as consultants and technical assistants were not exactly foreign in the national government, which was primarily funded by the French government.<sup>319</sup> Yet, Kountché insisted that the junta was not composed of “revolutionaries.” The coup d’état was not a challenge to global neo-colonialist capitalist systems; Kountché ultimately repressed the leftist Sawaba party as or more brutally than Diori.

Kountché discursively created a domestic insularity for Niger in order to install military control over the nation-state. He left in place many bureaucratic structures—simply replacing the career bureaucrats with soldiers. He explained that:

We do not have a defined intention of adopting a new form of society in Niger. What we need is to be purified before we can envision access to another form of society. Until now, in effect, foreign contributions have above all contributed to the destruction of most of the stability of our society. The youth want to move fast: but there are two kinds of youth, the student youth and the rest. For the first group, we advise them not to allow themselves to have foreign models of contestation imposed upon them; they must consider themselves Nigerien, and in the national context, taking into account all of its realities. No matter what reforms are advocated, in effect, we will undertake no action that would be contrary to the Nigerien reality. The other youth was organized and led by the dissolved party: we substitute ourselves for it.<sup>320</sup>

Kountché thus foreclosed the potential for popular Nigerien protest untainted by

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<sup>318</sup> *Le Monde* (April 18, 1974): 9.

<sup>319</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>320</sup> “Nous Mettons Fin au Règne de L’injustice et de la Corruption,” *Le Monde* (May 2, 1974)

supposed foreign contaminants from the small, but vocal youth with secondary school education, whose strikes in 1973 had been as important in the destabilization of the Diori regime as the famine. He portrayed the young most affected by the famine as incapable of self-representation and self-governance—or even the capacity to distinguish between the two regimes. As Chatterjee has described of Indian peasants, Nigerien peasants were meant to be “regarded as a part of the nation but distanced from the institutions of the state.”<sup>321</sup> They, and this included most weavers and subsistence farmers, were not considered true actors in relationship to the state. Kountché did not question hierarchical systems of power, but rather, he insisted that the systems have more Nigeriens and fewer French in positions of real power, and that those in charge adequately address the basic needs of all citizens. In fact, he would seek to strengthen patriarchal hierarchies.

The military junta benefited from high prices for uranium through much of the 1970s and 1980s. As France withdrew (to an extent) from its African interests in a post-Gaullist era, Kountché negotiated changing relationships with France, Libya, the United States, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund over the course his administration, or the “provisional” military junta that lasted fifteen years. Kountché consolidated power and inspired action through several evocative strategies. As demonstrated by Stoller, he used symbolism and energy from Hauka spirit possession.<sup>322</sup> He also effectively applied development ideological discourse, first by assuming a “state of underdevelopment” in Niger. African and other commentators were originally very optimistic, with *Jeune Afrique* characterizing the response of

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<sup>321</sup> Chatterjee 1993: 160.

<sup>322</sup> Stoller 1995: 174.

Nigériens to Kountché: “Thanks to a more dynamic administration and a more sound political supervision, Nigériens have regained confidence and look toward the future with serenity.”<sup>323</sup> It is, in part, this orientation toward the future that is so seductive for many people—and for many states. Developmental ideology *needs* a state, as Chatterjee has argued, and it is fundamentally undemocratic, as it assumes a single, rational consciousness setting out a linear path of unending improvement for the entire nation.<sup>324</sup>

The consumerist developmental ideology in combination with an extractive nationalist one can have extremely wide appeal, especially during a period in which people have increasing access to capital and consumer goods. The late 1970s and early 1980s provided this apparent linear progress of development, as uranium prices funded a regime that launched many campaigns, which ranged from expansions in primary and secondary education, the construction of a university, road and other infrastructure building, and agricultural and environmental management programs. In Operation Sahel Vert of 1975, Kountché called upon the “youth,” but especially the uneducated youth from peasant families who had little or no formal schooling or class training to indoctrinate them against manual labor, to plant trees to counter desertification. This inspired a version of the *Sahel Vert krou-krou*, which replaced the white warp and weft yarn with green. (Figure 2.23) This example shared with standard *téra-tera* textiles the heavy usage of *kulnej gutumo*, or the birds’ eyes motif. The work reiterates its nationalist intent with the inclusion of Nigerien flags (without the central circle) in the *babba*.

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<sup>323</sup> “Niger: La Stratégie du Développement.” *Jeune Afrique* 719 (October 19, 1974): 30.

<sup>324</sup> Chatterjee 1993: 204.



Figure 2.23: *Sahel Vert Tera-tera*, Cotton, c. 1970s.  
Collection of Tchimba “Djula” Alka

Increasing numbers of women had gained formal education since independence, although still remarkably few when compared even with neighboring countries. The few women who attended secondary school were then positioned to join government bureaucracies, development organizations, and private enterprises under Niger’s first military junta. Many women received income from their husbands’ and other family members’ widening employment options, which was especially important as the state and religious groups both encouraged a conception of the family in which men were wage-earners outside the home and women managed the home without wages. The greater incorporation of all women into the cash economy enabled more women to commission weavers to make more wall-hangings, providing a market for weaving, even as few people wore hand-woven cloth.

A stylistic term that had emerged in the 1950s or 1960s took on a new importance in the heady developmentalist late 1970s. The Hausa term “*ci gaba*” literally means to “eat ahead,” but it is translated into English as “progress” or “development.” In Nigerien weaving, *ci gaba* refers to a genre of *sakala* that are composed largely of horizontal stripes interspersed with sections repeating motifs, such as diamonds or *garbey kopto* (acacia leaves), as this example collected by Renée Boser-Saravaxevanis and Bernhard Gardi and now held at the Museum der Kulturen in Basel. (Figure 2.24) A multivalent label, *ci gaba* referred to the great speed with which a weaver could complete a piece, because the weaving was relatively simple and the bands wide, especially compared to a highly complex *téra-tera* with narrow bands, for example. This work progressed quickly, but the name also signified the optimistic aspirations for a shared national improvement that many Nigeriens shared. Because they required less labor, the *ci gaba sakala*, were cheaper to produce and purchase, and more people could have more wallhangings. To cover one’s walls during a holiday, to create a beautiful and modern home in this way, demonstrated participation in Niger’s national successes. Other *sakala* reflected the consumerist aspirations and accomplishments of the period. The *Télé sakala*, with its graduating inset squares in the center, represented a television. (Figure 2.25) This example includes pile in the central section, and the blue pile on the white square, or the “television screen,” evokes the flickering of a television struggling for reception. Other notable features of the *sakala* are the *dohinge* (cricket’s teeth) motif and the Nigerien flag motif. The representation of a television on a wall hanging emphasized the dynamic ways that *sakala* were seen, and it indicates the complex ways that the act

of seeing was changing in Niger in the 1970s, as greater numbers of the population had access to industrial forms of visual media, like television.



Figure 2.24: Strip intended for a *Ci Gaba* Blanket, Cotton, c. 1974.  
Collected in Bonkougou, Niger in 1974.  
Collection of the Museum der Kulturen, Basel.  
Accession Number: III 20451

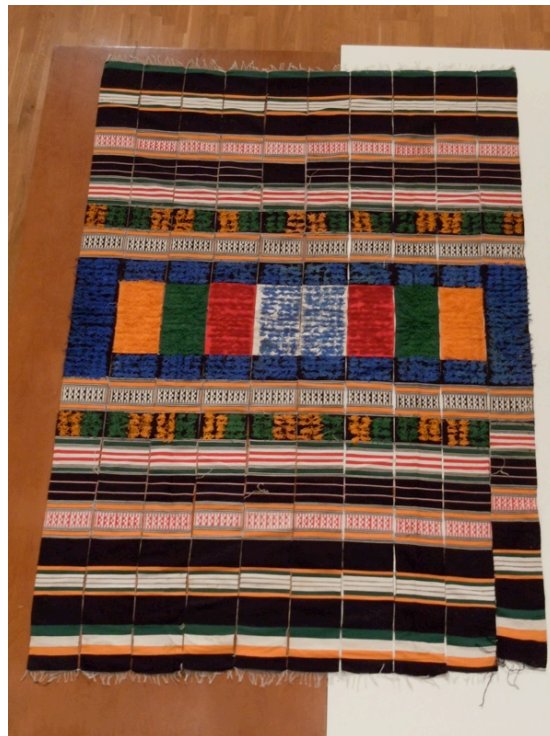


Figure 2.25: *Télé Sakala Ye-Ye*, Cotton, c. 1980s.  
Collected in Bonkougou, Niger in 2010.  
Collection of the author.

The *sakala ye-ye*, which was any *sakala* that included a section with a pile, gained unprecedented popularity, as patrons enjoyed the appearance and with it, they demonstrated their ability to pay for the additional thread and labor that was required. Historically, some Djerma elites had commissioned blankets, wall-hangings, and other textiles with a pile, but such styles were not widespread in the area.<sup>325</sup> The affordable quantity of industrially spun thread enabled this trend, and the Bellah weavers of Bonkougou and Baleyara took advantage of the lively market of the 1970s and 1980s to solidify their reputations as experts in the Nigerien *sakala* wall hangings, especially the *sakala ye-ye*. Moussa Jakuda of Bonkougou recalled Kountché's tenure as chief of state as a period of relative respect for weavers, during which the most prominent women sought out and fairly compensated skilled weavers. He regularly worked for Mintou Kountché when she was first lady.<sup>326</sup>

The national museum, on the other hand, suffered immediate neglect. The first Nigerien director, Albert Ferral, took charge soon after the coup d'état and the departure of Toucet with many other French employees of the Nigerien state in April 1974, and with his leadership and advocacy, the museum continued to expand and maintain its facilities, but this was only after an initial drastic reduction in funding and other support.<sup>327</sup> Weavers and other artisans struggled because they had relied on the French expatriates and tourists as their primary market for their work, which, under

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<sup>325</sup> Abdou Souda, Interview, April 2010. K.F. Schaedler noted that the Bellah were known for weaving textiles with a piled sections in 1982, and he compares their style to Ogboni *itagbe* cloths. Karl-Ferdinand Schädler, *Weaving in Africa South of the Sahara* (München: Panterra, 1987): Color Plate 48, 191.

<sup>326</sup> Moussa Jakuda, Interview, April 3, 2010.

<sup>327</sup> Albert Ferral, *Analyses Critiques du Fonctionnement du Musée*. Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, Unnumbered, May 23, 1975. For more on Ferral's great contributions to the National Museum and other arts and cultural scholarship and promotion in Niger, see Chapter Four.

Toucet's strict rules and supervision, they had sold exclusively through the museum shop.

Kountché put great stock in exhibition abroad, and often included artisans, including weavers, in his entourage when he traveled abroad. Amadou Oumarou, known as Fin, had come to work at the museum in 1970, and traveled to France, Germany and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. He recalled the tourist activities in France, and how in both Germany and the United States, customers purchased everything that he had brought with him.<sup>328</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the military government, in concert with international bodies such as the World Bank, also emphasized the economic, developmentalist importance of artisanry over the aesthetic, philosophical priorities shaped by Boubou Hama during the First Republic—although Hama and Toucet, too, had had serious economic goals in their promotion and shaping of Nigerien artisanry. Yet, because of its ongoing cultural relevance and caste associations, weaving was not well incorporated into many initiatives.

The museum attracted weavers seeking further education. Asmann Chiliaou, a Bellah weaver from Bonkougou, first went to the museum in 1977, where he sought to learn tapestry weaving.<sup>329</sup> Abdoulwahid Goumer arrived at the museum from a small village near Baleyara in 1980. He had apprenticed with an uncle to learn *sakala* and *tera-tera* blankets, but he sought new opportunities. During his first weeks, he would go to watch the caged lions everyday because, as he told me, “You never see lions in the bush.” The museum represented an educational opportunity in many senses—not

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<sup>328</sup> Amadou Oumarou, Interview, November 16, 2009.

<sup>329</sup> Asmann Chiliaou, Interview, November 16, 2009. See Chapter One.

least of which being access to the condensed, modern Niger and the neatly conscripted past that it portrayed. Although he was already a proficient weaver, he was not allowed a place to set up his loom, and he was relegated to apprentice status, which meant three years of winding thread onto spools and performing menial tasks for other weavers. One senior Djerma weaver in particular worked to discourage Goumer, which may have been because of Goumer's Bellah ancestry, as many Djerma weavers did not want people to associate weaving with an enslaved heritage. Nonetheless, Sinka took Goumer as an apprentice, and from 1980 until 1985, taught him the tapestry techniques needed to weave the cotton *kounta*.

Goumer remembers the 1980s and 1990s as a period of great activity at the museum. He developed a clientele among American Peace Corps volunteers, and could count on a relatively steady market among other foreign visitors for much of the year.

I have sold textiles to different women: American, Japanese, English, and French. The Americans buy the most, and after that, the Japanese. And there are also the Senegalese and the Ivoirians. I have worked with Americans for a long time—especially the Peace Corps volunteers. Every time I work with one, they bring their friends, too.<sup>330</sup>

Like Sinka, Goumer greatly enjoyed meeting foreigners. He spoke little French, but American volunteers generally spoke either Djerma (his first language) or Hausa (his second) proficiently. However, the price of thread began to rise steeply in the late 1980s, and Sinka, who had already standardized a simplified *kounta* from *arkilla kounta* conventions, excised a large block of motifs from the *kounta*, and encouraged Goumer to follow suit. At that time, complex blankets sold for between 20,000 and

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<sup>330</sup> Goumer Abdoulwahid, Interview, November 16, 2009.

50,000 CFA. Sinka also introduced small versions of the *kounta*, intended to be wall-hangings for tourists to purchase, as fewer seemed willing to purchase whole blankets.

Then, the Cold War arms race slowed in the early 1980s, and the United States and France slowed construction of nuclear reactors for electricity production as well. Demand for uranium and uranium prices dropped precipitously. The drought of 1983 resulted in another famine, and by then, the military junta that had first claimed to be “provisional” was more bloated with corruption than the First Republic had been, and was thus unable to adequately respond to this new severe crisis. As subsistence farmers, many weavers were hit hard, and some responded by settling in other towns instead of returning to Téra, Bonkougou, Baleyara, Dosso, or elsewhere to farm. Others migrated seasonally or permanently to the Southern coast: Ghana, Benin, or Côte d’Ivoire, especially. In addition to the drought and famine’s effect on their food production, their market was simultaneously constricted.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the international lending organizations that had replaced France as Niger’s primary income after Kountché took power began to impose strict Structural Adjustment Programs, or what Nigeriens less euphemistically refer to as “période de compression de travail.”<sup>331</sup> As Alidou and others have pointed out, the changes to business and government structures were especially difficult for women workers, many of whom lost their jobs or found themselves with lower wages or otherwise less favorable conditions. Meanwhile, as Kandiyoti has suggested sometimes happens in successor regimes of newly independent nations, Kountché’s government increasingly promoted heavily

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<sup>331</sup> Also see Chapter Four. See Mbembe 2001: 54-57; Charlick 1991: 97; and Alidou 2005: 99-100.

patriarchal Islamic and capitalist visions of the Nigerien family, which were conveniently in line with global capitalist housewifization, a process that supports non-waged and low-waged labor for women.<sup>332</sup> As discussed further in Chapter Four, when some women who were bureaucrats, such as Hadjiya Fadimata Marcel and Aïchatou Boulama Kane, began to consider alternatives to their newly unstable office careers, they turned to a contemporary version of a weaving patron by creating and entering businesses and governmental organizations that commissioned, purchased, sold, and promoted Nigerien artisanry.<sup>333</sup>

In sum, weavers saw their patrons' income quickly dwindle in the late 1980s and 1990s, and by this time, most women and weavers were fully incorporated in to Niger's increasingly cash-based economy. Even the weavers who still relied on subsistence farming needed more money than before, in order to supplement their families' diets, to purchase clothing, to pay children's school fees, and to pay for other new consumer needs. Many weavers had moved to cities and towns, and their weaving incomes thus needed to be sufficient to pay for all of their food, in addition to other needs. Gradually, women began commission fewer wall hangings and blankets for their daughters' weddings, and in the early 1990s, hand-woven blankets began losing fashion as the wall decoration of choice for holidays and special occasions.

Small machine-made rugs, often produced in Turkey and elsewhere, began arriving through Hausa merchants, who purchased them in Lagos or Dubai. Referred to as "Tapis Dubai," the rugs' rich colors and shiny pile suggested foreign luxury to

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<sup>332</sup> Alidou 2005: 12, 99-100; Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1986). See Chapter Four for more analysis of housewifization in Niger.

<sup>333</sup> For more on the work of Marcel and Kane, see Chapter Four.

women who had just seen their incomes and prospects shrink. (Figure 2.26) The green rugs on display in a market stall here are bright synthetic simplified interpretations of motifs from Turkish *kilims*.<sup>334</sup> Negotiating a price at the market also was far more efficient than purchasing thread (for which prices were climbing) and food (for which price increases were even more steep) for a weaver in residence at one's home for weeks or months at a time. The rugs' association with Dubai gave them the cachet of a connection to the Middle East and the broader Muslim world, a network and sense of belonging that had grown in important under the military junta.



Figure 2.26: View of stand at the Baleyara weekly market, 2010. *Tapis Dubai* hang in the back, while *krou-krou* textiles are folded on the table in the lower right foreground.

<sup>334</sup> For an example of a *kilim* that includes the red diamonds with protruding lines and hooks, see the nineteenth century Ottoman carpet in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Object 1974.149.29.

Among Djerma and some other urban families, two *téra-tera* weavings remained requisite, but most other textiles exchanged during a wedding could be and were expected to be replaced with *tapis Dubai*. The rugs were also used in the same way, in that women covered their walls with them for holidays and festivals. Just as they were cheaper, they also lacked a quality that had been important in hand-woven blankets: wealth storage. Having been much cheaper to begin with, *tapis Dubai* rugs had far less resale or re-gifting value than hand-woven blankets and wall hangings.

Despite the rising price of thread and costs of living, and because of the intense competition from *tapis Dubai*, the prices of hand woven blankets rose little. Some weavers, like Sinka and Goumer, simplified their designs, and in the 1990s, many others began weaving with the extremely cheap acrylic thread imported from Nigeria. Even with these economizations, there was no question of attempting to be compensated for hours worked. Weavers' labor and expertise was literally worthless, and even still, commissioning textiles was no longer profitably for their former patrons. Those weavers who continued weaving relied more on their other forms of income, whether subsistence farming, waged labor, or textile trade. When they could afford to, they sent their children to school—and for the most part, they did not teach them to weave.

Kountché's death barely marked a change in Nigerien life, as his lieutenant, Ali Saibou immediately took charge and only accentuated the authoritarian character of military rule. Nigerien national sovereignty, which had seemed so possible to so many just after the 1974 coup d'état, was once again a sadly absurd prospect, as Niger

now not only answered to AREVA, the largely French state-owned uranium company with a near-monopoly on Nigerien mines, but it was also now deeply indebted to the IMF and the World Bank, with their increasing conditions and demands, and highly reliant on both governmental and non-governmental development agencies, which had their own conditions and corruptions.

Weaving, meanwhile, had lost its modernity. It was out of fashion, with the exception of those that remained required by Djerma custom. No longer symbols of Nigerien ingenuity and artistry, weavers represented the pre-nation past, the supposedly ethnically distinct traditions laid out in the Costume Pavilion or frozen in the reconstruction of a Songhay village. The Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger only grew in importance for the few weavers who remained there. The increased presence in development workers and volunteers translated to a steady expatriate and tourist market during the 1980s and 1990s. Mahamadou Hama, or Mota, explained that had it not been for the museum, he would have permanently settled in Ghana, where his brother and other family members moved long ago.<sup>335</sup> For many women, the technology of African weaving, rich with symbolism and imbued with powerful energy, simply signified an impoverished country's lack of the kinds of technology and consumer products so widespread elsewhere. Many women gave their blankets away as gifts to younger brides in their families. Others sold some or all of their collection. Others just packed their blankets up and left them in storage, where they stayed.

Nigerien domestic identities in their homes and in their nation necessarily

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<sup>335</sup> Mohamadou "Mota" Hama, Interview, November 16, 2009.

changed rapidly again in the face of the new economic challenges of the 1980s and 1990s, which were climactically and economically global in scope. Textile production, trade, and use served as an effective way for women and weavers to feed themselves, control capital, create beauty, and display symbolism in their homes outside of the French-controlled cash-based economy through most of the twentieth century. Weavers built on previous patronage systems to conduct careers that combined subsistence agriculture and trading to feed their families and gain some capital. Neither women nor weavers were primary candidates for formal schooling in Niger, and their successes in the textile industry enabled them to survive and sometimes thrive during this period in which the knowledge taught in formal schooling grew increasingly valuable. For weavers and other artisans, the intersections between ancestral apprenticeship systems, informal training programs, and formal schooling would prove crucial sites of negotiation and opportunity during the shifts in the Nigerien economy in the twentieth century. French colonial education and later national governmental programs sought to domesticate artisans, who often used formal education to retain economic and creative autonomy.

## CHAPTER 3

### TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND MODERN ARTISANRY: ART EXHIBITION AND EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH CENTURY NIGER

*Before, people loved good work. Today, they love money—they do not love work.*  
Abdou Souda<sup>336</sup>

*If we had the means, we could do many things. We have the experience. It is the means that we lack.*

Issoufou Amadou<sup>337</sup>

In 1971, Issoufou Amadou heard a radio advertisement that piqued his interest. Around fourteen years old, he had finished middle school in Niamey, Niger, and needed to decide how he was going to make his living.<sup>338</sup> The advertisement was from the Musée National du Niger, where he, like most young people in Niamey, loved to go, although he did not have the opportunity as often as he would have liked. On his visits to the museum, Amadou, who is of the Djerma ethnicity, especially liked to go watch the Tuareg metalsmiths make jewelry. He was delighted with his good fortune when he realized that the national museum was saying over the radio that he could learn to do this himself.

His father, a veteran of World War I who had ensured that his son attend formal primary and intermediate schools, took him to the museum to enroll him in the new artisanal training program. They asked him what craft he would like to learn, and forty years later, he described how he chose jewelry-making because that was what he

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<sup>336</sup> Abdou Souda, Interview, April 2010.

<sup>337</sup> Issoufou Amadou, Interview, February 25, 2010.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

liked. While the museum provided his uniform, breakfasts, lunches, and transportation, Amadou apprenticed with Anu and Mohammed Galitou, two Tuareg *inadan*, or men from the Tuareg endogamous artisanal caste. Both were from Agadez, Niger, and they had been recruited to work at the museum. In this image, artisans and their apprentices gather for a photograph. (Figure 3.1) He learned the repertoire of designs then popular among Nigeriens and foreign customers, which included Tuareg forms like the famous Cross of Agadez. Women in Niamey also frequently commissioned ornate filigree rings, bracelets, earrings, and necklaces. (Figure 3.2) This bracelet, with its delicate filigree accented by a strong geometric motif exemplifies the styles favored by Nigerien women, many of whom also followed the trends in Senegal and Europe.

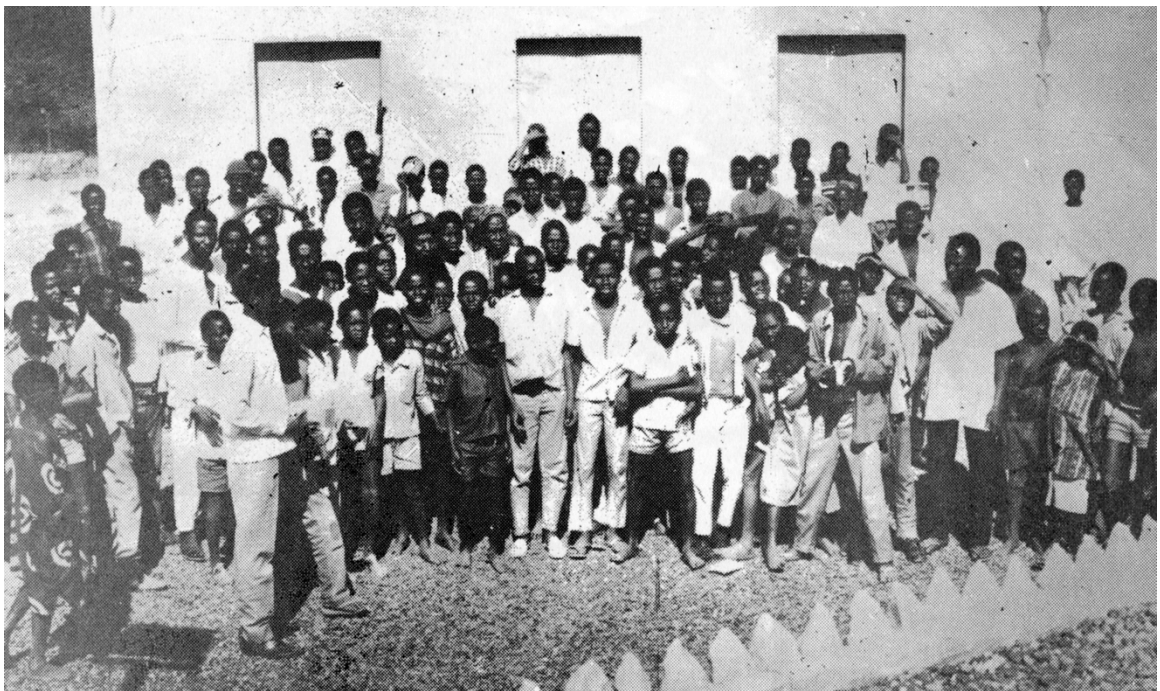


Figure 3.1: Teachers and Students in Traditional Artisanry Training Program of the Education Center at the Musée National du Niger, ca. 1971. Guide du Musée National du Niger.

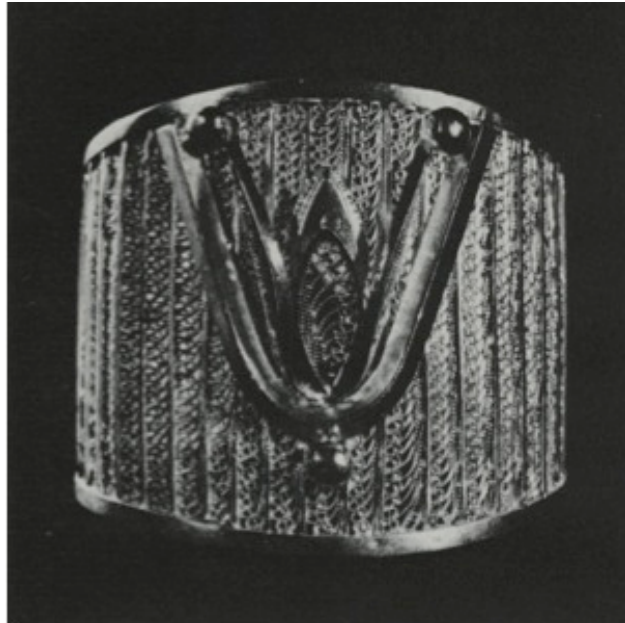


Figure 3.2: Filigree Bracelet from Catalogue of the Musée National du Niger, 1977.  
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By 1970, the national government had added many formal schools, but rates of school attendance remained low and rates of illiteracy remained very high. People were moving to Niamey at an ever-increasing rate, but entrepreneurial and waged-labor opportunities for most of them remained extremely limited. In 1970, the museum opened its Education Center, which was a vocational training school and offered courses in furniture-making, plumbing, electricity, and masonry for boys, along with sewing and some other courses for girls. (Figure 3.3) The Education Center, funded by North American and European donors, received a small campus on the other side of the museum park from where the artisans worked on display. The new facility sought to relate architecturally to the Hausa-inspired gallery buildings, as demonstrated by the arched doorways seen in the building in this photograph. The school received a fence and a gate, although it would be twenty more years before the entire museum would

be fenced. This fencing declared the Education Center a different kind of educational space than the museum—a more formal, regulated one, even if it did not offer diplomas. The Education Center added the program that Amadou took part in a year later, in which he and the others in the special traditional artisanry program apprenticed with the working artisans located on the main grounds.

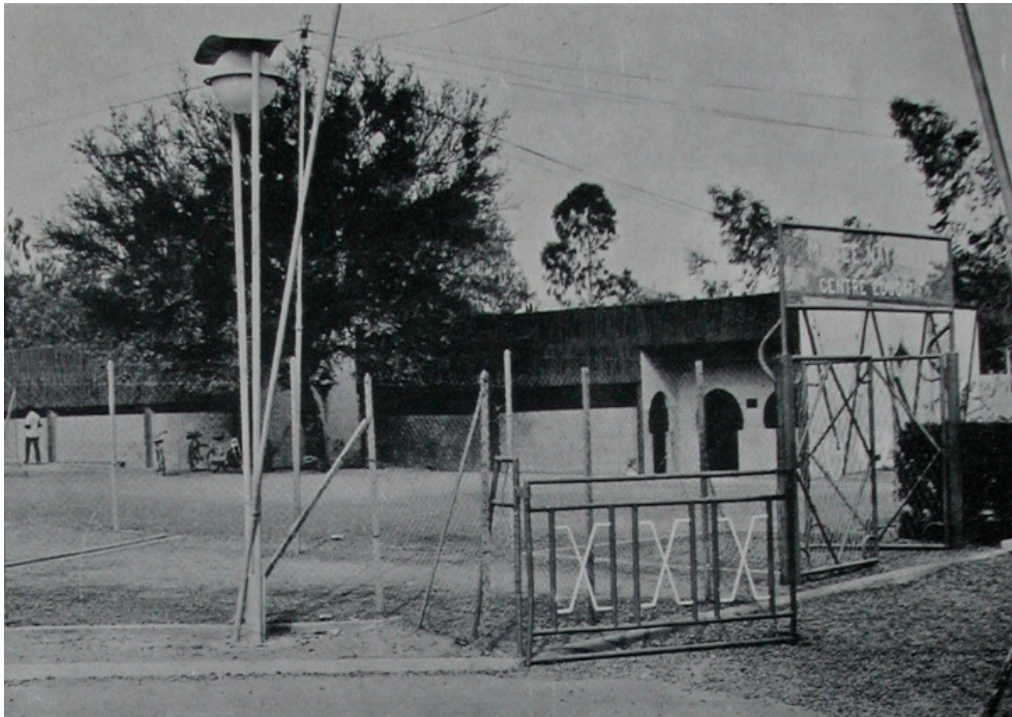


Figure 3.3: Campus of the Education Center at the Musée National du Niger.  
*Guide Du Musée National*. Niamey: s.n, 1975.

Museum-based artisans also taught classes in formal schools in Niamey in the mid-1970s. By attending an elite middle school like Issa Beri, children and their parents hoped that they would find the training and connections to enable them to later find coveted waged professional positions. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the school brought in artisans from the National Museum to teach their students woodworking,

weaving, ceramics, and sewing.<sup>339</sup> Such classes were not intended to train or inspire future weavers, but they were based on the belief that working with their hands improved students' characters and that such experience would lead to a greater appreciation for a Nigerien national culture.<sup>340</sup> (Figure 3.4) In this photograph, three students are at work, and the photographer carefully included two rows of elephant sculptures, which are wooden with ivory or bone inserts to represent tusks.



Figure 3.4: Students learning woodworking at Issa Beri Middle School, Niamey, Niger, 1977.  
“Les travaux manuels au collège Issa Béri,”  
*Sahel Hebdo*, Nouvelle Formule N° 66, February 7, 1977: 14-15.

These three formal initiatives in artisanal education—the apprenticeship program, the Museum Education Center, and the artisanal co-curricular classes—reinvented and reintroduced in the 1970s systems that had been introduced in Niger by

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<sup>339</sup> Saadou Maiga, “Les Travaux Manuels au Collège Issa Béri,” *Sahel Hebdo*, Nouvelle Formule N° 66, February 7, 1977: 14-15.

<sup>340</sup> For a discussion of related initiatives in Ghana, see Cati Coe, *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools: Youth, Nationalism, and the Transformation of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

France in the 1930s. From the 1920s until the 1940s, the French colonial educational system in West Africa was a node in international discourses that promoted formal education as the primary vehicles for shaping compliant laborers, colonial subjects, and modern citizens of stable nation-states in a global capitalist and industrial political economy. The relationships between human manual labor and industrial technological change motivated many of these questions about education, and new forms of labor and education were demanded, even as others seemed obsolete.

Niger returned to the methods of the 1930s in the 1970s because many of the same challenges of integration into an inherently exploitative global capitalist economy reemerged in the 1970s, as Niger's government responded to newly urgent international discussions about formal education and strategized for technological and industrial changes in modes of production on a national level. That the Museum founded highly visible educational programs funded by international development and philanthropic programs is symptomatic of the Nigerien state's broad failures to implement adequate formal education resources for its citizens. In 1968, only 7.7% of the population attended formal schools. This chapter will focus on the colonial educational programs in the early twentieth century before returning to examine their influence on education at the Musée National du Niger in the early 1970s.

In the 1930s, Nigerien educators, artisans, and other students shaped how French colonial programs developed and eventually disappeared. The pedagogical heritage of twentieth century artisanal education in Niger is diverse and perhaps surprisingly international. Many apprenticeship systems underwent drastic changes in the nineteenth century and twentieth century, due to shifts in ethnic caste practices,

slavery laws, and economic systems. Just as Niger's late twentieth century elite formal education system was shaped by the French colonial curriculum, the vocational and non-formal artisanal educational projects at the museum also echoed the complex and often confused efforts on the part of French colonial officials to install and develop an educational system in West Africa in the twentieth century. These efforts were also shaped further by the African artisans and students who participated as students, teachers, and collaborators.

With an emphasis on Nigerien and other African artisans' interventions and experiences, this chapter investigates the economic and educational discourses that have shaped the idea of the artisan and the education of the artisan in Niger. The 1920s and 1930s were a particularly feverish period of experimentation with artisanal education by French colonial authorities. The urgency of the pedagogical changes was accentuated for its leaders by the World War I and the Great Depression. Programs were implemented across West Africa from the 1920s until the 1940s, and many international discussions swirled around them in journals on Africa and on colonial education. This chapter contextualizes Nigerien projects and schools of the period within that international scene. Importantly, the 1937 Exposition des Arts et Techniques Modernes drew upon exhibitionary precedents of displaying the working artisanal body, but because educators sought to valorize artisans' labor and African aesthetic forms without simultaneously appreciating artisanal knowledge as such, it perpetuated and deepened a shifting definition of the non-modern African artisan-laborer that would be taken up by the Nigerien nation-state decades later.

The period from the 1920s until the 1940s saw related developments and

experiments in artisanal and agricultural education in other European colonies in Africa. Importantly, scholars and officials maintained an active international dialogue about their goals and methods in journals and at symposia. Andrew Zimmerman has traced the direct influence of Booker T. Washington's industrial educational theories on German colonial agricultural and educational experiments in Togo in the first years of the twentieth century, which were led by Tuskegee students and graduates.<sup>341</sup> Cati Coe has written on the Achimota School in Accra, and its administrators' efforts to incorporate "tradition" and manual labor into the curriculum of the most elite school in what was then the Gold Coast.<sup>342</sup> Bob White has analyzed the changes in the French and British colonial education systems in Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but he treats the period between 1910 and the 1940s as a static moment, and he draws indiscriminately from sources in those decades to describe the period. In fact, as recognized by David Scanlon as early as the 1960s, these were decades of great flux and experimentation during which artisanry responded to anxieties and antinomies about industrialization, aesthetics, and labor in the French, British, and German nation-states' colonial projects.<sup>343</sup>

As pointed out by both Arindam Dutta and Abigail McGowan in their histories of Indian artisanry, the concept of craft or handmade artisanry only could gain its rich symbolic potential in opposition to industrialized production.<sup>344</sup> Dutta suggests that in India, "the lack of clear differentiation between 'modern' labor and craft meant that

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<sup>341</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>342</sup> Coe 2005.

<sup>343</sup> David G. Scanlon, *Traditions of African Education* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964): 5.

<sup>344</sup> Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

the aesthetic appreciation for nonmodern craft could become the foil for expropriating labor outside of bilateral contractual arrangements.”<sup>345</sup> Related regimes of artisanal promotion have been used to exploit labor in West Africa, specifically Niger, as well. However, artisans have negotiated the changing boundaries between modern and traditional, between artisanal and mechanic, and between human and machine in ways that, while difficult, also have brought them pleasure and enabled them to maintain certain kinds of control over their labor.<sup>346</sup> Dutta also observes that “the ‘artisan’ is the conceptual rubric used within modernity to produce differentiated arenas of informal labor,” and West African artisans have strategically deployed this rubric to survive in a colonized economy and to what is more, to seek joy in labor through its aesthetic elements and its frequent association with their culture, ancestors, or nation.<sup>347</sup> This affective element of artisanal labor can be used to devalue it, but it is also has radical potential as a defiance of capitalist alienated labor.

Donna Haraway has stated that in the Western tradition, “the relation between organism and machine has been a border war, [and that] the stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination.”<sup>348</sup> Interpretations of changing technologies and the conflicted experiences of using them motivated the symbolic deployment of the figure of the artisan in French colonial educational projects, and later, during the First Republic of Niger. Richard Sennett suggests that at other moments in hegemonic Western thought, specifically as

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<sup>345</sup> Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007):74.

<sup>346</sup> Dutta 2007: 74.

<sup>347</sup> Dutta 2007: 77.

<sup>348</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” [1985] *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 8

represented in Denis Diderot's eighteenth century *Encyclopédie*, the artisan was not understood to be at war with technological changes, a paradigm evoked by Haraway, and most famously elaborated upon by John Ruskin in the nineteenth century. Sennett interprets Diderot to portray that "working with machines rather than fighting was the radical emancipatory challenge."<sup>349</sup> Yet, Diderot's portrayal of artisans as laborers to be documented and improved, along with the tools and machinery they used, contributed to popular concepts of the divisions between knowledge and manual labor, despite Diderot's own valorization of artisans in contrast to the elite classes, which he understood as unproductive.<sup>350</sup>

As Heidegger suggested and challenged, many in the early twentieth century understood technology to be "the fate of [their] age, where 'fate means the inevitableness of an unalterable course.'"<sup>351</sup> Heidegger exchanged one Hegelian teleology for another, one which he insisted must be shaped through recognition of the common linguistic and technical roots of art and technology: "Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it."<sup>352</sup> For Heidegger, artisanry remained a bringing-forth, not in itself, but in the artisan.<sup>353</sup> Modern technology, on the other hand, revealed through a challenging-forth, with a

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<sup>349</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 118.

<sup>350</sup> Sennett 2008: 91; William H. Sewell, "Visions of Labor: Illustrations of the Mechanical Arts before, in, and after Diderot's *Encyclopédie*." in Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp, eds. *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986): 275-276.

<sup>351</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977): 25.

<sup>352</sup> Heidegger 1977: 35.

<sup>353</sup> Heidegger 1977: 10-11.

“frenziedness” that defied attempts to comprehend its essence and the dangers of that essence. Terry Eagleton has pointed out the rapid industrialization Heidegger witnessed in Germany from his childhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward.<sup>354</sup> Capitalist industrialization across Europe upended labor practices with a speed that seemed to confirm linear conceptions of progress, and it transformed people’s relationships to materials around them and to one another.

The relationship of the European body, especially the European laboring body to the machine and technology was at a fractious and exploratory crossroads from the 1920s until the 1940s, and French colonial education used artisanry in Africa to negotiate the border war between human and non-human, between organism and machine. By confidently exporting European technology to Africa as superior, but simultaneously refusing to send the most complex technology, the educators claimed mastery over both the technology and over Africa itself. They insulated themselves from the Heideggerian essence of technology and its dangers by embracing what Jacques Rancière has pointed out to be the central modernist myth—that changing and “advancing” technology itself has created the modern experience.<sup>355</sup> For French colonial educators, technology was modernity, and it was only through continuous technological change that modern subjects could exist, for it was how they could *survive* modernity.

As Haraway has pointed out, technological changes have the potential to destabilize patriarchal notions of humanity, and interpreting technology through

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<sup>354</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990): 307.

<sup>355</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Continuum, 2004): 31.

“paradigms of rationality” has relied on dehumanizing racialized primitive bodies by associating them with nature. She cited a popular journalistic depiction of a Brazilian Kayapó Indian filming his community, which was meant to convey the uncanniness of a primitive, traditional man using modern technology.<sup>356</sup> French colonial educators sought to defend the borders between traditional and modern, Africa and Europe, primitive and civilized, even as they touted modernization and industrialization for Africa. They found the artisan at these borders, and exploited the artisan’s labor and the symbolism it produced.

Cast as part of a larger effort to make colonialism benefit Africans, the advocacy for artisanal education should be understood as what Peter Bloom has described as retroactive colonial humanitarianism, which “justifies economic exploitation by finding the cure to the effects of colonial intervention. Finding the cure not only justifies the suspension of sovereignty rights under the colonial administration but perpetuates a system of inequality founded on the magical promise of technological modernity.”<sup>357</sup> Likewise, Gary Wilder explains that colonial humanism “does not refer to reformers’ benevolent attitudes towards natives but to how their concern with native welfare indexed a new way of ruling and racializing native populations.”<sup>358</sup> French policymakers’ and educators’ promotion of artisanry reflected much more about French interpretations of art and technology than it did about the artisanry itself. However, students, artisans, and others used the focus on

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<sup>356</sup> Haraway 2003: 83.

<sup>357</sup> Peter J. Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): viii.

<sup>358</sup> Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude & Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 78.

manual labor and aesthetics to open up economic and expressive opportunities that were at times anti-colonial.

Three phenomena converged in the 1930s to provide the basis for new programs in artisanal education to emerge in the French colonization of West Africa. First, France had entered the twentieth century by defining itself as the European leader of handmade luxury items, and as a nation-state, France nurtured certain kinds of artisanry, such as leatherwork and haute couture, as symbolic of the nation. Secondly, French educators encountered a complex, multi-faceted and contradictory heritage of John Ruskin's anti-industrial pedagogies in the 1920s, which they adopted via the racialized Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model. Finally, the romantic primitivism of 1920s Parisian negrophilia had by then permeated both popular culture and official perspectives.

### ***John Ruskin, Marcel Proust, and France's Artisanal Colonization of Morocco***

The economic importance of handmade decorative arts in France and certain politically charged interpretations of the handmade shaped French twentieth century colonial policies toward the arts in West Africa. A French nationalist economic attitude toward French luxury products combined in curious ways with elements of nineteenth century anarchist and socialist theories around aesthetics and manual labor. Handmade items took on new symbolism in the industrializing French capitalist economy of the late nineteenth century, especially the 1890s. Some French artisans were able to join the bourgeoisie as workshop owners or decorative artists by couching their products as luxury items amongst inferior imported and/or manufactured goods.

Guilds were idealized in opposition to factory production, which were portrayed as unfeelingly capitalist.<sup>359</sup> Many others, both urban and rural, were forced to abandon their trades for “unskilled” factory labor. This led certain theorists, including anarchist Peter Kropotkin, to vaunt the handmade as something much more than a method of making, but a personal and cultural antidote to the capitalist, industrial modernity he criticized. He was influenced by William Morris, who called for an economic system in which people could find joy in labor, which he claimed and transformative possible through skillful manual labor that produced useful, beautiful objects.<sup>360</sup> Morris also opposed ongoing colonization of Africa, which he thought should be left innocent of the capitalism and industrialization he condemned.<sup>361</sup> His naïve romanticization of African aesthetic tradition and supposed isolation would contribute to the colonial humanistic claims to preserve African aesthetic forms.

Some French artisans were able to commodify the very handmade nature of their products by marketing them as luxury items. These were the makers of decorative arts: the couturiers, the watchmakers, the furniture makers, and others, who carved a bourgeois space in industrial capitalism by apparently rejecting industrialization for the sake of a few elite consumers. This apparent fixed identity of a bourgeois artisan who produced luxury items for elite consumers nostalgic for nonindustrial production obscured the actual modes of production and social relations of laborers in an industrializing late nineteenth century France, as pointed out by

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<sup>359</sup> David S. Landes, "French Entrepreneurship and Industrial Growth in the Nineteenth Century." *The Journal of Economic History*. 9.1 (1949):57.

<sup>360</sup> William Morris, *Politics, Art and Society* (London: ElecBook, 2001): 131; Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchy; Its Philosophy, Its Idea" [1896] *No Gods, No Masters*, ed. Daniel Guerin (Oakland: AK Press, 2005): 324.

<sup>361</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, "A Postindustrial Prelude to Postcolonialism: John Ruskin, William Morris, and Gandhism." *Critical Inquiry*. 22.3 (1996): 473, n.18 and 474.

Rancière, who also chided his listeners and readers that twentieth century Western understandings of the artisan retain much of this romanticization, which affects historical analysis of labor, art, and production.<sup>362</sup> In fact, many French artisans, especially tailors and shoemakers, according to Rancière, were active in labor protests in the late nineteenth century precisely because of the low social status accorded to their work and their lack of commitment to a craft that resulted in unsteady employment, which was now threatened further by industrial production of clothing and shoes.<sup>363</sup> He pierces Ruskin and Morris's romantic notions of ascribing joy in labor or "love" of work to artisanal production, but likewise warns against then assuming a facile "hatred," either. The late nineteenth century was a time of great social and economic instability in France, and despite the growing textile manufacturing sector and other industrial development, France remained more agrarian than its primary competitors, Great Britain and Germany in the 1880s.

Early in the history of world expositions, France positioned itself as a leader in the fine arts and decorative arts in Europe.<sup>364</sup> French nationalist sentiment was, in part, structured around a French aesthetic sense and appreciation of luxury. The identity of France as the leader of luxury had been consolidated by the turn of the century, and the government went so far as to embrace the popular icon of the ornamental "La Parisienne" as the emblem of France at the 1900 Exposition Universelle.<sup>365</sup> (Figure 3.5) The sculptor Paul Moreau-Vauthier created an image of "La Parisienne," which

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<sup>362</sup> Rancière 2004: 318, Rancière 2004: 322.

<sup>363</sup> Rancière 2004: 323.

<sup>364</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988): 115.

<sup>365</sup> Greenhalgh 1988:189.

stood atop of the main entrance of the exposition, welcoming visitors. Far above the crowd, her ethereal and idealized image was literally and figuratively on a pedestal. She presided over the exposition, obscuring the artisanal, domestic, and consumption work of real Parisian women. This imagined Parisian female consumer defined France through her pleasurable consumption of the fruits of its artisanal labors. After the conclusion of the Exposition Universelle in 1900, Moreau-Vauthier's sculpture was erected in a park in Neuilly-Sur-Marne, an eastern suburb of Paris, a strange banishment of the symbol of the city to a new home outside of its borders. (Figure 3.6) There, the statue arched her back like a ship's figurehead with no ship, adrift in the suburban park's trees. Her passing contribution to the affirmation of France's status as a leader in artisanal luxury and the home of taste-making women completed, she had retired to the countryside.



Figure 3.5: Entrance to the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. The sculpture by Paul Moreau-Vauthier, "La Parisienne" is at the top of the arch.



Figure 3.6: After the conclusion of the Exposition Universelle in 1900, Paul Moreau-Vauthier's sculpture, "La Parisienne," was erected in a park in Neuilly-Sur-Marne, an eastern suburb of Paris.

Meanwhile, industrialization and colonization both continued to expand in many facets in both France and West Africa. It was at this time that Ruskin was re-introduced to the French when a young Marcel Proust embarked upon a six-year immersion in the work of the John Ruskin.<sup>366</sup> Descriptions of Proust's work on Ruskin often refer to it as an "infatuation," and the emotional quality of his interest in Ruskin is clear.<sup>367</sup> In *Sesame and Lilies*, Ruskin especially encouraged girls to take up philanthropic handicraft.<sup>368</sup> Men's labor is depicted as of the scholarly or fine art variety—although it is expressed through metaphors of manual labor. In his preface to his translation of *Sesame and Lilies*, Proust emphasized Ruskin's comments on the act of reading. Importantly, Proust shifted the sphere of reading from the pedagogical

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<sup>366</sup> Cynthia Gamble, *Proust as Interpreter of Ruskin: The Seven Lamps of Translation* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 2002).

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ruskin 2002: 9-25.

advice Ruskin intended to be applicable to many children in home tutoring and in formal schools, to an intensely personal one. Proust rejected the activist approach of William Morris's interpretation of Ruskin in the decorative arts and in society in favor of an imagined friendship with Ruskin.<sup>369</sup>

Proust's use of Ruskin in such an intensely personal way shifted the tone in which Ruskin could be read in its French translation. Ruskin is nothing if not emphatically and widely prescriptive. Yet, Proust rejects this fundamental aspect of Ruskin's writing, and shaped future French readers' relationships to Ruskin. The Ruskin that gained new popularity in early twentieth century Paris was a literary early Ruskin, whose social policies and educational theories were strangely muted in the French translation of a book laying out his educational theories according to gender. Proust's mediation of Ruskin's already classist social prescriptions and his dismissal of Morris' more radical suggestions for social transformation affected the ways that educators, scholars, and policy makers interpreted the social theories of Morris and Ruskin regarding the handmade. The handmade and metaphorical manual labor in masculine intellectual pursuits could serve as individual antidotes to a dehumanizing, degenerative, but inevitable industrialization. Women's handwork, on the other hand, was not metaphorical, and it was through aesthetically pleasing, but non-waged domestic labor that girls contributed to the public good. The first practical application of this romantic approach in French colonial governance emerged in Morocco.

Influenced by Henri Matisse's interest in North African art and his predecessor's interest in Moroccan and Algerian art, Henri Lyautey used a Ruskinian

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid 50; Ibid 92.

romantic valorization of handmade objects during his tenure as governor of Morocco from 1912-1925, work which culminated in a groundbreaking exhibit from Morocco at the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*. His work to document, promote, organize, and innovate in Moroccan arts also interacted with charitable projects already in place, such as Madam Luce Ben-Aben's workshop to train Moroccan girls in embroidery, which was then sold in France, a philanthropically oriented business that had been in existence since 1845.<sup>370</sup> His interest in aesthetics was just part of his strategy for colonization which required the military to take charge of not only invasion, but also governing and cooptation—both in colonies and among the French populace.<sup>371</sup> Hamid Irbouh has shown how French artisanal education in Morocco was a key method in the establishment of French economic control and the expansion of French colonial cultural hegemony.<sup>372</sup>

Lyautey built on his perceived successes in Morocco to gain further prominence in French colonial administration. He advocated for ethnographic documentation of colonial subjects in order to achieve subordination with as little violence as possible, and as a way of cultivating economically productive aesthetic labor that would result in attractive commodities for the metropolitan market and capital for the companies based there. As its director, Lyautey, by then a General (*Maréchal*), was the primary force behind the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, which was a huge six month event that impacted how all involved

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<sup>370</sup> Roger Benjamin, "Advancing the Indigenous Arts," *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>371</sup> Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011): 229.

<sup>372</sup> Hamid Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005).

understood the French colonial project. The general public was introduced to a safely commodified empire, and the officials under Lyautey, such as Jules Brevié, Governor General of French West Africa and director of the West African section of the 1931 Exposition, learned from him methods in documentation and display that emphasized aesthetics and labor. Lyautey, Brevié, and other French colonial officials also developed their racialized colonial pedagogies by looking to educational experiments in the United States.

### ***Dignity of Labor: Racialized Pedagogies of Artisanry and Industrialization***

At the conclusion of the Civil War, educated leaders of the African American population and other Americans called for new educational opportunities for the recently emancipated, and the United States government's new Freedmen's Bureau funded several educational institutions. Samuel Armstrong, a white American whose parents had been missionaries in Hawaii and who served as the colonel of a regiment of African American Union, became the Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau of the Ninth District of Virginia in 1866. In 1867, Howard University was founded, and it soon offered undergraduate and graduate education in theology, liberal art, and medicine. Soon after, Armstrong proposed a school that would have very different educational aims from the scholarly Howard University. He conceived of the Hampton Institute, founded in 1868 and funded by the federal Freedman's Bureau, as a mission activity reaching both African Americans and Native Americans. Although he credited his father with much influence, Armstrong corresponded with educators and policy-makers in Germany, France and Great Britain, in addition to consulting other

missionaries. It was through this process that Armstrong began participating in international educational discourses increasingly concerned with training laborers to adapt cooperatively to the changing global economy. The centuries-old system of violent slavery based on race had just been abolished in the United States, and the economic upheavals of the Civil War had had many effects across the world. Unable to expropriate labor through slavery, the United States government still sought to exert authority over the formerly enslaved and to benefit from their labor. Armstrong and others saw education as one method to accomplish this.

An important referent in political economy in the 1860s remained Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, which had suggested in the late eighteenth century that artisans and others in the "common trade[s]" would benefit from increased formal education. He argued that it would be vocationally beneficial, but also that

An instructed and intelligent people, besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect their superiors.<sup>373</sup>

Education was intended to effect social control and maintain class boundaries without physical violence.

Smith's educational arguments had been brought to the fore of public debate in the United Kingdom and the United States by John Ruskin's transition from art and

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<sup>373</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. [1776] (London: George Routledge and Sons, Lmt'd, 1893): 618

architecture commentary into political economy.<sup>374</sup> In need of no translation in the United States, Ruskin's writings had quickly arrived there, where his theories were adopted for all manner of social experiments, from the American Arts and Crafts Movement to utopian villages like Ruskin, Tennessee.<sup>375</sup> Ruskin valorized handwork in education sponsored by the nation-state:

The first interference should be in education. In order that men may be able to support themselves when they are grown, they strength must be properly developed while they are young; and the state should always see to this... I believe all youths of whatever rank, ought to learn some manual trade thoroughly; for it is quite wonderful how much a man's views of life are cleared by the attainment of the capacity of doing any one thing well with his hands and arms.<sup>376</sup>

The best-known use of Ruskinian educational theory in the United States was Progressive Education, a pedagogical model popular among the late nineteenth century American urban bourgeoisie.<sup>377</sup> Created in response to the urgent situation of formerly enslaved populations who faced severe discrimination, frequent violence, and limited economic opportunities after the Civil War, Armstrong's theories were also very much in this spirit of other emerging pedagogies in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. This was an education intended to teach those who already labored to labor more efficiently—and to do so in subordination to the ruling classes.

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<sup>374</sup> John Ruskin, *The Political Economy of Art*. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1886): viii. See also *"Unto This Last": Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy*. (1860) (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

<sup>375</sup> Jan Bakker and Francelia Butler. *A Study of the Socialist Commune at Ruskin, Tennessee* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); and W. F. Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South: The Ruskin Colonies in Tennessee and Georgia, 1894-1901* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

<sup>376</sup> Ruskin 1886: 100.

<sup>377</sup> See Bettina Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens: The Life and Work of Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1864-1952* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000): 42-45; and Eileen Boris, Chapter Five: "Schooling Taste: Art and Manual Training in the Public Schools," in *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 82-98.

In 1874, Teachers M.F. Armstrong and Helen Ludlow emphasized that the Hampton pedagogy had been developed by white Americans for Hawaiian students, and they remarked that African Americans represented “a race similar in its dawn of civilization” to Hawaiians.<sup>378</sup> This conflation of African Americans with Hawaiians reflected an evolutionary and racialized conception of humanity, in which certain races could progress up a ladder of progress—but who would always fall short of the pinnacle. This underlying paradigm allowed for the model’s continuing evolution and exportability over the next century. In 1878, Armstrong requested that seventy Native American prisoners of war be transported to Hampton for enrollment as students. They had been deemed no longer a military threat, and Armstrong assumed that his model could also be applied to this supposedly less civilized population. The United States government sought new ways to control the Native American population as it continued to violently expropriate vast tracts of land. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was consolidating its strategy to use education to extract culture from Native American students, and it was amenable to Hampton’s absorption of Native Americans into its student body. Armstrong’s initiative influenced the founding of the first off-reservation boarding school for Native Americans, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, in the following year, 1879.

Hampton was in a period of growth in the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s. From 1878 until 1886, the number of students increased from 323 to 693.<sup>379</sup> In 1889,

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<sup>378</sup> M.F. Armstrong and Helen W. Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students* (New York : G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1874): 22.

<sup>379</sup> Francis Peabody, *Education for Life: The Story of Hampton Institute, Told in Connection with the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the School*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Page & Co., 1918): 179.

seventy-five percent of the 540 living graduates were teachers.<sup>380</sup> In 1892, 265 Hampton graduates taught in schools, and in turn, 2187 of their students also taught. Francis Peabody referred to this as the “self-propagating character of the Hampton training.”<sup>381</sup> Many of these Hampton graduates founded their own schools, and the 1880s saw a quick increase in the number of new schools for African Americans.<sup>382</sup> The most famous one was the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which was founded in 1888 by Booker T. Washington, an African American protégé of Armstrong who would gain much greater fame than his mentor. He further theorized and developed the vocational “industrial education” that Armstrong had implemented at Hampton, and Tuskegee maintained its emphasis on manual skills through its first decades. Donald General has argued that histories of Progressive Education in the United States must take account of Washington’s significant contributions to its theorization and implementation.<sup>383</sup> Washington’s leadership of this school, which required lecture circuits to raise money, led to his fame and stature in the United States and abroad. In the Social Darwinist rhetoric associated with both schools, the Ruskinian valorization of handwork took on an especially urgent, racialized tone. Armstrong and Ludlow lauded the manual labor system for their students because “their chief misfortune [was] in deficiency of character rather than in ignorance.”<sup>384</sup>

Building on his years of lecturing and writing, Washington published his

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Peabody 1918: 192.

<sup>382</sup> These schools included the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School (Virginia), founded by C. Walker and William B. Weaver in 1888.

<sup>383</sup> Donald General, “Booker T. Washington and Progressive Education: An Experimentalist Approach to Curriculum Development and Reform.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 69. 3 (July 1, 2000): 215–234.

<sup>384</sup> Armstrong and Ludlow 1874: 36-37.

autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, in 1901.<sup>385</sup> From his perspective, it was the “ultimate statement of black progress,” a personal account of how formal education focused on manual labor could transform and empower African Americans constructing lives after slavery.<sup>386</sup> Embraced by proponents of progressive education, the book catapulted him to even greater national fame. In an environment in which many white supremacists, including lawmakers and others in positions of power, argued against all education for African Americans, Washington tirelessly worked to advocate for educational and economic opportunities for them. Washington’s gained further fame and notoriety when W.E.B. Du Bois put his critique of *Up From Slavery* and indeed, Washington’s life’s work, at the core of the entire third chapter, entitled, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others.”<sup>387</sup> In it, Du Bois perspicaciously identified the dehumanizing commodification of the African American laboring body in both the pedagogy and the propaganda for the Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes. He also questioned the methods by which Washington was attempting to achieve his questionable means, becoming one of the earlier critics to observe that the trades taught at Tuskegee were or were becoming obsolete in the face of new technology.

Yet, scholar Carla Willard has suggested that this tension between education for physical laboring versus education into a capitalist bourgeoisie already existed in *Up From Slavery*, which depicted a man who had pursued industrial education as someone who was not dissimilar to the educated African American that Du Bois also

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<sup>385</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*. [1901] Ed. William L. Andrews. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996).

<sup>386</sup> Robert J. Norrell, “Booker T. Washington: Understanding the Wizard of Tuskegee.” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 42 (December 1, 2003): 96–109.

<sup>387</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* [1903] (Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett Publications, 1961).

described: “‘He’ was manly in a managerial or professional way; he farmed out labor, and, like his genteel wife who cultivated gardens into blooming oases, he consumed, rather than merely produced, domestic products.”<sup>388</sup> Washington presented his multifaceted project to a broad, often hostile, audience from whom he sought political, economic, and moral support. The popular discourses stemming from Progressive Education and the Arts and Crafts Movement provided broad philosophical backing for his specific work on behalf of African American Americans.

Washington would reiterate his emphasis on the character-building quality of manual labor when the Tuskegee Institute faced criticism from both white supremacists and African American scholars. In very Ruskinian fashion, he frequently emphasized the “dignity of labor.” Michael Bieze has argued for associating Washington with the broader American Arts and Crafts Movement, noting that his participation in it was a primary vehicle through which he reached his white bourgeois and elite donor audiences.<sup>389</sup> Washington also countered his critics, whether those speaking from white supremacist viewpoints or those allied with W. E. B. Du Bois, by couching his arguments in the moralist, aestheticized terms of Ruskin.

The pedagogies associated with Hampton and Tuskegee were exported in unique, racialized, and highly visual ways. Frances Benjamin Johnston received a commission to photograph the Hampton Institute for the American Negro Exhibit at the 1901 Universal Exposition in Paris, which was organized by Du Bois just two

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<sup>388</sup> Carla Willard, “Timing Impossible Subjects: The Marketing Style of Booker T. Washington.” *American Quarterly* 53. 4 (December 1, 2001): 624–669.

<sup>389</sup> Michael Bieze, *Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008): 86-90. Bieze argues that “the most direct link between Washington and the Arts and Crafts Movement is Elbert Hubbard, the founder of the Roycroft community. Not only did Washington know him but so did his friends” (90).

years before the publication of his groundbreaking, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, in which he launched his critique of Washington's methods.<sup>390</sup>

Johnston's highly stylized images of students working drew from and contributed to ethnographic photographic representations of Africans, and colonial discourses on African art education would later emphasize images of artisans working over images of what they produced. Johnston's project made up only a small portion of the photographs Du Bois included in the American Negro Exhibit, for which he commissioned numerous images, including photographic albums of African Americans in Georgia, which have been analyzed by David Levering Lewis and Deborah Willis in *A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. Du Bois and African American Portraits of Progress*.<sup>391</sup> It was, however, a notable part, and both the Hampton Institute and the American Negro Exhibit won Grand Prix awards at the Exposition.<sup>392</sup> The photographs were very well received by the leaders at Hampton and by the audiences attending the Exposition, which is attested by the prize awarded to them.<sup>393</sup> French and other European visitors to the exposition saw Johnston's aestheticized account of how African Americans were being educated to labor in service to the United States nation-state.

Having already completed other commissions related to Progressive Education, Johnston stylized the images of the student learning and the laborer working by

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<sup>390</sup> Verna Posever Curtis, "Frances Benjamin Johnston in 1900: Staking the Sisterhood's Claim in American Photography." in Bronwyn Griffith, ed., *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2001): 33; Du Bois [1903] 1961.

<sup>391</sup> David Levering Lewis and Deborah Willis. *A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. Du Bois and African-American Portraits of Progress*. 1st ed. (New York: Amistad, 2003).

<sup>392</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>393</sup> Curtis 2001: 33.

blending the already mercurial genres of documentary, journalistic, portrait and art photography. The lasting impact of her way of seeing Hampton, of conceptualizing African American and Native American bodies learning and laboring, was crystallized within the realm of fine art. In 1966, the Museum of Modern Art organized an exhibition of some of the photographs Johnston took at Hampton, and published an accompanying catalogue of forty-four of them.<sup>394</sup> (Figure 3.7) In “Stairway of Treasurer’s Residence, Students at Work,” the student-workers’ bodies echo the staircase that they are building. The staircase represents the bourgeois material success and respectability to which Hampton graduates are meant to aspire. However, it is unfinished, and the photograph’s subject is not the staircase, but the young men building it. The student-workers concentrate on their work, feigning lack of awareness of the camera. The photograph attests to their technical excellence and aesthetic expertise as artisans. They pose as if at work, but their stillness betrays the performance. The photograph intends to reassure white supremacists fearful of an overthrow of American racist culture. These African American men work, and they reinforce the capitalist economy, rather than challenge it. Framed by the banister and the staircase’s molding, they are visually controlled.

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<sup>394</sup> Frances Johnston and Lincoln Kirstein. *The Hampton Album: 44 Photographs from an Album of Hampton Institute* (New York: Museum of Modern Art distributed by Doubleday, 1966).



Figure 3.7: Frances Benjamin Johnston, "Stairway of Treasurer's Residence. Students at work," 1899. Library of Congress, United States of America

In Figure 3.8, "A Class in Carpentry," Johnston presents the classroom in which students learn the skills conveyed in "Stairway." The Hampton Institute was a school, and here was its primary activity, formal education in a classroom. Students again look down at their work, the camera's gaze claiming them, deterring the viewer from imagining their perspectives. Opponents to formal education for African Americans and Native Americans feared that Hampton graduates would disrupt society by demanding equal social and economic rights by spurning manual labor for the political realm. In this photograph, the brick walls again contain the active bodies in front of them, which are further visually controlled by the sturdy worktables in front of them. The only man not completely bisected by a table wields a saw. The sharp instrument points down, cutting wood. The saw evoked the threat of violent rebellion,

but simultaneously communicated that Hampton students were not raising weapons in destruction, but applying tools to projects of construction.



Figure 3.8: Frances Benjamin Johnston,  
“A Class in Carpentry,” 1899.  
Library of Congress, United States of America

The Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model was strictly gendered, adhering to Victorian bourgeois patriarchal systems, even as the late nineteenth century’s “New woman” claimed increasing rights to autonomy and mobility. At Hampton, men were taught wage-earning trades, while women were instructed in domestic skills intended to be unwaged—or if paid, only configured as supplemental to a husband’s primary income. In a class in dress-making, students reinforce the importance of dress in Johnston and Dubois’s representations of the “New Negro” by demanding viewers imagine the origins of all of those beautiful clothes worn not only in Johnston’s

photographs, but the numerous others Du Bois included in the 1900 exhibit in Paris.<sup>395</sup> (Figure 3.9) These women do not confront the viewer either, and one even has her back to the camera. This student adds to the pattern sketches on the chalkboard, where numbers and letters are barely discernable. Here is where the body, especially the female Black bourgeois body, is planned, made, and shaped through clothing. In defiance of primitivist stereotypes, Hampton students claimed bourgeois identities they could sew themselves.



Figure: 3.9 Frances Benjamin Johnston,  
“A Class in Dress-making,” 1899.  
Library of Congress, United States of America

In Figure 3.10, another depiction of a women’s home economics class, two women spin yarn, two work at a loom, and three card the cotton to be spun. The title

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<sup>395</sup> See Deborah Willis’s discussion of Du Bois’s emphasis on dress in Lewis and Willis 2003:66.

states that they are weaving a rug. As is the case for all of Johnston's photographs of Hampton, the rug is nowhere to be seen, but the photograph means to show that the students are making something—rather than *what* they are making. This photograph very explicitly inspired the nostalgia associated with the anti-industrial Arts and Crafts movement by taking as its subject not only the women, but equally important, two spinning wheels and a foot pedal manual floor loom. The women wear clothing sewn from machine-woven cloth, as was conventional in the United States in 1899.

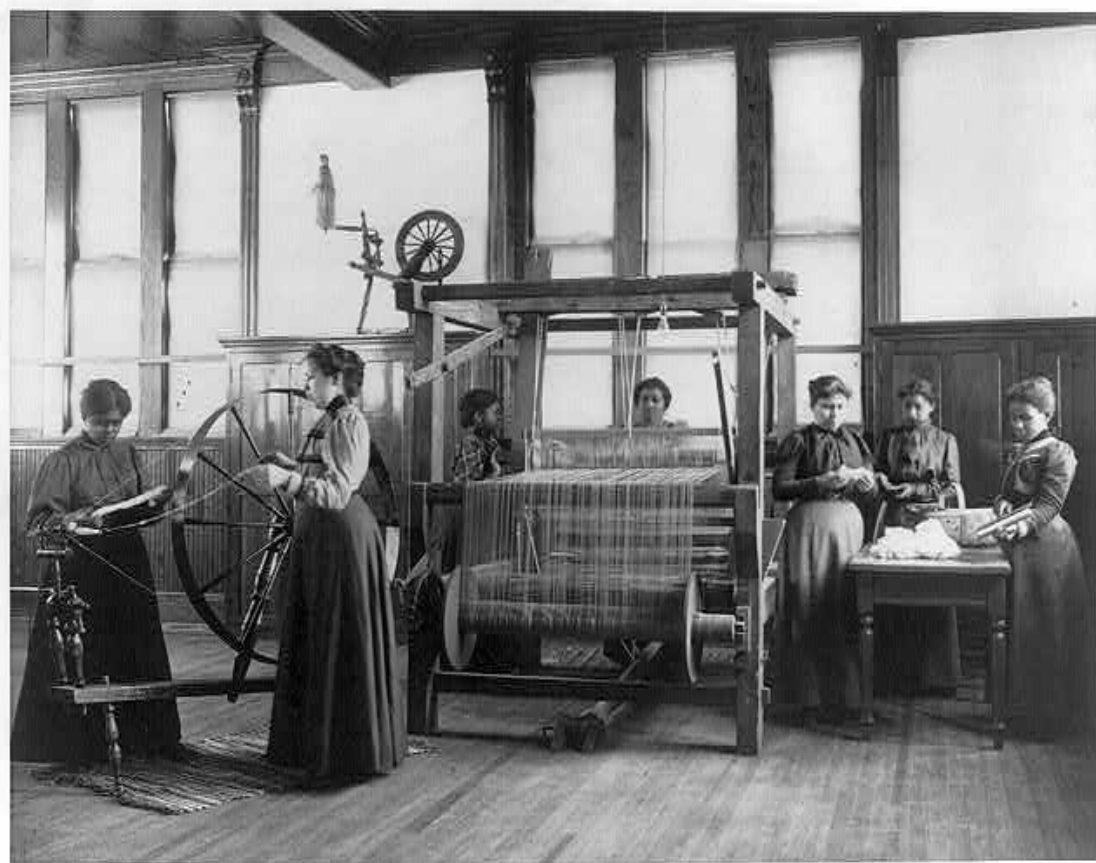


Figure 3.10: Frances Benjamin Johnston, "Women Weaving Rug in Home Economics Class at Hampton Institute," 1899. Library of Congress, United States of America

Industrially spun and woven cloth had long dominated the market, and the artisanal methods of textile production depicted in the photograph were not considered

economically feasible for rug-making anymore, either. These were technologies considered obsolete in a global industrial economy, and they certainly would have been read as quaint in France, with its large centers of textile industry in Lyon. By training students in artisanal technologies, Hampton reassured white observers that their graduates might become bourgeois, but their economic capacities would be limited. The depiction of artisanal skills also invoked Ruskin's association of good character with manual work. The women carding, spinning, and weaving here attest to their common humanity and dignity through work in the paradigm of the Ruskinian American Arts and Crafts Movement. The weaving implements were also meant to inspire warm emotions associated with an imaginary pre-industrial home tended by a bustling, unwaged mother figure. Johnston's photographs made Hampton's contributions to the American Arts and Crafts movement legible, but they left graduates' specific contributions to the economy safely vague. This was education for labor—but labor for what ends was largely outside of the scope of Johnston's camera.

As Williams Watkins has argued, "Hampton education came to exemplify colonial education for Blacks in America and the rest of the world."<sup>396</sup> Alluding to his ongoing conversations with missionaries and colonial officials, in *Up From Slavery*, Washington wrote that he had been encouraged "to extend the work that we are trying to do at Tuskegee to Africa or to the West Indies, where Negroes are a larger part of the population than in this country."<sup>397</sup> Washington and Armstrong facilitated mission work abroad for their schools' graduates. Africa was not their exclusive foreign

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<sup>396</sup> William Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001): 44.

<sup>397</sup> Washington [1901] 1996: 172. See also Zimmerman 2010.

destination, but school officials and educators believed their pedagogical model most appropriate for black students.<sup>398</sup> German government officials sought out Washington and hired several of his students to lead agricultural and industrial educational projects in Togo in the first years of the twentieth century. Although the institutional relationship faded after several members of the Tuskegee contingent had died in accidents or from disease, Zimmerman argues that the project demonstrated to Germany, France, and Britain that cotton could be transformed into an export-oriented cash crop in West Africa.<sup>399</sup>

The French government had its own links to the Hampton Institute and the Tuskegee Institute. During World War I, Robert Russa Moton, a Hampton graduate who first worked there and then became the principal of Tuskegee in 1915, conducted a study of black soldiers' and officers' performance in the French military. He found no appreciable difference in performance, and concluded the study by speaking to two audiences, the conscripted African soldiers and white French soldiers and officers. He exhorted the French officers to recognize the merit of black soldiers, and in both speeches, he advocated for education, Hampton-style education, for French colonial subjects in Africa.<sup>400</sup>

Eighteenth and nineteenth century French colonization schemes for Africa had been based on an "idea of 'regeneration,' in which colonization was meant to "free

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<sup>398</sup> Armstrong Association, *The Work and Influence of Hampton. Proceedings of a meeting held in New York City February 12, 1904*. Under the direction of the Armstrong Association. With the addresses of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, chairman; President Charles W. Eliot; Dr. H. B. Frissell; and Dr. Booker T. Washington (New York, The Lehmaier Press, 1904): 25.

<sup>399</sup> Zimmerman 2010: 8.

<sup>400</sup> William Hardin Hughes, and Frederick D. Patterson. *Robert Russa Moton of Hampton and Tuskegee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956): 127.

Africa from despotic regimes and open it to civilization.”<sup>401</sup> The rhetoric of a “civilizing mission” remained important for French colonial policy makers and administrators, and both French scholarship and government-sponsored propaganda presented France’s various colonies as members of a family, or La Plus Grande France, at various states of maturation, with the ultimate but unattainable goal of French-ness.<sup>402</sup> Education in French West Africa was extremely restricted and centralized. A very few elite schools in Dakar provided academic training of exceptional quality, but most almost no Africans in French West Africa had access to French formal education.<sup>403</sup> Despite the caricature of French colonial power as purely assimilationist, this dual educational system revealed the cracks in those French goals for remaking, or “regenerating” Africans. In fact, France was just establishing political and military control over vast swaths of West Africa in the 1920s, including the territory demarcated as Niger, where resistant Tuareg nobles were pacified for the time being through both military and medical means.

Following in the wake of the First World War, with its unprecedented travel experiences for infantrymen and concluding calls from the League of Nations, the 1920s and 1930s proved to be decades of an increase in formal educational opportunities for laboring classes in many places in the world. Colonial powers felt pressure to demonstrate the supposedly humanitarian aspect of colonization, and the United States was making strides in broadening educational opportunities to many

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<sup>401</sup> Françoise Manchuelle, “The ‘Regeneration of Africa’: An Important and Ambiguous Concept in 18<sup>th</sup> an 19<sup>th</sup> Century French Thinking about Africa.” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 36.144 (1996): 583.

<sup>402</sup> For an extensive discussion of the French government’s conceptualization of various colonies as members of a French “family,” see Dana Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples: 1886-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

<sup>403</sup> Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

populations, including the many African Americans attending Hampton, Tuskegee, and their related schools.<sup>404</sup> A flurry of writing on education and pedagogy for colonial subjects appeared in published books and in scholarly journals throughout both decades, but none were more important than the Phelps-Stokes Report, published in 1922.<sup>405</sup>

The Phelps-Stokes Fund, founded and led by members of a philanthropic wealthy Boston family, had as its mission to assist both African-Americans and Africans. The Fund had close ties with both Hampton and Tuskegee, and had spent the first part of its existence focusing on the United States. After World War I, the Phelps-Stokes Fund chose to conduct a study of education in Africa. European colonial governments took adequate heed to mention it in official documents.<sup>406</sup> The Commission undertook two research trips, including one that resulted in a report on Western, Equatorial and Southern Africa. The Educational Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the Director of the Commission, and the author of the resulting reports was Thomas Jesse Jones, who had served as the director of the research department at Hampton. He, too, had conducted research in France during World War I, and the scope of his research included both African and African American soldiers.

Jones also wrote in terms of “regeneration,” which was an increasingly common refrain in a Europe fractured and disillusioned by World War I. As Petrine

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<sup>404</sup> Russell Lane, “The Legal Trend Toward Increased Provisions for Negro Education in the United States Between 1920 and 1930.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 1.3/4 (1932): 396.

<sup>405</sup> Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in Africa; a study of West, South, and equatorial Africa by the African education commission, under the auspices of the Phelps-Stokes fund and foreign mission societies of North America and Europe*. (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1922); Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in East Africa; a study of East, Central and South Africa by the second African Education Commission under the auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund in cooperation with the International Education Board*. (1924) (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970).

<sup>406</sup> Scanlon 1964: 6.

Archer-Straw and others have argued was the case for the fashionable “negrophilia” that radiated outward from Paris, it was Africa seen to be regenerating Europe this time: “Civilization, exhausted by the destruction of war and the confusion of an unsettled world, looks to Africa to help replenish its resources.”<sup>407</sup> Yet, this remaking of Europe required a remaking of Africans. Like Armstrong and Washington, Jones saw disordered bodies with “few wants” waiting to be remade through bourgeois bodily practices, manual labor, and capitalist consumption. He put special emphasis on decrying to hard physical labor of African women, and advocating for their instruction in the handwork of an idealized European Victorian woman, such as sewing and embroidery.

Although Jones’ goals and rhetoric were both very compatible with the French colonial government’s, he and his commission spent almost no time in French African colonies, and they did not visit French West Africa at all. Jones consistently implicitly criticized French colonial education for using French instead of indigenous languages as the medium of instruction, but chose not to address it in depth. However, the Report imagined an African student that would be of great use to French educators later. This student was, like students at Hampton and Tuskegee, an artisan and laborer whose work was enhanced by academic study, and sometimes a student whose academic study was enhanced by artisanal work. He reiterated Smith, Ruskin, Armstrong, and Washington to affirm the character-building aspect of manual work. Jones averred:

Every pupil should be taught the special forms of hand skill required in his community, so that he may be able to use the materials available to make the conditions of life healthful and comfortable. Such instruction

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<sup>407</sup> Jones 1922: 9. See Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture* (New York: Norton and Co., 2000).

should not be merely incidental to the ends of the station. Nor should it be regarded as merely for economic ends. It should be understood that the training of the hand involves a training of the mind and of the character. The educational systems observed in Africa either omit all provision for the training of the hand or offer a formal instruction patterned after the manual training courses of the large urban schools of Europe or America.<sup>408</sup>

Jones, representing an influential philanthropic fund in the newly powerful United States, rebuked colonial powers for not having established a system of Hamptons and Tuskeeges across Africa. Through his affiliation with Hampton and his academic background, he elided the controversy over manual work in the United States, maintaining his paternalist viewpoint despite the longstanding challenges from Du Bois and others.<sup>409</sup>

In response to these converging pressures to reform education and other aspects of colonial administration, an Education department was created within the French Ministry of the Colonies in 1924.<sup>410</sup> In a strictly Social Darwinist tack, its statements reflect an official, if not practical, adherence to the so-called assimilationist style of colonialism: “The essential goal of elementary-level education is to bring as many natives as possible close to us, to familiarize them with our language, our institutions, and our methods of leading them unknowingly to economic and social progress through a prudent evolution appropriate to their own civilization.”<sup>411</sup> The practical challenges of assimilationist aspirations in a region lacking the infrastructure of a widespread formal education would encourage those policy makers already

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<sup>408</sup> Jones 1922: 21.

<sup>409</sup> For more on the relationship between Jones and Du Bois, see Watkins 2001: 109-116.

<sup>410</sup> Scanlon 1964: 6.

<sup>411</sup> Abdou Moumouni, *L'Education En Afrique* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1964): 55.

influenced by Jones to look to seek further inspiration from the Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model. The French versions of colonial education for African subjects were distinctly aesthetic, as Paris was the center of a Western enthusiasm for African and African Diasporic cultural expression, an appropriation of Blackness to recreate White modernity and power.

### ***Negrophilia and African Art Education***

Over the course of the teens and twenties, the phenomenon of negrophilia shifted from avant-garde modernist circles to a mainstream Parisian fashion.<sup>412</sup> In Europe and the United States, Pablo Picasso, Paul Guillaume, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Albert C. Barnes canonized African sculptures compatible with their own modernist aesthetics that were intended to challenge formal and social paradigms of the European past.<sup>413</sup> Surrealists incorporated African art in their vocabulary of objects intended to challenge Western cultural constructs. Man Ray's photograph of Kiki de Montparnasse is just one of the most famous examples. Nancy Cunard mixed European negrophilic fashions with an evolving social activism that also advocated for African American rights in the United States. Although still criticized for her objectification of Black bodies, Cunard's long career demonstrates the global artistic, popular, journalistic, activist, intellectual, and personal potential dimensions of

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<sup>412</sup> See Archer Straw 2000.

<sup>413</sup> Kathleen Berzock and Christa Clarke. *Representing Africa in American Art Museums: A Century of Collecting and Display* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Christa Clarke, "Defining African Art: Primitive Negro Sculpture and the Aesthetic Philosophy of Albert Barnes." *African Arts*. 36.1 (2003): 40-51; Patricia Leighton, "The White Peril and L'art Nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism." *Art Bulletin*. 72.4 (1990): 609-630.

European negrophilia.<sup>414</sup> In their primitivist interpretations, African sculpture represented a natural resource of exotic human vibrancy, which could reinvigorate the tired, self-destructive Western artistic tradition, just as Africa, its people, its cultural forms, and its natural resources, could be a source of energy for a Europe scarred and frightened by the highly industrial horrors of World War I.

In 1927, Georges Hardy, who along with Albert Charton, would be one of the most prominent French officials and theorists in colonial African education in the next decades, wrote a book entitled *L'Art Negre: L'Art Animiste des Noirs D'Afrique*, in which he emphasized the religious character of African art. Completely under the sway of Parisian negrophilia, he chided those who did not appreciate the aesthetic beauty of African art. He drew from prominent collections to illustrate the forming canon of African art, as defined by European and American collectors. (Figure 3.11) This Kota reliquary, or *mbulu-ngulu*, demonstrates the prevalence of European provenance and aesthetic criteria over African cultural contexts and object uses. This sculpture is only part of a more complete object, which included a bundle wrapped around the bottom part that held the remains of a revered ancestor. Carefully cleaned and mounted on a polished wooden stand, the reliquary's specific meanings in Africa became only indirectly relevant in Guillaume's collection and Hardy's book.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> See Nancy Cunard, *Negro Anthology* (London: Published by Nancy Cunard at Wishart & Co, 1934); Petrine Archer Straw, "Why Not Africa?: Ideas About Black Culture Between Norman Douglass and Friends," Lecture Delivered at *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, 1997. [www.petrinearcher.com/files/ps/articles/NDNancy.pdf](http://www.petrinearcher.com/files/ps/articles/NDNancy.pdf) [Accessed May 4, 2012].

<sup>415</sup> For more on the changing meanings of African art in different contexts, see Susan Vogel, *Fang: An Epic Journey* (S.I.: Prince Street Pictures, 2001); Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, eds. *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Christopher B. Steiner, *African Art in Transit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Arthur C. Danto, *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: Center for African Art, 1988).



MASQUE DE L'OGOUE.  
(Collection Paul Guillaume).

Cl. Lemare.

Figure 3.11: Illustration of a Kota *Mbulu-Ngulu* (reliquary figure) in the collection of Paul Guillaume included in Georges Hardy's *L'art Nègre: L'art Animiste Des Noirs D'afrique*. Paris: H. Laurens, 1927.

Hardy characterized the African work ethic by clarifying that “it is not exactly true to say that the Black is lazy: he likes activity and he is capable of lively efforts, but not sustained efforts. If he is master of his labor, he will work just enough for his immediate needs or a bit more, because his lack of foresight is unimaginable.”<sup>416</sup> He

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<sup>416</sup> Georges Hardy, *L'Art Nègre: L'art Animiste Des Noirs D'afrique* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1927): 83.

also cited other authors to bolster his argument that Africans do not seek originality in aesthetic expression, but hold steadfast to tradition, to “a singular monotony.”<sup>417</sup> He lauded a former golden age of religious art in Africa, but conceded that “*l’art nègre* is now in full decadence.” He blamed both Islam and European colonization. He noted that Europe “emancipated” artisanal castes, and thus arrived at his optimistic perspective by observing that

all artisans’ sons did not become construction workers for railroads or public works. He finds he already has an artistic vocation that he can claim. But instead of being limited by narrow conventions of caste, they will benefit from a new liberty, they will become aware of their creative faculty, the individual will emancipate himself from the group, the artist will replace the artisan.<sup>418</sup>

He then praised projects in which Europeans teach and organize African artisans to produce for the European expatriate and tourist market, citing a workshop in Ouagadougou in particular. Interestingly, he also anticipated increasing numbers of African painters.<sup>419</sup> He defined an African artist, who was a man, as an anonymous primitive sculptor who might become a painter with sufficient European guidance.

Like many others, he lamented the ostensible declining aesthetic and technical quality of African art, and he proposed interventions to facilitate design innovation and European marketing.<sup>420</sup> Hardy’s arguments represented the two major ways that the popular fascination with African art manifested in French colonial pedagogy. Hardy and others valorized African art to adjust Social Darwinist racist paradigms to account for African intelligence, and thus justified new forms of education for

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<sup>417</sup> Hardy 1927: 107.

<sup>418</sup> Hardy 1927: 157.

<sup>419</sup> Hardy 1927: 158.

<sup>420</sup> Hardy 1927.

Africans to skeptics in their own government. Such an argument was equally invested in scientific racism and imperial power, but it was an attempt to use art to resolve the unavoidable contradictions in French colonial policy, which vaunted the French motto of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” that increasing numbers of colonized peoples were demanding be applied to them, too.

The second important negrophilic interpretation of African art was also meant to justify colonization and colonial education. In popular European Modernist conceptions of African art, it had happened in the past. Early twentieth century European Modernist artists and collectors’ Africa was an imagined primitive space in a contemporaneous past, a Hegelian static Africa with no history because it *lived in history*. Faced with drastic changes in which they were implicated in Africa in the 1920s and 1930s, many French and British officials ascribed any aesthetic or technological change to a general deterioration of Africa, a failure of Africans to enter the present tense. Africa needed regeneration, after all, even while it was used to regenerate Europe. These educators argued that it was through artisanal education that Africans could retain their racial distinctiveness, while participating in the global economy as laborers and consumers.<sup>421</sup>

The emphasis on African art opened a space for a discussion of beauty and affect as they related to colonization, industrialization, and capitalism. Colonizers indirectly addressed their emotions and those of colonized Africans, even as they adhered to the rational scientificism that justified colonial humanism. F. Grébert, in an article entitled “The Disappearing Arts of Gabon” observed that “Purely indigenous

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<sup>421</sup> W. B. Mumford, "Education and the Social Adjustment of the Primitive Peoples of Africa to European Culture." *Africa*. 2.2 (1929): 138-161.

arts...are...disappearing, to the great displeasure of ethnographers and amateurs in native arts.”<sup>422</sup> Grébert goes on to note that “The taste or the courage of the native is far behind the pace of the collection of his work, and he doesn’t have the means to make up that gap with an intensive production, because that would not be art...He rightly rejects Taylorism and Fordism, which annihilate his individual taste and his joy in his personal work.”<sup>423</sup> Grébert’s partial adoption of Arts and Crafts Movement utopian theorist William Morris’s insistence on joy in labor for all humanity lacked Morris’s broader critique of global capitalist systems.<sup>424</sup>

In 1932, energized by several months in a Paris still in the throes of negrophilia and his experience organizing the West African section of the recent 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, Jules Brevié, the Governor General of the AOF, implemented an educational plan centered around artisanry.<sup>425</sup> It was meant to “safeguard indigenous crafts...to update them by perfecting them and adapting them to the necessities of modern life.”<sup>426</sup> Brevié’s plan had three elements: 1.) Include artisanry in primary school education; 2.) Found crafts and trades schools; and 3.) Organize groups of artisans to work together and adopt different technologies.<sup>427</sup> This was part of Brevié’s push to expand access to formal education in West Africa, which he referred to as Education for the Masses. He and others in his administration inveighed against the formerly “bookish” character of French education in West

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<sup>422</sup> F. Grébert, "Arts En Voie De Disparition Au Gabon." *Africa*. 7.1 (1934): 82-88.: 82.

<sup>423</sup> Grébert 1934: 83.

<sup>424</sup> See also Jean Le Gall, “Éducation de l’Artisanat Indigène.” *Bulletin de l’Enseignement de l’Afrique Occidentale Française*. 21<sup>e</sup> année, N° 78. January-March 1932: 172-178. Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer de la France: BIB AOM 20932/925.

<sup>425</sup> “Note Sur la Participation de l’Afrique Occidentale Française à L’Exposition Internationale de 1937.” Undated (ca. 1936). Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer de la France.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

Africa. Faced with challenges from African intellectuals like Leopold Sédar Senghor, who spoke at the conference on education at the 1931 Exposition, Brevié hoped for the education described by Jones in the Phelps-Stokes Report, which would prepare laborers to respect authority and to be satisfied with their work.<sup>428</sup>

Brevié's education reforms were based on the association of the European with the modern and technology, and the African with tradition and nature. The assumption was that the two groups were in opposition, but must be brought into a controlled relationship in order for Africa, tradition, and nature to be productive in the modern, European, industrial capitalist economy. Brevié modestly added nuances to these larger binary categories when sketching out how European consumption of Africa would benefit Africans:

The roles in this collaboration are perfectly defined. The colonizer brings his superior knowledge, spirit of direction, moral sense, financial means, and techniques for execution. At least at the beginning, indigenous populations will only commit the potential for work, their good will that needs guidance, their soil that needs to be developed, the latent riches of mines, agriculture, and animal husbandry that need to be realized through persevering efforts.<sup>429</sup>

Wilder has noted that Brevié set "the paradoxical task of creating traditional

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<sup>428</sup> Jules Brevié, "La Vie de l'A.O.F. et L'Ecole: Partie Générale. Extrait du discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Brévié prononcé à l'ouverture du Conseil de Gouvernement, le 14 décembre 1931." *Bulletin de l'Enseignement de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*. 20<sup>e</sup> (October-December 1931): 7. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer de la France BIB AOM 20932/1932-3.

<sup>429</sup> Jules Brevié, "La Vie de l'A.O.F. et L'Ecole: Partie Générale. L'Enseignement en A.O.F. en 1934 et L'oeuvre Sociale. Extrait du Discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Brévié, prononcé [sic] à l'ouverture du Conseil de Gouvernement, le 7 décembre 1934." *L'Education Africaine (Bulletin de l'Enseignement de l'A.O.F.)*. 23<sup>e</sup> année, N°87. July-December 1934: 139. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer de la France BIB AOM 20932/1934-5.

Africans.”<sup>430</sup> Training Africans to be what Europeans imagined Africans to be elided the fact that colonial subjects were “only” being asked to exchange *everything*—their labor, their land, their food, their cultural production—in order to produce capital for the French empire.

### *Artisanry in Primary Education*

The numbers of West Africans attending French schools grew relatively little in the early 1930s, despite Brevié’s ambitions. This was especially true in Niger, where in 1937, 1,927 students out of an estimated population of 1,800,000 attended French schools. French and African instructors’ implementation of Brevié’s prescriptions for primary education was met with resistance from the few students and their parents, much to the dismay of proponents of the Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model for black students. Some kinds of artwork were practiced only by members of certain castes and social groups, and other people often refused to touch certain materials, such as leather or weaving tools, which were imbued with energy considered to be harmful to the uncasted or uninitiated.

The need to include manual work in all schools was reiterated to local colonial officials in Niger in an announcement on July 16, 1937. The Lieutenant Governor of Niger passed along his orders, parroting some of the exact language from Brevié and the new Governor General Jules-Marcel de Coppet: “In the small artisanal studios, the work of manual labor, combined with agricultural work in school fields, avoids the

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<sup>430</sup> Wilder 2005: 120. See also Jerry Boulibaugh, “French Educational Strategies for Sub-Saharan Africa: Their Intent, Derivation, and Development,” Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Stanford University, 1964.

often harmful effects of an exclusively bookish education and prepares children for an improved life in their environment.”<sup>431</sup> That year, Boubou Hama, who later, as one of Niger’s most influential politicians and thinkers, initiated the national museum, was teaching in Tillabéry. He received special mention and honors for “giving his teaching a markedly rural and artisanal orientation by taking students to learn and work in weaving and leather-tanning workshops and having fishing lessons. He also led the elementary students to farm almost twenty-five acres of land where they grew food for school lunches.”<sup>432</sup> Hama was, at the same time, organizing local communities to resist oppressive aspects of French colonialism, but for the moment, his superiors interpreted his work as a reinforcement of French authority. From the Office of the Commandant de Cercle, it appeared that Hama was instructing students to willingly labor under the authority of the French state. From the pavilion where Hama taught, he adopted pedagogical strategies for different goals, including teaching his students the value of African knowledge systems.

The Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model pervaded all French educational institutions in Niger in the mid-1930s. Not only was it being used in small villages, but it was adopted at the highest level of formal education then available in Niger, the Ecole Primaire Superior, where the students who might eventually become bureaucrats or teachers trained.<sup>433</sup> An official report claimed that future bureaucrats needed to be exposed to manual labor in order to learn how to respect artisans and subsistence farmers, and to counter social discrimination against manual work. Once a week, all

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<sup>431</sup> Niger Enseignement, Rapport Statistiques Année Scolaire, 1936-37 : 13. Archives Nationales de Sénégal 2G37 : 125.

<sup>432</sup> Niger Enseignement, Rapport Statistiques Année Scolaire, 1936-37 : 14.

<sup>433</sup> Niger Enseignement, Rapport Statistiques Année Scholaire, 1936-37 : 5.

students either worked in a school garden, or took lessons from a carpenter, blacksmith, or weaver.<sup>434</sup> The stigma against physical labor was not actually being contradicted by this pedagogy, but in fact, it was simply being given a different context. French educators insisted Africans needed to learn the dignity of labor *because they were Africans*, thus reinforcing primitivist and racist hierarchies between Africans and Europeans.

### ***Trade Schools in “Modern Artisanry”***

In order to more completely incorporate Niger and the other colonies of the AOF into France’s economy, Brevié and his colonial government sought to have buildings, roads, and other infrastructure built. They conscripted Africans through forced labor laws, but hoped to train more Africans in European style trades like carpentry and masonry. In October 1931, while Brevié and many others were attending the final month of the Exposition Coloniale, the Ecole Professionnelle was founded in Niamey, which was added to the nine other ones already in the AOF.<sup>435</sup> It was meant to train students in European-style trades or at least, techniques of construction influenced by European technology. The school had a rocky start, and it was reinvented as the Ecole d’Apprentissage in July 1937, when it had 30 students.<sup>436</sup> The administration touted these trade schools as vehicles to introduce modern technology and techniques throughout the AOF, but the curriculum reveals the slippage between modern and traditional artisanry, and colonial teachers’ tenuous hold

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Brevié 1931: 3; Niger Enseignement, Rapport Statistiques Année Scolaire, 1936-37: 6.

<sup>436</sup> Niger Enseignement, Rapport Statistiques Année Scolaire, 1936-37 : 6.

on the modernity they proffered to their students.

There were nine students in woodworking, who learned to make and repair agricultural and artisanal tools. Six students learned metalwork. Six others learned Nigerien leather tanning and shoe making, and nine learned adobe earthen building techniques. All students received training in weaving, ceramics, and sculpture. This artisanry used many of the same African technologies that other artisans in the area used, and perhaps was actually best distinguished by an aspirational perspective of European technologies and an attempted adherence to European industrial aesthetics. Its modernity was an aesthetic one that referred to technology, for it relied on traditional technologies and expertise as much as it introduced other, supposedly more modern ones. The interplay between technological regimes was a defining feature of the pedagogical project of the Ecole d'Apprentissage. For example, in addition to making tools to be used by subsistence farmers, in 1937, the carpentry students made three different kinds of looms, which an official report labels as a native type, an improved native type, and a Maison des Artisans Soudanais type. (Figures 3.12 and 3.13) In Figure 3.12, a man weaves on a loom at the Maison des Artisans Soudanais that would be categorized as an "improved native type." In it, the basic technology remained identical to other African looms, but the weaver sat elevated above the ground, minor technical adjustments were made to the frame, and it is possible that a metal batten was used. In Figure 3.13, a man weaves on what the report's author referred to as the "Maison des Artisans Soudanais type" at the Maison des Artisans Soudanais. It is loom made to emulate large European-style floor looms, which produced textiles of much larger widths. European writers frequently cited the

relatively narrow width of African weaving as evidence of the technique's primitive backwardness, and the French pedagogues and officials interpreted greater efficiency of the larger looms as improvement. However, such models could not be used to produce many of the intricate designs favored by African women.



Figure 3.12: W. Bryant Mumford, "Plate 14—Weaving with peasant looms." 1935.  
W. Bryant Mumford, *Africans Learn to be French*. (1935)  
(New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970): 74.



Figure 3.13: W. Bryant Mumford, "Plate 15—Weaving on new looms at the Crafts school. Note the wide windows opening on to the market-place and villagers looking on," 1935.  
W. Bryant Mumford, *Africans Learn to be French*. (1935)  
(New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970): 74.

### *Maisons des Artisans*

In 1937, the Ecole d'Apprentissage in Niamey was essentially a synthesis of an industrial trade schools and the final kind of institution that made up Brevié's three-pronged vision for French artisanal education in West Africa. Brevié hoped that a "Maison des Artisans" would be opened in each of the colonies of the AOF. Although one or two others were opened as a part of the initiative, the first and model example was the Maison des Artisans Soudanais in Bamako, Mali. The Maison des Artisans revived the dormant aesthetic aspect of the Ruskin's influence on the Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model in West Africa, which, as part of the broader phenomenon of negrophilia, accentuated the racialized nature of a pedagogy that sought to extract African labor and train students to submit to French authority. In the West African participation in the 1937 Exposition des Arts and Techniques Modernes in Paris, the tensions between and within French colonial aspirations, the school's pedagogical goals, and African artisans' own plans emerge, as do many points of shared interests and cooperative strategies.

Each Maison des Artisans was to have sections for the media judged to be most important in that area. The program recruited already practicing artisans, who were assumed to be men, to instruct them in new techniques of work that they could develop to produce commodities for both local and export markets. In Bamako, media included weaving, wooden sculpture, and ceramics. In a 1932 article published shortly after the school opened, Jean Le Gall, architect and founding director, dismissed his students' existing artisanal knowledge and their demonstrated capacity to learn the content of his curriculum:

Most of the native artisans we have approached are skilled in the pure sense of the word. One could say that their manual dexterity contributes to divert them away from the improvement of their tools. Like all primitives, they easily acquire simple automatisms, which are so regular that they often compensate for the lack of sophisticated tools.<sup>437</sup>

Demonstrating the influence of Washington through the Phelps-Stokes Report, he instead focused on the presumed influence of the introduction of different technology on the characters of African artisans: “One of the most important tasks is the moral evolution of the artisans whose technique we are improving. We work at every moment to give them the taste for well-done work, to develop their moral dignity, the feeling of professional honesty that made the enviable reputation of French artisans.”<sup>438</sup> While the reputation of French artisans may have been enviable, they, like many workers around the world, were struggling in the early 1930s in the midst of the global economic depression. By 1935, journalists wrote of the “colonial crisis,” by which they described a perceived lack of profit from France’s empire for the metropole and the ostensible over-education of a segment of the colonized who now challenged French authority. Training colonial subjects in labor was meant to ameliorate these tensions between the metropolitan working class and the state, and between the anticipated future colonial working class and the state.

In his 1935 study of French colonial education in Africa, William Bryant Mumford highlighted this artisanal educational initiative, devoting a large section to what he called the “Craft Schools,” which he praised throughout his book.<sup>439</sup> He

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<sup>437</sup> Le Gall 1932: 172-178.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> William Bryant Mumford, *Africans Learn to Be French: A Review of Educational Activities in the Seven Federated Colonies of French West Africa, Based Upon a Tour of French West Africa and Algiers Undertaken in 1935*. [1935] (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970).

emphasized the valorization of manual work, and he claimed that the French were overcoming prejudices against manual labor.<sup>440</sup> Echoing Hardy, Mumford also observed that “the first difficulty has been the old persistent prejudice against manual labor, which was considered servile and not very dignified.”<sup>441</sup> Mumford further explicitly prescribed inviting traditional artisans into the classroom to teach.<sup>442</sup> He dismissed art education in primary education in Africa, noting that “indigenous and imported crafts...are often muddled, with the result that in craft periods, a visitor might find anything being made, from indifferent African drums to tin European ashtrays.”<sup>443</sup> He thus concluded that primary education should stick to practical crafts, such as agricultural tools, but artistic pursuits were better cultivated at specialized Craft Institutes. Mumford was explicit in the purposes of all formal education in Africa: “The introduction of a European economy into Africa necessarily involves the technical and manual training of native labor.”<sup>444</sup> Yet, despite the grandiose title of his study, *Africans Learn to Be French*, he acknowledges the limits of the goals of French education: “Lastly comes adaptation to economic necessities and requirements...It would be futile to people the Niger with useless specialists.”<sup>445</sup> Niger, which Mumford did not include on his tour, was understood to be the most remote colony in the AOF, and by invoking it, Mumford reassured his reader that his title was hyperbole after all, and what was truly meant to be taught was an aspiration to Frenchness through technological facility and aesthetic regimes—not Frenchness itself, which was

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<sup>440</sup> Mumford [1935] 1970: 115-117.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.: 115.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.: 60-61.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.: 60-61.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.: 101-2.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.: 105.

understood by this British author to be something, like racial whiteness, that was innate.

Because of its important aesthetic and economic roles in both African and French cultures and economies, weaving received special attention from French educators. Mumford explained that

The Sudan Craftsmen's Institute aims, after an investigation of those native industries whose future vigour and economic importance appear sufficiently certain, at improving the technical processes of the native craftsmen, but without breaking away from the traditional background. It has already distributed a new type of loom that has had an excellent reception.<sup>446</sup>

The advantages of the large floor loom lay in its efficiency, its ability to produce more square meters of cloth more quickly. It was technology considered obsolete in industrialized Europe, but it was understood to be more advanced than African looms. However, despite its diffusion—including to the professional school in Niamey—it did not replace African looms because it had technical disadvantages, too. African looms are designed to be portable, and weavers have great control over adjusting the elements of the loom. Furthermore, the intricate floating weft and tapestry designs in West African weaving could not be done on this model of floor loom. Finally, sewing strips together was not merely a technical tradition, but an aesthetic one, too. In his advocacy for the large looms as a technical advancement, Mumford glosses over the paradox that such looms were actually considered obsolete in France—and had been for quite some time, as in the case of the loom in Johnston's photograph of a Hampton class for girls (Figure 3.10). This was not empowering technology, but technology

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid.: 107.

that perpetuated racist evolutionary theories, consigning Africans to remain behind. Also, it was domesticating technology. In Europe and the United States, handweaving is associated with women's domestic work. Depicting a man at a large floor loom was a feminizing and colonizing gesture.

Mumford praised the windows of the workshops that were open to a busy Bamako marketplace, as can be seen in Figure 3.13, because passersby could stop to watch. He asserted that there was new interest in artisanry, and that the students were inspired to do good work by their audience.<sup>447</sup> The theatrical nature of the Bamako Craft Institute workshop echoes the ways that African artisans were put on display while working during exhibitions in France, and it asked Africans to view African artisanry as both performance and production.<sup>448</sup>

### ***1937 Exposition des Arts et Techniques Modernes***

Some saw the colonial sections of the 1937 Exposition, and the projects like the Maison des Artisans represented there, as crucial opportunities to demonstrate how Brevié's three-pronged approach to artisanal education in West Africa could redress both of these issues.<sup>449</sup> The 1937 Exposition was a celebration of complex machinery and new consumer products, an assertion of a European modernity in which states and

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid.: 36.

<sup>448</sup> Many of the almost 200 West Africans on display at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition were artisans. In Volume Five of the Official Report of the 1931 International Colonial Exposition, authors provide a catalogue of the individual colonies and occupations represented by the "delegation" from French West Africa. One hundred sixty-six people are listed by occupation (no names are given), and the authors mention that in addition, there were indigenous women acting as cooks for the one hundred sixty-six others *Exposition Coloniale Internationale De Paris: Colonies Et Pays d'Outre Mer* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1930): 299.

<sup>449</sup> Jean Castelboux, "La Place des Colonies Françaises dans l'Exposition de 1937," *Les Nouvelles Nord-Africaines et Coloniales, Revue Mensuelle*. 37<sup>e</sup> Année (February 1, 1935): 1.

capital controlled technology—and not the other way around. The Spanish Civil War haunted the festivities, and Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* was famously unveiled at the exposition.<sup>450</sup> Despite this and other harbingers of the war that would soon follow, organizers strove for a celebratory and optimistic tone. Sonia and Robert Delaunay designed grand murals that portrayed large technological forms, such as the airplane, as objects of inspiring beauty.<sup>451</sup> The bulk of the exposition took place on the Champ de Mars around the Eiffel Tower, and opened in May 1937. The colonial section was given the tiny island in the Seine, the Ile des Cygnes, which was artificially expanded to accommodate the exhibitions. (Figure 3.14) This aerial view affirms the marginality of the colonial section to the larger exhibition, with the Seine separating it from the rest of the city on all sides. The buildings jutting out into the river demonstrate the persistent aspirations of the colonial officials, who were going to assert the importance of French colonialism, even if they had to build more space than they were given in the exhibition.



Figure 3.14: Aerial View of the Colonial Section of the Exposition des Arts et Techniques Modernes, Ile des Cygnes, Paris, 1937.

<sup>450</sup> Pablo Picasso, Steven A. Nash, Robert Rosenblum, and Brigitte Baer. *Picasso and the War Years, 1937-1945* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998); *1937 Guernica 2007: Exposition, Paris, Musée Picasso, Du 19 Sept. 2007 Au 7 Janvier 2008* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Beaux Arts Editions, 2007).

<sup>451</sup> Jean-Louis Delaunay, Krystyna Gmurzynska, and Mathias Rastorfer. *Robert & Sonia Delaunay: International Esposition Paris 1937* (Köln: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1997).

In the years of preparation for the exposition, planners and colonial officials consistently defined the colonial participation in the 1937 Exposition in opposition to the 1931 Exposition. Whereas the 1931 event celebrated colonialism, official letters and announcements cautioned that the colonies were only a small part of the 1937 Exposition. What was more, even the colonial section would only feature those aspects of the colonies that conformed to the theme of modern arts and technology. The organizers of the exposition intended for the colonial section to serve as a foil for the modern, and while colonial officials conceded this, they wanted to use the exposition to demonstrate colonialism's value in the modernization of supposedly primitive cultures and races. To accomplish this exhibition of alterity and progress in accordance with the theme, organizers chose to focus on artisanry.

Organizers complained that at the 1931 exposition, artisans had been lost among "markets of rubbish" and had often turned to reselling "African art," sometimes made by white Parisian workers, instead of making it themselves.<sup>452</sup> This confounded both primitivist regimes of authenticity and desired demonstrations of African labor. They reiterated the significance of colonial artisanal laborers, their potential economic contributions, and the originality of their aesthetics. They regretted the sensationalist inaccuracies of 1931, and assured visitors that no "modern" decoration would be used in the African section, because it would be much more realistic. This desire for realism resonated with the exposition's technological and economic theme, but it also made claims about and on an Africa antithetical to

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<sup>452</sup> Henry Bérenger, "La France d'Outre-Mer à l'Exposition de 1937," *Panorama* January 8, 1936. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12124.

modern, technological Europe. African technology could only be traditional artisanry, rather than a viable modern technology. At the same time, other writers noted that unique non-western aesthetic forms should be valued precisely because they were such important elements in modern domestic interiors in Europe.<sup>453</sup>

By 1937, many West African artisans and other business people knew of the commercial opportunities available at large expositions and fairs. Artisans approached local officials and wrote to regional ones requesting to participate.<sup>454</sup> Organizers framed their close watch over the twenty-four participating artisans as protection of the artisans, and assurance of quality and authenticity control. Artisans lived in one of the exhibition buildings on Ile des Cygnes, and they worked on display in another. The exposition provided them with their primary materials. They were paid a small salary, and forbidden from selling directly to customers. Instead, a shop that was adjacent to a temporary museum kept careful records of its sales of artisans' work, so that they could receive most of the profits.<sup>455</sup> Suggesting that the demonstration of work was even more important than what they made, journalistic and promotional accounts include a few images of artisans working, but no images of their work.

The need to appease the great market demand for African art existed in uneasy tension with projects for technological modernization, and the introduction to an inventory of objects from the colonies included in the 1937 Exposition was frank

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<sup>453</sup> "La France d'Outre-Mer: Nos Colonies à l'Exposition de 1937 et Technique," February 27, 1937. Press Clipping. Publication Title Illegible. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12124.

<sup>454</sup> "Requêtes des artisans indigènes desirant participer aux foires et expositions de Paris de 1937." Archives Nationales de Sénégal 6Q 130 77 *Foires et Exposition en Europe, recrutement d'indigènes pour exhibition, 1930-1935*.

<sup>455</sup> Point 5 in Letter from Ministry of Commerce and Industry of France to Commissioner of the A.O.F. section of the Colonial Section of the 1937 Exposition des Arts et Techniques Modernes. Signature illegible. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer de la France: FM/Agfom/ c614 d 931 *L'artisanat à l'Exposition des artisans indigènes à l'Exposition*.

about the exploratory nature of the project: “We are examining how conditions of a renovated artisanry can be adapted, whether to the way of life of natives in the new economy that is entering French West Africa, or a European clientele wishing to acquire quality African objects for its personal use.”<sup>456</sup> Artisanal production by and for Africans could be modernized, but not modern, and artisanal production by Africans for Europeans needed to be sufficiently primitive in order to define a European modernity as its opposite. The paradox in romanticizing African aesthetics while continuing to denigrate African knowledge and technology demanded a politician explicitly assert the violent colonizing power of industrial technology in the inauguration of the colonial section that praised the aesthetics contained with it: “Don’t think, however, that I would deny the power of the machine and its constructive role in the colonial project, which is a splendid victory over nature.”<sup>457</sup> Here is Haraway’s border war between organism and machine on bald display. African knowledge, both technological and aesthetic, was subsumed within the category of nature: to be contained, controlled, and made profitable through the power of the machine. The arts were valuable because they maintained a connection between African and primitive, between race and tradition. Unique aesthetic forms thus became convenient shorthand tags to scientifically catalogue innate racial qualities.

Of the three women and twenty-one men who were recruited to take part in the AOF section of the 1937 Exposition, none were from Niger, despite the involvement of the colonial government there in promoting Nigerien artisanry at smaller venues.

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<sup>456</sup> “Inventaire des objets des diverses colonies. Annex 11: L’Afrique Occidentale Française.” Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer de la France: FM/Agéfom/ c628 d1077 Expo 1937.

<sup>457</sup> “A L’Exposition: M. Lebrune A Inauguré le Centre de la France d’Outre Mer. Le Discours de M. Moutet,” *La République* June 26, 1937. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12124.

Niger, like the other AOF colonies, sent objects to be sold in the sections' boutique and others to be exhibited in the small museum, most of which would later be sent to the Musée de Dakar. Most of the Nigerien objects were Tuareg pieces, such as pendants portraying the Cross of Agadez, but they also included Hausa leather work, especially large cushions, which were sold in the shop, along with blankets and wrapping garments hand-woven in Tillabéry, Téra, and Niamey. The absence of Nigerien artisans may have been caused by an economic crisis that was developing in 1937, which was caused by both drought and colonially imposed circumstances, such as new strict customs barriers between Nigeria and Niger.<sup>458</sup>

Due to the technical difficulties of expanding the Ile des Cygnes and organizational problems, the opening of colonial section was delayed several times and received increasingly bad press, especially after a worker died after falling from construction scaffolding.<sup>459</sup> The main exposition itself had opened later than planned due to its own problems on May 25, 1937, and the colonial section did not open until July 7, 1937.<sup>460</sup> The West African metalsmiths, weavers, embroiderers, shoemakers, sculptors, and ceramicists shared a workspace, and while a small contingent from the Maison des Artisans in Bamako were expected to exemplify modernizing artisanry, the others represented a notion of African tradition in complete contrast to the exposition's definition of modernity. Both the constant stresses and adventurous possibilities of living in such close quarters and working with a constant audience in

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<sup>458</sup> Finn Fuglestad, *A history of Niger, 1850-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983: 138.

<sup>459</sup> "Aux Chantiers de l'Exposition: Par Manque de Sécurité un Charpentier se Noie au Cours de Son Travail à l'Ile des Cygnes." Press Clipping. Publication title and date not recorded. 1937. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12124.

<sup>460</sup> Marc Aysse, "La Féerie en Veilleuses: Pavillons Fantomatiques et Palais Transparents," *L'Ami du Peuple*. March 22, 1937. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12124.

Paris come through in the press coverage of the event. In July, a West African participant, Abdoulaye Guèye, accidentally fired a gun on the exposition grounds, injuring a young French man.<sup>461</sup> Less than a week later, another artisan attacked two of his colleagues in the middle of the night before he was taken to a mental hospital.<sup>462</sup>

For at least some of the artisans, the exposition was an opportunity to make more money than usual. Some of them already focused their sales on European customers in Africa. It was also an exciting chance to travel abroad and focus on artisanal work. They strategized within the asymmetrical power structures and used their skills and knowledge to gain capital and more knowledge. Aesthetically-focused artisanal work offered them unique opportunities in ethnic identification, self-fulfillment, entrepreneurship, and global representation. Official records show that after the exposition, some artisans felt satisfied with their sales and experiences, while others approached their local colonial officers to demand payments still owed to them for works they had left behind in Paris.<sup>463</sup> Over half a year after the artisans had left, Alioune Guèye, a master jeweler in Dakar who had fought for France in the first World War, sent a letter to one of the organizers:

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<sup>461</sup> “Blessé d’une balle de carabine dans un tir du parc des attractions.” *Le Petit Parisien* July 17, 1937. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12124. Abdoulaye Guèye is the name given for the Senegalese artisan who was eighteen years old and shot a passerby. He is not listed in the official list of artisans, and so he might have been a related apprentice of Alioune Guèye, who, as a veteran of World War I would have been older and whose letter is discussed below.

<sup>462</sup> “Un Drame au Pavillon de l’A.O.F. à l’Exposition,” *Journal des Belats* July 22, 1937. Archives Nationales de la France (Paris): F/12/12153.

<sup>463</sup> “Le Gouverneur Général De l’Afrique Occidentale Française à Monsieur Le Commissaire De l’A.O.F. à l’Exposition Internationale De 1937 – Ministère Des Colonies.”, January 1938. AFOMc628d1078. Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer de la France.

My dear Mr. Spitz,  
Please excuse me for not having written since I arrived. I have had so many issues to attend to that it is just this week that I have gotten to my correspondence. ...I want to let you know that I was so very happy with my trip to France. What I saw and admired gave me many lessons, especially what we learned with you. I also want to thank you for the attention you gave me during my time at the exposition, and all of the benefits I received from you. I want you to know that in my heart I will not stop sending my best wishes to you.  
My compatriots come to ask me about the exposition. As I already told Mr. Provost, the harvests were not good in Senegal this year, but thanks be to God, my compatriots still have millet.  
My wife and all of my family greet you.  
Best wishes,  
Alione Guèye  
Master jeweler <sup>464</sup>

Guèye's professionalism and collegiality contradicts the exposition's conceit that the colonial section represented colonies that existed in a traditional past contemporaneous with Europe's modern present. Guèye may have had complaints that he did not include in this courteous thank you note, but we must also reckon with the idea that despite the overarching exploitative and demeaning nature of colonialism and the exposition as an expression of French colonization, Alione Guèye had an enjoyable and enriching time at the Exposition, and felt genuine gratitude and affection for individual organizers of the West African section. Guèye and other artisans rightfully saw clients' and officials' admiration for their work as acknowledgement of their knowledge and skill, even if it was warped by primitivist and Social Darwinist understandings of humanity.

As Guèye's letter suggests, whatever the motivations for the African section of the exposition, it was an unusual opportunity to learn new technologies and aesthetic

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<sup>464</sup> Letter from Alioune Guèye to M. Spitz. April 28, 1938. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer de la France: FM/Agefom/ c628 d1075 *Expo 1937: Artisans des colonies*.

forms, and to exchange with European, African, and other artisans. Guèye interpreted the exposition for friends and family curious to hear about France's grand statement on modern technology. He writes not from a past contemporaneous with France's present, but from the same moment in which the addressee lives. He alludes to the challenges of leaving his family and business for so many months the year before in his apology for not having written sooner. He also suggests the tenuousness of Senegal's food security in a colonial economy. It is impossible to generalize about other artisans' experiences from this letter, for it is doubtful that either the man who was taken to the mental hospital or those still petitioning for the balance of their compensation months later wrote similarly warm thank-you notes. But Guèye does suggest the educational and business resources artisans selectively accessed through French colonial educational and exhibitionary projects.

### ***Modern Traditional Education for the Nation-State of Niger***

During World War II, many of the trade and artisanal educational projects were folded into efforts to supply or replace materials that had been imported into the region in recent decades but were then scarce. Boubou Hama and other French-educated African leaders worked to organize local production for local consumption, in the face of interruptions in imports and requisitions from the French government. As director of the Ecole Professionnelle in Niamey (which had been renamed again) for part of the war, Hama was even more attentive to issues of labor, artisanry, and production than he had been in Tillabéry. He was especially satisfied with the success of a group of shoemakers he organized to sell to Niamey customers.

As World War II drew to a close, after Africans had again served as soldiers in great numbers, Charles de Gaulle and others sought to distinguish their new Fourth Republic from the repressive Vichy regime that had controlled West Africa during the war.<sup>465</sup> The Conference of Brazzaville in 1944 abolished forced labor and promised greater rights for Africans in French colonies. Increasing numbers of Africans demanded access to French formal education, and most sought academic rather than artisanal training.<sup>466</sup> In 1948, France implemented yet another educational reform in West Africa. More closely based on the French school system, it emphasized French language instruction in primary schools, and abandoned the Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model.<sup>467</sup> Anti-colonial reform and nationalist movements demanded expanded access to education throughout the rest of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s.<sup>468</sup> These systems stayed in place, and were largely inherited by the new nation-states, including Niger, when they gained independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The system had continued to produce a small elite trained for bureaucratic jobs in the government, and the new governments saw many of the strains of urbanization and capitalist change as failures of the educational system to produce the right kinds of laborers. In cooperation with international organizations, African leaders began to assess and strategize educational institutions and the pedagogies they might use. As David Scanlon recognized in 1964, the Conference of African States on the

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<sup>465</sup> Ruth Ginio, "Vichy Rule in French West Africa: Prelude to Decolonization?" *French Colonial History*. 4.1 (2003): 205-226.

<sup>466</sup> Moumouni 1964: 77.

<sup>467</sup> Moumouni 1964: 78.

<sup>468</sup> Cowan et. al. 1965: 3.

Development of Education in Africa, which took place from May 15 until May 25 in 1961, marked a shift in the discourses and goals for education on the continent.<sup>469</sup> Attended by delegations from thirty-five African nations, as well as other nation-states, the conference set working groups tasks to develop recommendations. Emperor Haile Selassie gave one of the inaugural addresses. The United States government and the United Nations strongly influenced the content and direction of the conference. The Director General of UNESCO, Vittorino Veronese, gave another inaugural address, and the Assistant Director General M.S. Adiseshiah gave one of the closing addresses. Scholars such as F.H. Harbison, then Director of the Industrial Relations Section of Princeton University, gave prominent talks, which were included in the Final Report.

Veronese opened the conference by emphasizing the economic stakes of reforming African educational systems, noting that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa partnered with UNESCO to organize the conference.<sup>470</sup> In his talk, Harbison portrayed a teleological path of technological modernization that African nations must navigate with sufficient “dedication and hardwork” in order to successfully move ahead—which was, after all, the only permitted direction.<sup>471</sup> He notes that one whole “category of problems” resulted from young Africans’ perception that “education is...the shortest and easiest road to a soft government job,” or in other

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<sup>469</sup> Scanlon 1964: 1; *Final Report: Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, Addis Ababa, 15-25 May 1961* (Addis Ababa: United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, 1961).

<sup>470</sup> Final Report 1961: 24.

<sup>471</sup> F.H. Harbison. “Annex: The Progress of Educational Planning.” In *Final Report: Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, Addis Ababa, 15-25 May 1961* (Addis Ababa: United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, 1961): 47.

words, an assurance of a cash salary and no manual labor.<sup>472</sup> Adiseshia also emphasized the need for hard work on the part of Africans, and he called for the increased use of technology in education and education about technology.<sup>473</sup>

The Final Report of the conference opens with an assertion that the newly independent state sought to make a break from colonial education, stating that “The education for the future citizen of Africa must be a modern African education.”<sup>474</sup> Yet what constituted a “modern African education” quickly harkened back to Brevié’s framework of the 1930s as the adaption of curricula to “rural needs and interests” was made a priority, not as an end in itself, but to stem the tide of urbanization.<sup>475</sup> The report, as it focuses on many of the same questions about training, labor, and the economy that Jones, Brevié, and Mumford engaged, paused to offer a caveat that

Education does not have for its primary purpose a greater production of goods and services. The purpose of education is to broaden understanding, so that men make the fullest use of their innate potential, whether spiritual, intellectual, or physical. Education would therefore have value even if it contributed nothing to economic development. Education is listed among the universal human rights; it is necessary for the full development of the human personality, and it is grounded in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>476</sup>

Yet, what the “education” to which one had a human right entailed remained vague and undefined, although some kind of formal education that imparted basic literacy, citizenship, knowledge, and vocational skills was implied. The report’s authors recognized that the expansion of the cash economy, desires for consumer products,

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<sup>472</sup> Harbison 1961: 49.

<sup>473</sup> M.S. Adiseshiah, “Closing Addresses.” In *Final Report: Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, Addis Ababa, 15-25 May 1961* (Addis Ababa: United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, 1961):121.

<sup>474</sup> Final Report 1961: 3.

<sup>475</sup> Final Report 1961: 5.

<sup>476</sup> Final Report 1961: 9.

and the uneven access to labor-saving technologies was perpetuated by colonial style formal education, and they sought to use education to redress both national and global wealth disparities. They hoped African citizens with more formal education could be more powerful in the global economy, and learn artisanal, industrial, and agricultural that, with the assistance of imported machines, tools, and technologies, would require less labor and be more productive. The Final Report promoted a euphemistically named “international cooperation,” giving two reasons:

There is first the moral reason based on the recognition that the world could not exist half rich and half poor. International co-operation represents the international conscience of the post-war era.

...

There is also a second reason: international co-operation is good business. The developed countries of the world have shown a great capacity to produce wealth. Their markets are the developing countries, and these have to have the purchasing power to pay for the goods and services made available to them.<sup>477</sup>

“International cooperation” cultivated markets for private industrial capitalist businesses in the world’s most powerful nations. “International cooperation” sought to “develop” Africa by reframing the new African citizens first and foremost as consumers. Modernity and development were understood as access to an exponentially increasing spread of consumer goods, and thus a “modern African education” would teach how to consume international capital’s commodities.

In the wake of the conference, African nation-states, including Niger, sought to reform and expand their school systems. Authors introduced a volume on the topic in 1965 by stating that “Education has become a major, if not the major, concern of the

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<sup>477</sup> Final Report 1961: 15.

new independent states of Africa.”<sup>478</sup> They emphasized educational goals of decolonizing by creating citizens from former colonial subjects:

Everywhere, attempts are being made to “Africanize” the school curricula—both to adapt the Western systems of education developed under the colonial administrations to the needs and desires of contemporary African society and to promote in the coming generation a sense of belonging to the new nations being developed out of what were formerly colonies.<sup>479</sup>

Although access to formal schools remained miniscule, Niger gained occasional bursts of recognition for its experiments in educational television.<sup>480</sup> Of course, since so few citizens even had electricity in their communities, much less their homes, access to this venture was also negligible.<sup>481</sup>

Authors continued to emphasize formal education’s role in promoting capitalism and consumerism in Africa. One noted that “there is indeed a serious disparity between the pace of economic change and the growth of desires for it in Africa. Many forces—migration to the towns and better communications and transport, as well as formal education—have made Africans aware of their poverty.”<sup>482</sup> Another in that volume highlighted the need to gain cash, as young people

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<sup>478</sup> L.G. Cowan, James O’Connell, and David G. Scanlon. *Education and Nation-Building in Africa* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1965): V.

<sup>479</sup> Cowan et.al. 1965: 18.

<sup>480</sup> Max Egly, “L’utilisation De La Télévision Scolaire Au Niger, En Côte D’ivoire Et Au Sénégal.” *International Review of Education*. 32.3 (1986): 338-346; Charles Ridoré, *La Signification De L’éducation Dans Le Développement: Télévision Et Éducation Au Niger* (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1979); *La Télévision Scolaire Du Niger, 1964-1971: Rapport Général* (Paris: AUDECAM, 1975).

<sup>481</sup> Television nonetheless impacted ways of seeing even for those who had little, irregular, or no access to it, as evidenced by the popular *sakala* design representing a television screen. See Figure 2.25.

<sup>482</sup> Francis X. Sutton, “Education in Changing Africa,” L.G. Cowan, James O’Connell, and David G. Scanlon, eds., *Education and Nation-Building in Africa* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1965): 195.

left subsistence farming to seek wages.<sup>483</sup> Although he recognized consumer desires, he noted that many young people needed waged labor in order to pay for the education and other cash needs of their families.<sup>484</sup> Guided by “international cooperation,” which was in fact heavy-handed coercion in the form of economic agreements between former colonial governments and the nation-states and promises of assistance and acceptance from international bodies such as the United States, the Nigerien nation-state was replicating retroactive colonial humanitarianism, rather than decolonizing.

Abdou Moumouni, a chemist from Niger who would later be an important politician and educator there, published his influential *L'Education en Afrique* in 1964, and it was translated into English in 1968. He emphasized the efficacy of traditional African pedagogies, in that they “constantly combine manual and intellectual activities.”<sup>485</sup> He cited Fanon in his central criticism of French formal education’s creation of a multi-layered bourgeoisie that was not “oriented toward production, invention, construction, or work.”<sup>486</sup> He argued that in the 1960s, despite the great hubbub at the Addis Ababa conference and in education publications, West Africa lacked a coherent policy for education. He accused all nation-states in the region, but perhaps most of all Niger: “Even though the new states play at political sovereignty, they maintained and continued the policies of the former colonial power in matters of teaching and education.”<sup>487</sup> He denounced neocolonialism in West Africa.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Archibald Callway, “Unemployment Among African School Leavers,” L. G. Cowan, James O’Connell, and David G. Scanlon, eds., *Education and Nation-Building in Africa* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1965): 235.

<sup>484</sup> Callway 1965: 239.

<sup>485</sup> Moumouni 1964: 22.

<sup>486</sup> Moumouni 1964: 73.

<sup>487</sup> Moumouni 1964: 137.

<sup>488</sup> Moumouni 1964: 142.

After 1961, Ministers of Education in the region began to propose reforms and, influenced by the conference and its report, many of their ideas reinvented Brevié's theories of education via a United Nations-sanctioned conception of formal education and its goals. The late twentieth century reinvention of Brevié's early twentieth century reinvention of the late nineteenth century Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model should come as no surprise. After all, like Boubou Hama, who was by then the President of the General Assembly of Niger, many of them had been trained or begun their careers during Brevié and de Coppet's tenures. Yet, controversy remained. In a 1969 assessment, Avigdor Farine explained that

The "ruralization" of education and the changes in curricula which are aimed at orienting the school population toward rural life, and which were discussed with enthusiasm at the conferences of the francophone Ministers of Education at Bamako in 1965, and at Yaoundé in 1966, remain theoretical and are approached cautiously. Such education is not favored since it does not lead towards lucrative and respected employment. The school contributes to the alienation of the child from the norms of his group and his rural life, without preparing him to integrate elsewhere.<sup>489</sup>

With an economic situation even more acute than those of its neighbors and the lowest rates of school attrition in West Africa, the First Republic of Niger was determining the very purpose of education in its nation-state. Rather than expanding access to elementary school to most of the population, the First Republic of Niger relied on figurehead programs that reached few students. Secondary school attendance remained almost nonexistent, and as an enthusiastic member of the Cote d'Ivoire-led and French-endorsed Conseil d'Entente, Niger sent its post-secondary students to

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<sup>489</sup> Avigdor Farine, "Society and Education: the Content of Education in the French African School." *Comparative Education*. 5.1 (1969): 58.

universities in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, and France, as the state saw no need for one in Niger. In 1971, the First Republic of Niger, like France in 1931, was facing a crisis of authority. Ushered in through rigged elections controlled by the French nation-state in 1958, Hamani Diori's government had long lost the initial euphoria of independence, and it had become increasingly authoritarian and opaque. A major drought had begun in 1970, and secondary students had gone on strike to demand better education, better conditions, and better employment prospects after graduation. The Nigerien state turned to educational reforms to maintain its own power, and Brevié's three-pronged artisanal education system re-emerged at the National Museum.

As discussed in Chapter One, the museum had been founded as an educational institution. President of the National General Assembly Boubou Hama and Museum Director Pablo Toucet sought to teach French visitors and all Nigeriens, most of whom were illiterate, about Niger as a nation through the displays and exhibits. Working with the Ministry of Education in 1970, Toucet solicited funds from the Lion's Club of Niamey (one million francs), the Embassy of the United States in Niger (one million francs), the Rotary Club of Niamey, the Belgian Association "Brother of Hope," and the Canadian nongovernmental organization SUCO (Service Universitaire Canadien Outre-Mer). UNESCO contributed 800,000 francs in 1971. Here, Toucet and the Ministry heeded the Addis Ababa conference's recommendation for international cooperation. But as is conventional for retroactive colonial humanitarianism, the Education Center was founded to redress ills created by the power asymmetries and economic exploitation in which the donors were complicit—and it did not redress these ills with much efficacy or on any major scale. The strong

representation of American and American-connected donors among the supports of the Education Center speaks to the persistence of the missionary aspects of the Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model in the forms of education that the United States promoted in neo-colonies in Africa, both indirectly through the United Nations and directly, through its embassies.

The formal goals claimed high aspirations for the center that had 106 students in its first year and 290 in its second: “The Education Center is an experimental establishment that is intended to recuperate young unemployed Nigeriens between the ages of fifteen and eighteen who have not had the chance to complete their primary school studies.”<sup>490</sup> But it was a carefully named center—it was not a school. It did not give a diploma after a student completed his or her course of study there. Although Albert Ferral gave a grim assessment of the center’s education in practice upon assuming the directorship of the museum in 1974, the intended curriculum was thorough and wide-ranging.<sup>491</sup> All students were to study civics, basic business skills, the Nigerien economy, Nigerien history and geography, African history and geography, elementary mathematics, hygiene, nutrition, and the environment. Students specialized in one or more of the following skills: do-it-yourself general repair, mechanical repair, soldering, electricity, furniture-making, masonry, plumbing, artisanry (leatherwork, weaving, pottery, sculpture, and metalwork), and housework (childcare, hygiene, nutrition, sewing, and embroidery). The Ministry of Education supplied some of the instructors, but the Association Français des Volontaires du

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<sup>490</sup> Pablo Toucet, “Le Centre Educatif du Musée National.” 1970. Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger.

<sup>491</sup> Albert Ferral, “Analyse Critique du Fonctionnement du Musée.” May 23, 1975. Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger.

Progrès provided a conspicuous critical mass; seven French volunteers served as instructors among the sixteen total teachers and monitors in 1971. In his 1974 assessment, Ferral dismissed their amateurism in calling for a more organized and rigorous curriculum.

The images promoting the Education Center in the Guide to the Museum and in slide packets evoke Francis Benjamin Johnston's photographs of the Hampton Institute from the beginning of the twentieth century. Toucet traveled to New York in the 1960s, and he and Ferral were likely familiar with the *Hampton Album*, and so the influence could be very direct. In the photographs, students at the Education Center, like the Hampton students, are anonymous individuals working in groups. They bend in concentration over their work, ostensibly oblivious to the photographer. In Figure 3.15, the frame much more tightly hugs the Nigerien students than Johnston's portrayal of the entire classroom in Figure 3.8. These students, however, genuinely seem caught in movement; the technological capacities of cameras had greatly expanded in seventy-five years and shutter speeds no longer required the stillness of Johnston's models at Hampton. Other Education Center images suggest dynamic moments of instruction and the distraction of a visiting photographer. (Figure 3.16) While most students successfully feign concentration in a class on electricity, two students engage the viewers—one with an eager smile. In the 1970s, the perceived obsolescence of the technologies taught at the Education Center was that much more drastic in a rapidly changing and globalizing world. Yet, teaching Nigeriens artisanal skills appealed to funders because it was humanitarian but also limiting. A few students learned basic principles of electricity in thatched walled sheds at the museum,

while Nigerien uranium was processed to fuel electricity in France.



Figure 3.15: Woodworking Class at the Education Center of the Musée National du Niger.  
*Guide Du Musée National*. Niamey: Musée National du Niger, 1975.



Figure 3.16: Electricity Class at the Education Center of the Musée National du Niger.  
*Guide Du Musée National*. Niamey: Musée National du Niger, 1975.

Despite the social changes resulting from the feminist movement that allowed young French and American women to come, often as single women as well as parts of married couples, to Niger as volunteers, the Hampton-Tuskegee pedagogical model reinforced Ruskinian gendered ideals of labor and domesticity. In Figure 3.17, a

French volunteer looks over two students ironing, just as a matronly instructor studies materials on a table in the right of Johnston's 1899 "A Class in Dress-Making." A crowd of students in the background sews, while another three students concentrate on their small projects in front of a second French volunteer, who sits in a relaxed, cross-legged posture at the far left of the image. These domestic skills are intended to remake the women performing them, as much as they are intended to make garments. As in the case of Johnston's photographs, these photographs from the Education Center attest to the transformative character of education. In Figure 3.18, the frame again closely focuses the eye on the subjects, three young women in head wraps that, as Helen Bradley Foster has pointed out is true of many African and African Diasporic style of headdresses, expose the forehead and build height on the head.<sup>492</sup> Again, however, these young women and their creative dress practices are not the subject—all of their faces are at least partially obscured. Instead, it is their performance of the penultimate feminine skill within traditional Western gendered systems of labor. They sew by hand. In 1975, of course, this was a superfluous skill for most people in an industrialized global economy, but the Education Center prepared students, and especially young women, not for powerful positions in the global economy, but to be citizens of a nation-state with shaky sovereignty, forced to make do with few industrial conveniences, even as they knew of their existence. These young women knew about sewing machines—one was depicted in Johnston's 1899 photograph, after all—and they knew even more acutely the machines' absence.

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<sup>492</sup> Helen Bradley Foster, *New Raiments of Self: African American Clothing in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Berg, 1997). See also Mary Arnoldi and Christine *Crowning Achievements: African Arts of Dressing the Head* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History and University of California Los Angeles, 1995).



Figure 3.17: Promotional Slide for the Musée National du Niger. Ca. 1971.



Figure 3.18: Sewing Class at the Education Center of the Musée National du Niger. *Guide Du Musée National*. Niamey: Musée National du Niger, 1975.

In 1971, the Museum started two related educational programs. The first was the short-lived formal apprenticeship program that Amadou attended, along with thirty-three other young men. It was carefully managed, and its purposes echoed Brevié and LeGall’s hopes for their Maisons d’Artisanat: “The results obtained with this artisanal school are remarkable. The museum is very proud to have organized it. To do it, it was necessary to valorize the artisanal profession and to make young

people understand that the work of an artisan is dignified and lucrative, at the very least when practiced at the National Museum.”<sup>493</sup> The museum provided participants with many advantages that the Education Center and other Nigerien students did not receive, including uniforms, shoes, two daily meals, soap, and transportation. Toucet selected only master artisans to instruct the apprentices, who also attended some general courses at the Education Center. Students were expected to become productive, according to their skill, as soon as possible. To convey their acuity and the quality of their work, Toucet emphasized that the museum bought the apprentice’s work and sold it through the museum shop within months of the program’s inception.<sup>494</sup> Because of the ambivalent, often denigrated social positions of many artisans and the great logistical challenges of maintaining the program’s structure, the program was short-lived, and no more classes of apprentices were admitted. The museum concluded its oversight of the apprentices in 1974.

It was highly unusual for a literate young man who was neither Tuareg nor from a traditional artisan family to apprentice with a Tuareg master artisan in 1971. For Amadou, who opened this chapter, the apprenticeship program at the museum was a rare career training program in a nation-state with very limited educational and employment opportunities—but an increasingly pervasive cash economy and integration into global consumerism. Through the program, he could learn skills like traditional Tuareg technologies and aesthetics, which would have been much more difficult—if not impossible—without an institutionally organized program. Furthermore, these were skills that brought him that joy in aesthetically beautiful,

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<sup>493</sup> Toucet 1970.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

manual work that William Morris advocated. For a time, Amadou favored sleek designs that evoked for him a sense of the modern, while still honoring the Tuareg artisanal technologies and aesthetics he had adopted. He designed and sold many necklaces that symbolized the crescent moon. (Figure 3.19) For Amadou in the 1970s, jewelry with neither filigree nor engraving represented a crisp cosmopolitanism. The chain is delicately linked, with a central pendant that hangs by both ends of the tips of the crescent moon, which would hang just below a woman's clavicles. Amadou found inspiration in the moon symbols in classical Tuareg jewelry, as well as the significance of the moon and lunar calendar to the Tuareg culture, other Nigerien cultures, and Islam.<sup>495</sup>



Figure 3.19: Amadou Issouffou, Crescent Moon Necklace, 1977.  
Catalogue of the Musée National du Niger BAA 238

In October 1971, after the fast-paced start to the apprenticeship program earlier that year, Toucet introduced a program to train ten blind adults in artisanal skills. Within the year, he modified the program by including physically disabled adults, who were paired with the blind artisan-students so that they could work together to make leather objects in the Hausa tradition. Records do not document the ethnicities of

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<sup>495</sup> Susan J. Rasmussen, "Reflections on Witchcraft, Danger, and Modernity Among the Tuareg." *Africa* 74.3 (2004): 335.

participants. The museum provided them with the same perks as the other apprentices (uniforms, meals, transportation, etc.) until 1974, and in 1976, there were twenty-five participants.<sup>496</sup> Despite the relatively high percentage of blind and physically disabled people in the Nigerien population, they frequently struggled to achieve social integration into Niger's growing cash-based urban economies because they often needed modifications to perform physical labor and faced other social discrimination.<sup>497</sup> Alms-giving was highly regarded in West African Islamic religious and scholarly traditions, and many blind and physically disabled people, along with young Qur'anic students, begged on the streets of Niamey. This form of redistribution confounded the capitalist ideal of worker productivity that the museum, as an arm of the nation-state still essentially controlled by the French state, promoted.

Training these men to produce commodities altered their roles in the cash economy, and perhaps most obviously, added to the Nigerien production of commodities saleable on a global market. They gained part of their value as commodities by being produced by the disabled, thus appealing to the philanthropic consumerist desires of European customers. For the artisans, they gained skills with which they could maintain more control over their participation in the cash economy, and many embraced their new positions at the Museum. The museum continued to define them by their blindness and their physical disabilities, and they worked in a space segregated from the larger space where the other leather artisans worked

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<sup>496</sup> Mahamane Saley, "Action to Help Blind and Physically Handicapped: Niger National Museum, Niamey." *Museum*. 28 (1976): 210-211.

<sup>497</sup> See Denis Poizat, "L'Afrique, Le Pittoresque Et Le Handicap." *Reliance* 24.2 (2007): 22; Patrick Gilliard, "Rues De Niamey, Espace Et Territoires De La Mendicité." *Politique Africaine Politique Africaine* (1996).

adjacent to the metal workers. These newly trained artisans were defined by physical characteristics instead of ethnicity, or even what they were producing, while the other artisans were divided according to ethnic and family divisions (some of which were actual and others of which were imaginary).

Under Museum Director Albert Ferral, several artisans based at the museum were recruited to teach co-curricular courses at the middle school, College Issa Bèri. In 1977, the government weekly newspaper praised the program, which emphasized social discrimination against artisans and artisanal work among many Nigeriens. Author Saadou Maiga offered a quick caveat about artisanry lessons' place in formal education: "The intended goal is not to orient them toward a profession of manual labor, but to teach the students how to use common tools, and also to valorize these activities."<sup>498</sup> Although artisans from the museum taught the lessons, the school hoped its students would be encouraged to enroll in a vocational high school or to train as an electrician with the state agency. The school did not expect students to become artisans, but it claimed that lessons in artisanry would work against the denigration of such work as well:

The goal is to demonstrate that the work is not inferior and it is good that the students know that they can prepare themselves for intellectual activities while learning a manual skill. The beginning has demanded a small transformation of the students. For example, most of the students did not want to weave, because they think that it is a profession reserved for a certain class, but with conversation, mentalities change.<sup>499</sup>

Students absorbed the lessons to learn artisanry for its character-building qualities, but to use formal schooling to pursue a career other than artisanry. Like the lessons taught

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<sup>498</sup> Maiga 1977: 14-15.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

by artisans at the Achimota School in Ghana in the 1940s and in Tillabéry and Niamey in the 1930s, these lessons objectified a national culture for students. A vague interpretation of Booker T. Washington's advocacy for the "dignity of labor," students' skill in the arts that they learned was irrelevant—the lesson was in the fact of laboring, not in what they produced with that labor.

Although only a relatively small number of students and artisans have ever learned and worked at the museum, it has far greater symbolic and representational significance than such numbers would suggest. Thousands of visitors passed through the museum, and its educational projects were given disproportionate publicity to external organizations and institutions, especially those linked to the United Nations, France, and the United States, which might provide financial support. Through its dramatic claims for remedial social change, it provided a distraction from the pervasive inefficacy of the national educational system that was seen to be devolving in the early 1970s. The Nigerien state could point to its experiment at the Musée National du Niger as a potential model for training laborers, even as it regarded secondary school students' demands for better educational and financial resources and opportunities with distrust and ambivalence. The inclusion of training in aesthetic artisanry gave a sheen of authentic African-ness, in the colonial primitivist tradition, to the venture. International donors congratulated themselves for their pragmatic philanthropic actions, which obscured their power in a system that invented unemployed men and housewives who struggled to access cash, even as participation in the global cash economy grew to be imperative.

In 2010, when describing his participation in the Education Center's

apprenticeship program from 1971 until 1974, Amadou praised it as a life-changing opportunity. He echoed Toucet's formal descriptions of the program: "It was a good effort to help children, for people who could not continue their education."<sup>500</sup> Yet, he noted that once Toucet left the museum, the program did not continue. Many apprentices left the museum once it stopped providing clothes and meals, and no new ones were recruited. Amadou finished his apprenticeship with Anu and Mohammed Galitou, and began working on his own account, although he would work with other artisans on commissions, too. During the 1970s, he, along with other artisans at the museum, had a steady clientele among the European expatriates in Niamey. He particularly remembers French soldiers and their families who would visit the museum on weekends.

In the 1980s, he noticed an increase in tourists, and as the state began to organize weeks in celebration of artisanry, Amadou thought that Nigeriens were beginning to appreciate the work of the artisans at the museum, who had always relied on an almost exclusively foreign market of expatriates and tourists. He worked with other leaders among the artisans at the museum to organize a cooperative, something that he was particularly well-equipped to do because he had a middle school education, which many of the artisans who had inherited their vocations did not. It was in the 1990s that Amadou noticed a drop in customers at the museum. Since 1996, Amadou has been active in governmental and nongovernmental artisanry promotional and organizational projects, and as the General Secretary for the national group GIE-DANI (Groupement d'Intérêt Economique - Développement de l'Artisanat au Niger),

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<sup>500</sup> Issoufou Amadou, Interview, February 25, 2010.

he has affected the direction of artisanry organizations and gained many opportunities. Through his national organizing roles, he has traveled all over Niger to meet with artisans, as well as to Mali, France, Canada, and Norway for fairs and business trainings. Amadou has gained prominence in artisanal organizations in Niger because of his unique combination of skills that he honed in both formal education and a rigorous apprenticeship. Although few others in his cohort pursued a career in artisanry, Amadou used his participation in the short-lived educational experiment to access training that he has then applied to learning about relevant but diverse subjects like design, quality control, and marketing. As a national leader of the one of the largest artisanal organizations in Niger and member of the leadership council of the artisans' co-operative at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, he is now positioned to continue influence artisanal education in contemporary Niger.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXTRACTING BEAUTY: NIGERIEN ARTISANAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVES

*We will make it a job, we will improve it, and we will adapt it to the rhythm of life, of the world, and of fashion.*

Fadimata Marcel<sup>501</sup>

*Culture is money. Africans must understand that their creativity has value.*  
Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly<sup>502</sup>

In 1983, world market prices for uranium plummeted. This was particularly bad timing for the Nigerien state, which was struggling to distribute food during a major famine. Having narrowly escaped two attempted coups d'état himself, President Seyni Kountché remembered all too well that it was the failure of the First Republic to adequately respond to the 1973-1974 famine that had precipitated the coup d'état that he led to install the military government that he continued to lead almost ten years later. The French government had learned of the uranium deposits in Niger in 1957, and the prospect of a profitable extractive industry in a colony many administrators had viewed as peripheral and costly motivated the strict and coercive control French authorities exercised over Niger's transition to statehood. Even once Hamani Diori, the president who had been handpicked by French authorities, had declared independence, much of the government's staff was composed of French technical

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<sup>501</sup> Fadimata Marcel, Interview, January 14, 2010.

<sup>502</sup> Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly, Lecture, Université Abdou Moumouni, October 23, 2009.

assistants and consultants—some of whom were the very same men who had served in the French colonial government in Niger.<sup>503</sup> Diiori's inability to negotiate more profitable agreements for uranium in Niger further discredited his government, and it may have been his apparent determination to demand a greater share of profits for the Nigerien state that provoked France's decision to look the other way during the coup d'état, instead of intervening, as they had once before.

Kountché asserted Nigerien sovereignty in many ways, including by dismissing all of those French technical assistants and consultants, among whom was the founding curator of the National Museum. Kountché emphasized national unity in discourses that prioritized development and technological modernization. His efforts in the 1970s were quickly and substantially supported by the rising prices of uranium for almost a decade. Kountché expanded access to education and the salaried civil service, so that this new state wealth had wide reach, although it was not equitably distributed. Kountché's military government maintained close, if at times strained, ties to France, but Kountché also cultivated relationships with Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi and international lending organizations, so that Niger was less dependent on France. As a uranium analyst observed in 1982, Kountché's eschewed visions of national self-reliance, and courted both international lending agencies and uranium companies.<sup>504</sup>

During the uranium boom, Kountché's government's treatment of the arts was

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<sup>503</sup> According to Virginia Thompson, citing the journal *Europe-France-Outremer, L'Afrique d'Expression Française et Madagascar*, in 1969, 47% of the national budget was dedicated to paying the salaries of the 362 French employees of the Nigerien government. Virginia Thompson, *West Africa's Council of the Entente* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972): 217.

<sup>504</sup> Michael C. Lynch and Thomas L. Neff, *The Political Economy of African Uranium and its Role in International Markets*. Energy Laboratory Working Paper No. MIT-EL 82-006 Wp. (July 1982): 55.

an instrumental approach that valorized traditional arts as symbols of the distinctiveness of the Nigerien state. Artisans such as leather workers sometimes traveled as part of his entourage, and as the First Republic had done, he presented handmade items to diplomats as gifts.<sup>505</sup> The government maintained the small arts and technical education programs at the National Museum that had begun during the First Republic, and the museum experimented in the late 1970s with sending weavers, wood carvers, and ceramicists to teach co-curricular classes in a middle school. These classes were not intended to train future artisans, but to instill a nationalist appreciation of an objectified tradition in future state bureaucrats and other salaried elites.<sup>506</sup>

### ***The French Colonial Gaze, Ethnicity, and Art in the Military Nation-State***

Kountché promoted the painter Rissa Ixa, whose romantic portrayals of Tuareg nomadic life drew directly from French colonial exoticist catalogues of indigenous dress. (Figures 4.1 and 4.2) As argued in Chapter One, the visualization of West Africa was a key element in the French colonization of West Africa.<sup>507</sup> This included the codification and dissemination of images of dressed African bodies and African lands—and the conflation of those bodies and lands into a single resource for the French imperial state. The publications and exhibitions resulting from the 1925 “Croisière Noire,” or the Expédition Citroën Centre Afrique, were one of the most

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<sup>505</sup> Illiassou Addoh, Interview, October 2009.

<sup>506</sup> Cati Coe, *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools: Youth, Nationalism, and the Transformation of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See also Chapter Three.

<sup>507</sup> See also Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Laurent Gervereau, eds. *Images Et Colonies: Iconographie Et Propagande Coloniale Sur l’Afrique Française De 1880 à 1962* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine and Association Connaissance de l’Histoire de l’Afrique Contemporaine, 1993).

important vehicles for perpetuating images of Africa in early twentieth century France.



Figure 4.1: Paintings on Display in Rissa Ixa's Workshop. Ca. 2000s.

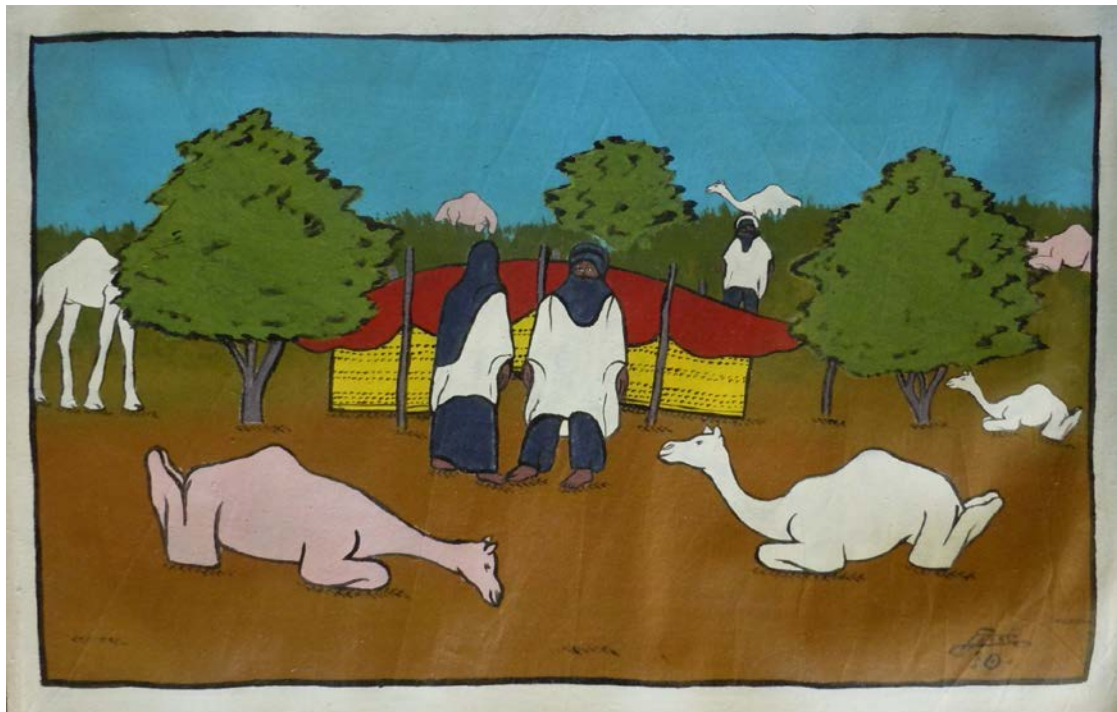


Figure 4.2: Rissa Ixa, *Untitled*, Acrylic on Canvas, 2009.  
Collection of author.

The expedition's artist, Alexandre Iacovleff, published a volume that included sketches next to diary entries, along with fifty high-quality color plates. The first page

opens with a section on “Landscapes,” but the drawing that overlaps with the text is not a landscape, but a person, a veiled man. (Figures 4.3 and 4.4) The diary entry reads:

November 2, 1924. Sahara. Like a body under a dissection table, the earth presents its living volumes to the sun; vibrant red hills like women’s breasts, smooth surfaces with soft lines like that of the human stomach, or angular and black forms, with dry flanks on its sides. Sky and Earth, all is concentrated in them, under the cruel light, in these two elements.<sup>508</sup>

For Iacovleff, Africa *was* on a dissecting table, and he represented the people and places he encountered with surgical detail. The posture of the sketched man on this first page is telling. Despite the feminine landscape of Iacovleff’s text, it is a veiled man in a loose robe and pants who stands in a curious, vulnerable pose, his elbows splayed as he presumably arranges his headdress. While he is performing an act of concealment, it is simultaneously one of exposure, as his posture leaves him open to Iacovleff’s gaze. This may be the same subject portrayed in Plate Three of the volume, “Mahoua, Race Songhai.” (Figure 4.5) French popular culture knew well the image of veiled Tuareg men, and the apparent reversal of other dress practices in the Middle East and Africa, in which women veiled, accentuated French popular fascination with Tuareg culture. Iacovleff’s depiction of Mahoua refers to this popular image of the Sahara, although he specifies his sujet as Songhay, not Tuareg. As Mahoua is almost entirely covered by his dress, Iacovleff lingers on the folds of the blue-black cloth, recalling women’s dresses in seventeenth century works by Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer. Like the women in Vermeer’s paintings, Mahoua has used these textiles to

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<sup>508</sup> Alexandre Iacovleff, *Dessins Et Peintures d’Afrique Exécutés Au Cours De l’Expédition Citroën Centre Afrique, Deuxième Mission Haardt, Audouin-Dubreuil*. (Paris: J. Meunial, 1927): Unnumbered.

construct his social identity, his social skin.<sup>509</sup> The veil protects him from the elements, and as significantly, serves to signal reserve and demand respect. The vast tunic folds onto his shoulders to add volume to his body, and the loose robes and pants are cool in the heat. He wears amulets, which may be medicinal and/or protective. Iacovleff records details in order to make the diverse dress practices he saw legible to himself and his French audience, but their meanings in context remained opaque. This portrait is the first of an African in the plates, indicating the geographic path of the expedition, and the centrality of the Sahara in the French colonial imagination.



Figure 4.3: Beginning of section “Paysage” in Alexandre Iacovleff, *Dessins Et Peintures d’Afrique Exécutés Au Cours De l’Expédition Citroën Centre Afrique, Deuxième Mission Haardt, Audouin-Dubreuil*. Paris: J. Meunial, 1927.

<sup>509</sup> Terence Turner, “The Social Skin” In *Not Work Alone: A Cross-Cultural Study of Activities Superfluous to Survival*, Jeremy Cherfas and Roger Lewin, eds. (London: Temple Smith, 1979): 111–140.



Figure 4.4: Detail of drawing at beginning of section “Paysage” in Alexandre Iacovleff, *Dessins Et Peintures d’Afrique Exécutés Au Cours De l’Expédition Citroën Centre Afrique, Deuxième Mission Haardt, Audouin-Dubreuil*. Paris: J. Meunial, 1927.



Figure 4.5: Plate 3, “Mahoma, Race Songhai,” in Alexandre Iacovleff, *Dessins Et Peintures d’Afrique Exécutés Au Cours De l’Expédition Citroën Centre Afrique, Deuxième Mission Haardt, Audouin-Dubreuil*. Paris: J. Meunial, 1927.

The Croisière Noire had an exhibit at the 1931 Exposition Coloniale and the romantic portrayal of Sahelians, especially the Tuareg, remained so important that the magazine *L'Illustration* used a drawing of two Tuareg warriors on the cover of one of its first special issues dedicated to the exposition. (Figure 4.6) Viewed from below, the figures veiled and draped in indigo robes peer down from impossible elongated camels, and they seem so impervious that they would never need the shields that swing nonchalantly at their sides. The Tuareg successfully had resisted French domination for years, and French colonial theorists had invented what Cynthia Becker and others have called “the Berber Myth” in order to situate the Tuareg and other Amazigh ethnicities into their colonial racial taxonomies.<sup>510</sup> The myth portrayed the Tuareg as descended from European ancestors, but who had failed to progress to the supposedly more civilized status of twentieth century Europeans.<sup>511</sup> Due to both violent military conquest and coercive medical missions, by 1931, the Tuareg were considered largely “pacified.”<sup>512</sup> The Tuareg were in many ways the prototypical colonized body in French popular imagination, for precisely because they confounded previous racial taxonomies and fiercely refused French culture, they seemed safely categorized and contained after decades of presenting both physical and economic threats to French colonial interests in Africa. They were now available to be visually appreciated and visually possessed.

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<sup>510</sup> Cynthia Becker, “Matriarchal Nomads and Freedom Fighters: Transnational Amazigh Consciousness and Moroccan, Algerian, and Nigerien Artists.” *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture* 5 (Fall 2009): 70–101.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> Jacques Hureiki. *Les Médecines Touarègues Traditionnelles: Approche Ethnologique*. (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2000): 153.

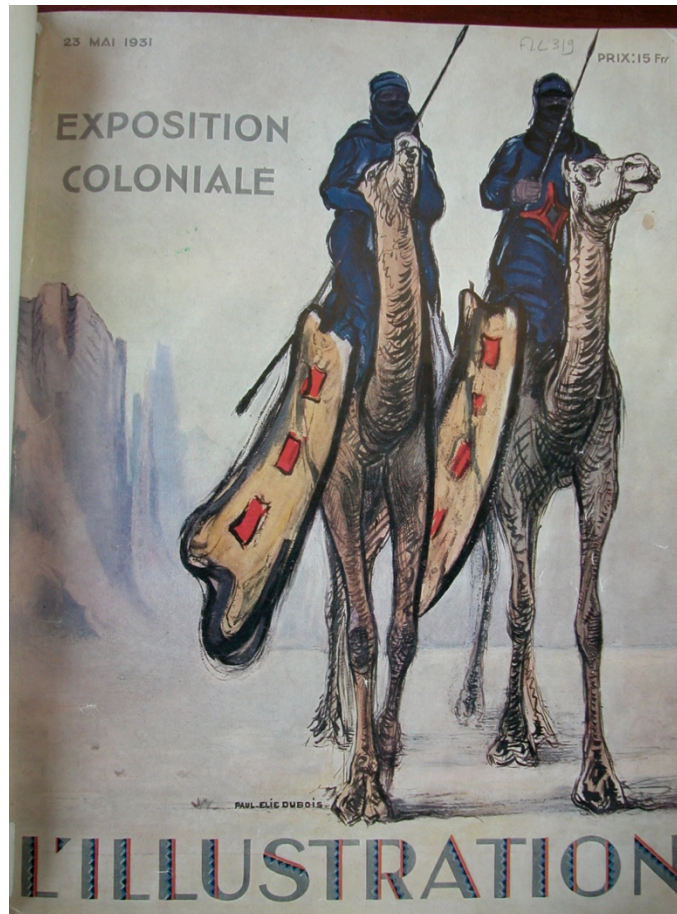


Figure 4.6: Cover of *L'Illustration*, May 23, 1931.

Émile Gallois confirmed the ongoing importance of images of Tuaregs and other veiled African men in his 1946 book of plates, *Costumes de l'Union Française*,<sup>513</sup> in which he dedicates twenty-five of the forty-four plates to Africa.<sup>513</sup> The very first three are of Tuareg subjects: “Femme Touarègue de Tombouctou,” “Touareg du Hoggar,” and “Guerrier Touareg.” (See Figures 4.7 and 4.8) Gallois has none of Iacovleff’s Art Deco sensuous treatment of textiles, but in 1946, his drawing style streamlines dress customs from around the world into easily digestible images reminiscent of comic strips, with their black outlines filled in with bright colors.

<sup>513</sup> Emile Gallois and Marcel Griaule. *Costumes De l'Union Francaise* (Paris: Éditions Arc-en-Ciel, 1946).

Comic strips and comic books, or *bande dessinées* had skyrocketed in popularity in Europe and the United States during the 1930s, and by the mid-1940s, their aesthetic had infused many aspects of visual culture, including advertisement, education, art, and propaganda, including Gallois's volume, which blended all of these categories in the service of French colonialism.<sup>514</sup> In "Touareg du Hoggar," a man stands in profile, his arm outstretched as if in greeting, but more importantly to better illustrate his clothing. The "Guerrier Touareg," or Tuareg Warrior, is at a diagonal, and defined by his accoutrements, the same spear, sword, and shield that had been on the magazine cover fifteen years before. (Figure 4.7) In his work, Gallois exerted French power over the people he depicted, freezing customs to uphold nationalist, colonial ideologies of race and power.



Figure 4.7: Émile Gallois, "Guerrier Touareg,"  
Emile Gallois and Marcel Griaule. *Costumes De L'union Francaise*.  
Paris: Éditions Arc-en-Ciel, 1946.

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<sup>514</sup> Pierre Couperie, *Bande Dessinée Et Figuration Narrative. Histoire, Esthétique, Production Et Sociologie De La Bande Dessinée Mondiale, Procédés Narratifs Et Structure De L'image Dans La Peinture* (Paris: S.E.R.G., 1967).



Figure 4.8: Émile Gallois, “Touareg du Hoggar,” Emile Gallois and Marcel Griaule. *Costumes De L'union Francaise*. Paris: Éditions Arc-en-Ciel, 1946.

Famed anthropologist Marcel Griaule wrote the preface to Gallois’s volume, and his perspective unsurprisingly added to the book’s emphasis on Africa.<sup>515</sup> His account of Gallois’s work attests to the material claims on the aesthetic creativity of the people depicted:

This work wanted to give some idea of our wealth in traditional elegance. The author of the brilliant paintings presented here insisted rightly, of course, on what one would be tempted to call an excess of cloth: the title itself would have it so. But he still has made an unassuming place for the sorts of arrangement in which the cloth seems scant and others where what is ordinarily only an accessory or trinket becomes the main clothing.<sup>516</sup>

Griaule and Gallois thus attempt to domesticate and banalize both too much and too little dress according to French standards of the 1940s, although Griaule notes the

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<sup>515</sup> Griaule is best known for his writings on the Dogon culture in what is now Mali. See Marcel Griaule, *Dieu D'eau, Entretiens Avec Ogotemmêli* (Paris: Éditions du Chêne, 1948).

<sup>516</sup> Gallois and Griaule 1946: 1.

paradoxes of this project, since the title of the book immediately consigns the dress within to the abnormal—the Other—by calling it “costume.” As Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher have established, the term “costume” carries implications of dress that is “‘out-of-everyday’ social role or activity,” and Griaule confirms that this implication was true in the French language in 1946, too.<sup>517</sup>

Griaule points to the importance of Gallois’s paintings by explaining that “In effect, clothing is a kind of capital. It is a display that others can count and evaluate. Everyone knows that it is part of a whole—behind it appears the lifestyle.”<sup>518</sup>

Immersed in theories of salvage anthropology, or the idea that Western anthropology needed to document so-called primitive cultures before they were inevitably absorbed and assimilated into a single, dominant homogenous European culture, Griaule feared that the changes in African dress, specifically the incorporation of imported textiles into dress practices, would lead to the destruction of ethnicities’ distinctive aesthetic practices. He criticized French claims to “mettre en valeur,” or to develop or exploit artisanry, along with colonially supported textile importation. He concluded gloomily that “to flee monotonous horizons, there will be nothing left but the refuge of books like this one.”<sup>519</sup> Griaule recognized how other kinds of colonial exchange and extraction manifested in African dress practices, but Gallois’s paintings themselves extracted and simplified beauty for French consumption. Griaule assumed that change in African dress practices meant a monotonization because he prioritized the French gaze, rather than considering African perspectives on expanding access to industrially

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<sup>517</sup> Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher. “Dress and Identity.” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 10.4 (June 1, 1992): 3.

<sup>518</sup> Gallois and Griaule 1946: 3.

<sup>519</sup> Gallois and Griaule 1946: 8.

produced textiles. Gallois's portraits and other images like them circulated to define the French empire, and when nation-states like Niger established independence, they drew upon these visual vocabularies to make their own claims upon landscapes and people.

Nigerien artist Rissa Ixa began painting in the 1960s, and he saw many noble Tuaregs devastated by the droughts and famines in Niger from 1968 until 1974. He gained national prominence and a measure of international recognition during the military rule of Kountché's Conseil Militaire Suprême (1974-1987). Ixa has experimented with a range of media, but his primary medium is painting. (See Figures 4.1 and 4.2) His oeuvre consists of portraits of "traditional" Tuareg figures and scenes of "traditional" Tuareg life in the desert. His paintings create a fantasy of the nomadic life of Tuareg nobles before French colonization, an isolated and ritualistic life frozen in the two dimensions of his paintings. Like Gallois's Tuaregs, Ixa's begin with sharp black outlines, which demarcate the elements of their "costume." Isolated and still, Ixa's subjects are offered up for examination as surely as Iacovleff's. The sophisticated, varied dress practices of numerous Tuareg communities over time are distilled into flat frontal portrayals that commodify the Tuareg body. Rather than relating his style to illustrations like Gallois's, some scholars have categorized Ixa as "naïve" because of the outlined, flat style that he employs.<sup>520</sup>

Cynthia Becker has contextualized Ixa's romantic portrayals of Tuareg life within a larger trend of Amazigh appropriation of colonial imagery to assert cultural

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<sup>520</sup> Audrey Boucksom, "Arts 'Touristiques' en Afrique et Consommateurs Occidentaux: Le Cas de l'Artisanat d'Art au Niger". Unpublished thesis. Université Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne, Ecole doctorale d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie, 2009: 161. Boucksom refers to Ixa as "Guissa Ixa," "the most well known naïve painter" in Niger.

work and autonomy.<sup>521</sup> She observes that “While Ixa is acutely aware of the challenges faced by contemporary Tuareg and the impact of urbanization on Tuareg culture, he creates a non-threatening folkloric view of Tuareg life that appeals to his primarily Western clientele, creating a commercial genre devoted to Tuareg life in the desert.”<sup>522</sup> Ixa gained prominence not only through appealing to Western clients, but also to the nation-state in what Elizabeth A. Davis calls a “particularly acute instance of neutralizing state co-optation of Tuareg images and symbols.”<sup>523</sup> Davis notes that painting, as a foreign medium associated with the European “fine arts,” was deemed acceptable as an occupation for Ixa and others of the noble caste, who would not perform the artisanal work associated with the Tuareg artisanal caste, the *Inadan*, such as metal work and leatherwork, or those descended from people enslaved to the Tuareg, the *Bellah*, such as weaving, basketry, and wood-carving. According to Davis, Ixa used painting to claim the desert and Tuareg imagery as a commodity that nobles possessed, even as *Inadan* had more commercial opportunities to market their work, especially jewelry. Kountché and his administration promoted Ixa to convey state ownership of Tuareg culture. Even as many Tuareg nobles emigrated to Libya to work and others to urban centers around West Africa, the state treated their visual culture as a resource to be extracted and exchanged for capital.

In Figure 4.2, Ixa’s 2009 acrylic painting on canvas typifies the vision of nomadic Tuareg life that he has sold to Western tourists since the 1970s. A Tuareg man and woman stand in front of a tent, which is a key part of Ixa’s visual vocabulary

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<sup>521</sup> Becker 2009.

<sup>522</sup> Becker 2009: 94.

<sup>523</sup> Elizabeth Davis, “Metamorphosis in the Culture Market of Niger.” *American Anthropologist* 101.3 (1999): 490.

of romantic Tuareg life. Susan Rasmussen has stated that

The Tuareg tent is important in ritual and symbol, as well as in subsistence, property relations, and marriage...the tent remains the center-piece of rural Tuareg culture in both nomadic and semi-nomadic communities. As noted, the tent is primarily associated with women, as women build and own it.<sup>524</sup>

The Tuareg tent took on additional symbolic dimensions in the national and international context, in which it signaled Tuareg ethnic distinction and a romantic anti-modern exoticism. In this work, Ixa frustrates the colonizing gaze, even as he works within Iacovleff and Gallois's tradition of laying the Tuareg body on the dissecting table, suggesting the paradoxes and complexities in his project of valorizing Tuareg culture to an international audience. Many of his works feature a man and a woman, which appeals to Western notions of monogamous heterosexual romantic love as well as adhering to ethnographic practices of showing male and female "types" of colonized ethnicities. In this midground of this work, the woman's back is to the viewer, and the eyes of the man behind her are indistinct, and he too is almost entirely covered by his clothing, including a veil. Another man stands in the background, behind the tent, even more distant.

The painting challenges the sparse desert of Iacovleff's colonial imagination by portraying the sand of the foreground transforming into a grassy field with bushy trees of the background. For Ixa and other Tuaregs, the desert is a home—a viable home, not the illegible expanse calling out to be conquered by the colonial state or exploited by the national state and neocolonial corporations. The green trees evoke

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<sup>524</sup> Susan Rasmussen, "The Tent as Cultural Symbol and Field Site: Social and Symbolic Space, 'Topos,' and Authority in a Tuareg Community." *Anthropological Quarterly* 69.1 (January 1, 1996): 16.

homey depictions of the French countryside, simultaneously reorienting Western viewers' conception of the desert and domesticating nomadic Tuaregs as safe commodities. Camels encircle the scene. Camels were crucial resources for nomadic Tuareg as essential modes of transportation, and they were also treasured status symbols. According to Susan Rasmussen, ownership of the most camels in the region was one way that noble Tuaregs had maintained their historic military and economic domination over other groups in the region, and Ixa's painting thus nostalgically looks back on the disintegrated social stratification in which Tuareg nobles successfully extracted labor and capital from groups they viewed as servile.<sup>525</sup> Camels were, and are, as invested with symbolism as the tent in both the Tuareg worldview and the colonial image of the Tuareg. Like the tent, the camels in this painting function in both registers simultaneously. They are protective and empowering of the figures represented in the painting, and their images are also relatively cheap commodities available for ownership by French and other consumers hoping to possess a piece of the exotic Tuareg.

Both brief and some more extensive histories of the relationship between the Tuareg and the Nigerien state generally skip the first decade of the Conseil Militaire Supreme, but Ixa's career suggests how important this period was in shaping the conflicts that persist until today. Kountché realized how tenuously most Tuaregs had been integrated into the nation, if at all. They and other nomads had just emerged from years of drought and famine. In 2010, nomads still recognized the early 1970s as a period of stock depletion from which their communities had not recovered. Tuareg

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<sup>525</sup> Susan J. Rasmussen, "Within the Tent and at the Crossroads: Travel and Gender Identity Among the Tuareg of Niger." *Ethos* 26.2 (June 1, 1998): 155.

noble groups also historically had controlled the Northern deserts, and the cornerstone of Kountché's governance was to be the harnessing of the profits of uranium mined there for the nation-state's control. Resistance to Kountché's repressive policies of containment and coerced emigration and urbanization began to manifest in the early 1980s in ways that played out internationally. In 1980, relations with Libya became strained when Libyan head of state Muammar Gaddafi accused the Kountché's government of mistreating the Tuareg population. Abdoulaye Diori, the son of former president Hamani Diori, led a famous attack against government forces at Tchin Tabaraden in 1985. Ethnically Djerma, Diori had gathered Tuaregs trained in Libya for the undertaking, which was intended to be the beginning of a larger uprising. Ixa's paintings offered the CMS, the French government, and Western expatriates a far safer representation of Tuareg culture than the activists, fighters, and workers demanding an autonomous state.

Kountché's uranium-funded vision of modernization had great impact on Nigerien art in indirect and less formal ways, too. Women were educated and employed in unprecedented numbers, and even women who did not attend school began to participate in the cash economy in new ways, especially in the rapidly growing cities of Niamey, Maradi, and Zinder. Women commissioned numerous wall hangings and blankets from weavers, who experimented in form and technique with the brightly colored industrially spun thread that their patrons supplied to them. These wall hangings and blankets were frequently nationalist in tone, like the *Sahel Vert tera-tera* alluding to Kountché's anti-desertification campaign discussed in Chapter Two, and often featured the Nigerien flag. (Figure 2.23) The *Sahel Vert* demonstrated

the belief in the nation-state's ability to improve quality of life in its embrace of expanded access to a range of colors of industrially spun thread.

Most weavers and other artisans were also subsistence farmers who balanced different kinds of work according to the season. Although gains were made in formal education, attendance and literacy remained low. Despite the influx of capital into the country, the Nigerien state was still operating on a budget composed primarily of foreign aid and loans, and many state funds were stolen by government officials and their families. Kountché promoted a strictly hierarchical and teleological vision of development that drew on both international modernization and, as Paul Stoller has demonstrated, tropes from Hauka spirit possession.<sup>526</sup> In Hausa, international development is translated as *ci gaba*, or to eat ahead, which appropriately conveys what French colonial authorities, the French neocolonial state, international aid bodies, international lending organizations, and many Nigeriens emphasized, which was that to develop in a globalized capitalist economy meant increasing one's capacity to consume, which required incorporation into a cash economy. Kountché's vast expansion of access to formal education, state bureaucracy, and the military exponentially increased the number of wage laborers, and through agricultural cooperatives, he encouraged greater participation in global networks of exchange for subsistence farmers, too. The *ci gaba sakala* excised many complex motifs in favor of plain weave stripes, suggesting the aesthetic sacrifices in quotidian modern life necessary to "eat ahead." (Figure 2.24)

In addition to the ongoing direct influence of French colonial educational

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<sup>526</sup> Paul Stoller, *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1995): 188.

projects on the pedagogical and institutional forms of artisanry education in Niger, the model of extractive mining was applied to artisanry promotion and education by the Nigerien state and international organizations from the late 1970s going forward. By treating artisans, the arts, and artisanal knowledge as natural resources to be exploited for the advancement of the national economy, the Nigerien state and other participating actors used nonformal pedagogies to partially formalize the informal economy in which many artisans participated. The connection between uranium mining and the promotion of Nigerien artisanry is not merely metaphoric, although the notion of extracting Niger's beauty for export is apt. Instead, as the Nigerien state sought capital, and especially after it saw its income drop precipitously along with the price of uranium, it approached artisanal labor and artistic knowledge as potential resources that, while they could not replace all of the revenue from uranium, could be sold as commodities. Uranium and artisanry also have been bureaucratically housed together in agencies such as the Ministry of Mines, Energy, and Industry during Kountché's military regime.

Some policy makers made the connection explicit, as they promoted artisanry projects as a necessary component of development in a Niger disillusioned by former hopes for rapid industrialization and steady agricultural production—or a Niger in which uranium was no longer “manna from heaven,” as some government officials had referred to it.<sup>527</sup> Between 1980 and 1988, uranium export receipts in Niger declined about 16 percent, but uranium remained the dominant export, falling only

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<sup>527</sup> For example, see Dabal 1997: 2.

from 80 to 75 percent of all exports.<sup>528</sup> The Chamber of Commerce of Niger noticed in the mid-1980s that 40% of the population did artisanal work on a temporary or permanent basis. It also estimated that artisanry made up around 14% of the Gross Domestic Product.<sup>529</sup>

For the fifteen years following the rapid drop in uranium prices in 1983, the Nigerien government implemented the Structural Adjustment Policies mandated by its lenders, which resulted in the layoffs of numerous government employees, the privatization of government enterprises, a spike in the costs of goods, and a constriction in circulating capital. The period is recalled in Niger as the *conjuncture économique* or *compression du travail*—the “Economic Situation” or the “Reduction of Work.” A bottle of Bière Niger is still called a “conjuncture” because the price stayed the same during the crisis—but the bottles became smaller. Although the wry nickname stuck to the beer, artisans also faced customers who refused to pay more for weavings and other objects, despite rising costs of materials and artisans’ increasing need for cash. Artisans produced their own objects for the “Economic Situation” by deskilling. For example, weavers at the National Museum excised complex and time-consuming tapestry motifs from their repertoire.

Ali Sinka and other weavers observed that despite the rising cost of thread and rising costs of living in the 1980s, neither Nigerien nor foreign customers at the museum were willing to pay more for the complex *kounta* and *tcharka* wall-hangings

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<sup>528</sup> Cathy L Jabara, *Structural Adjustment and Stabilization in Niger: Macroeconomic Consequences and Social Adjustment* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Food and Nutrition Policy Program, 1991).

<sup>529</sup> Chambre de Commerce, d’Agriculture, d’Industrie et d’Artisanat du Niger, Documents from Semaine Nationale Nationale de l’Artisanat (15-22 Octobre 1987). Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. Unnumbered. ca. September 1987.

in which they specialized. Sinka did not change the price, but instead he excised some of the most difficult and time-consuming tapestry motifs. In Figure 4.9, these interlocking curved diamonds created with tapestry had been a defining characteristic of the *kounta*, but were abandoned by the small percentage of weavers in Niger who knew tapestry work over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Likewise, this zigzag motif added movement to the *tcharka*, but it, too, was excised in the face of economic exigency. (Figure 4.10) This abandonment of difficult tapestry motifs is one of the most direct instances of voluntary deskilling among Nigerien weavers, but numerous other examples exist in Nigerien artisanry.



Figure 4.9: Motif on *kounta* textile in the collection of the Abdoulwahid Goumer. Ca. 1960s or 1970s.



Figure 4.10: Motif on *tcharka* textile in the collection of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. Ca. 1960s or 1970s. 2010 Catalogue Number 1679.

In a bid for more Western customers, Ali Sinka also again modified color and fiber schemes and sizes for the *kounta*. He began producing much smaller works that could be sold for less and would be more easily transportable for foreign visitors and expatriates. In the late 1980s or early 1990s, acrylic yarn manufactured in Nigeria became more readily available in the markets in Niger. Also used by women in Niger to knit baby clothes, the yarn was relatively cheap and came in a wider variety of colors than cotton thread. Marketed as “wool” (“*laine*”), it also hearkened back to the *arkilla* forebears of the cotton *kounta* and *tcharka*. Minding the tastes of his Western customers, Sinka began making versions of the *kounta* that included only four colors: black, white, and two acrylic colors. These works were intended to better coordinate with Western interior decoration aesthetics. By 2010, this had been codified into two color schema: maroon with grey and blue with green. In Figure 4.11, this sample band woven by Amadou “Fin” Oumarou demonstrates what weavers at the museum determined defined a *kounta*, despite its vast transformation from the wool furnishing textiles some of them had learned in as young men. At least one tapestry motif was necessary, along with the use of weft-faced bands approximately twenty-two centimeters in width. This example uses black and white cotton yarn with blue and green acrylic accents. The thick acrylic yarn adds additional dimension to the central tapestry motifs, and the color scheme can easily coordinate with various Western traditions of interior design.



Figure 4.11: Amadou “Fin” Omarou, *Kounta* Sample Strip, 2011. Cotton and Acrylic.

The difficulties faced by the Nigerien state coincided with a resurgent interest in arts and material culture in international academic and development circles. This widespread phenomenon was rooted in anxiety about the ill effects of industrialization and a desire to possess authentic and exotic objects with which to oppose a Western modernity. In his study of artisanry in Niger in 1977, Jacques Anquetil claimed that traditional art only existed in isolated areas protected from “the invasion of tourists,” and that the art market has claimed most old works. Yet, despite decrying this extraction and assumed resulting degeneration, he framed his call for change as a suggestion for Africa to draw upon its traditional wisdom as a resource for other

places: “Africa must react quickly to safeguard its specific value. Tradition must teach modernity. The most modest of ethnic groups have in their spirit many lessons of life and wisdom to give to any industrialized civilization.”<sup>530</sup> Although many artisans remember the 1970s as a time of expanded Nigerien and tourist markets and relative wealth, retrospective developmentalist analyses labeled the 1960s and 1970s as a period of official neglect of artisanry in Niger, or as one author and government official put it, “artisanry was long the poor relative in the development of most African countries.”<sup>531</sup> The international shift of attention to artisanry as a method and focus of development represented the rise of an aggressive neoliberal agenda to more fully incorporate individuals into a globalized cash economy. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and related organizations encouraged these projects in order to increase capital in Niger, so that Niger could pay interest on its loans and have more inducement to take out more loans. The national government colluded with these international organizations and institutions by regarding artisanry, which was composed of design expertise and unwaged labor, as a natural resource that could be exploited for state capital accumulation in the wake of the collapse of the uranium market.

As discussed in Chapter Three, in West Africa, both French and British colonial governments had a passing enthusiasm for artisanal education in the 1930s and 1940s, and missionary training and marketing activities stretched back to the

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<sup>530</sup> Jacques Anquetil, *Niger: L'Artisanat Créateur* (Paris: Agence de coopération culturelle et technique, 1977): 31.

<sup>531</sup> Abdelkrim Ben Fadhl, “Potentialités d'Exportation de Produits de l'Artisanat du Niger.” Organisation International du Travail. Genève, January 1995. Archives of the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry, République du Niger.

nineteenth century. Such projects had fallen out of favor in the 1950s and the 1960s, but beginning in the 1960s, various international bodies sought economic development for Niger through artisanal education, often with an aesthetic angle, which was part of an international trend first analyzed in depth in Nelson Graburn's landmark 1976 volume, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*. American Peace Corps volunteers often formally and informally attempted to influence aesthetic design and encourage or facilitate marketing in the United States. In Graburn's volume, William Bascom noted that Peace Corps volunteers across West Africa had initiated batik and tie-dyeing projects that focused on an expatriate market.<sup>532</sup> In Niamey, two Peace Corps volunteers added batik to the curriculum of the Education Center of the National Museum in 1978. The primitivist figural depictions of village life were intended to appeal to an export and tourist market. (Figure 4.12) As part of the Education Center, where plumbing, electricity, masonry, and machine sewing were also taught, batik was counted among techniques considered modern. Its modernity lay in its appeal to an export market and its relative lack of labor intensity. As a newly introduced medium, it did not have associations with a particular caste or class. The international developmentalist preference for pictorial batik wall hangings aimed at a foreign market over hand weaving resulted from several local and international dynamics.

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<sup>532</sup> William Bascom, "Changing African Art," in Nelson H. H. Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 311.



Figure 4.12: Batik Wallhangings on display at the Musée National du Niger. ca. 2000s.

In the late 1970s, Nigerien women had unprecedented access to cash and those able to do so were commissioning numerous wall hangings for weddings, which recipients then used to decorate their homes during holidays and celebrations. The patronage system reflected the comparatively slow incorporation of women and weavers into the cash economy, as most of the weavers' compensation came in the form of food and other provisions given to them while weaving. Most weavers relied on patrons to supply their thread and a place to work. When a Peace Corps volunteer wanted to purchase a hand woven wall hanging, blanket, or garment, they negotiated on similar terms, and provided food to a weaver who would work in their compound for the duration of that project. Weavers' access to the cash economy was mediated through women, and there was a lively local demand for their work. Nigerien weaving was highly skilled labor, but it had limited value in a global labor market. The formal introduction of batik represents the deskilling necessary to produce commodities for a

globalized economy, and its depictions of a generic African village reflect developmentalist ideology's prioritization of foreign, primitivist consumer tastes.

Batik can be an intricate artistic practice, and these comparison between the skill requirements and class associations between weaving in Niger and batik in Niger do not reflect on inherent qualities of batik as a medium, but rather, I offer an analysis of how it has been deployed as a developmentalist tool intended to extract cultural aesthetics and material capital.<sup>533</sup> The batik training at the Education Center was not given to weavers, but to students from nonartisanal families seeking skills in nontraditional, "modern" artisanal labor. Since the 1970s, other batik trainings have been given at various nonformal educational venues, including *foyers feminines*, nonformal schools for young women that are often funded by that Nigerien state and international aid organizations.

The designs on Nigerien batiks have not referred to Nigerien textile motifs, further proving the disconnect between batik and other textile production and use in Niger. Pieces sometimes included representation of the prehistoric rock paintings in Nigerien deserts. Others participated in the nation-state's endorsed romanticization and domestication of the Tuareg warrior. In Figure 4.13, a batik checks off several key

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<sup>533</sup> For analysis of some of the complex batik traditions in West Africa, see Lisa Aronson, "The Language of West African Textiles." *African Arts* 25.3 (July 1, 1992): 36–100 and John Picton and John Mack. *African Textiles: Looms, Weaving and Design* (London: British Museum Publications for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1979). Judith Byfield has written an extensive history of women dyers of *adire* cloth in Nigeria in the twentieth century in Judith Byfield, *The Bluest Hands: A Social and Economic History of Women Dyers in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1890-1940* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002). See also T. L. Akinbogun and S. R. Ogunduyile. "Crafts Engagement in the Economic Survival of South-Western Nigerian Rural Women." *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy* 3, no. 2 (May 29, 2009): 217–234. The impact of batik on the industrial production of cloth in the Netherlands and Great Britain is well-documented, as is the subsequent impact of industrial waxprint cloth on African visual culture. See Marcel Hoogenboom, Duco Bannink, and Willem Trommel. "From Local to Grobal, and Back." *Business History* 52.6 (October 2010): 932–954. For analysis of the the rich artistry of Southeast Asian batik traditions, see Fiona Kerlogue, *Batik: Design, Style & History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

tourist boxes for Niger in its depiction of a lone Tuareg on a tall camel in front of the Agadez Mosque. The perspective recalls the upward gaze to the two Tuareg warriors on camels on the cover of the 1931 *L'Illustration* special issue on the Exhibition Coloniale (Figure 4.6). Other figural works correspond with batik works produced for the tourist market throughout the region. Figure 4.14 is a typical example of a “village scene,” which generally includes huts and at least one woman preparing food. Even as Anquetil and others decried “tourist art,” development agencies offered substantially more support to such media because they were more legible and visible to the Western development workers engineering crafts-based projects, and they furthered neoliberal goals of capital generation. The system of patronage and textile production controlled by “women with means” in collaboration with weavers (most of whom were also subsistence farmers) was not within the scope of development projects, because it was controlled by women, it took place in the home, its symbolism was largely abstract, and its primary exchange system was not cash-based.

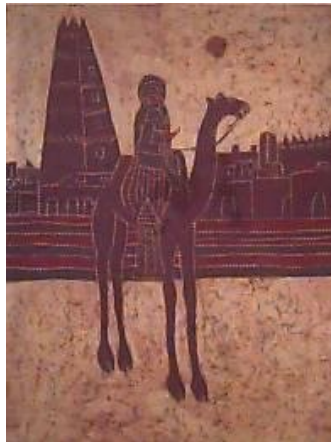


Figure 4.13: Batik depicting Tuareg on camel in Agadez. Musée National du Niger, ca. 1980s-1990s.



Figure 4.14: Batik depicting “African village scene.” Musée National du Niger, ca. 1980s-1990s.

### ***The Nigerien Artisan’s Globalized World***

The confluence of development-oriented crafts initiatives, a surging market for so-called primitive arts, and numerous exhibitions on such materials led James Clifford to pronounce 1984 the “Winter of Primitive Art,” which Shelley Errington also marked as the year of the “Death of Authentic Primitive Art.”<sup>534</sup> Errington demonstrated that the fuller incorporation into commercial sales and exhibition spaces undermined the perceived authenticity of objects within primitivist discourses and markets. At the same time, academic discourses were dismissing regimes of authenticity and primitivism. Likewise, artisanry was discovered by development in Niger just as it became more difficult for the people identified as artisans to survive.

The government of Niger did not legalize a definition of an artisan until 2006, but the eventual formal definition reflects assumptions that had been in operation for decades: “Artisan, someone who, on his own account, performs manual labor for which he has professional qualification and in which he has a part in the execution of

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<sup>534</sup> Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 1-2.

the work.”<sup>535</sup> Karen Tice has pointed out that it was in the 1980s that scholars recognized that “precapitalist relations of production coexist with capitalist relations of production,” or that artisans can maintain control over their means of production and may continue to use patronage systems, even as they participate in capitalist and industrial economic systems in other, often strategic ways.<sup>536</sup> Owning the means of production, the avoidance of waged labor, and the performance of manual labor are the three primary characteristics of artisanry that scholars, Nigerien artisans, and the Nigerien government agreed upon by the 1980s. Under current law in Niger, service artisanry includes taxi driving, and what is termed the artisanry of art, or those with some aesthetic element, was included in the artisanry of production, which also includes any manual productive labor, including water pipe repair and automobile mechanics.

Timothy Scrase has observed that “unlike some other forms of labour, artisan production can also enable a degree of labour autonomy for those who have limited access to the cash economy.”<sup>537</sup> As demonstrated in Niger, many people choose artisanal work and artisanal identities for this reason, and there has been concerted resistance to waged labor by artisans in Niger. Yet, this centrality of forms of labor and means of production also obscures the expertise, perspectives and humanity of artisans. Scrase goes on to note that “Despite the West's fluctuating interest in all things 'ethnic', 'traditional' and 'different', the daily life of the Third World artisan

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<sup>535</sup> République du Niger Loi n° 2006-23 du juin 2006. Portant régime des cooperatives artisanales. Archives of the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry, République du Niger.

<sup>536</sup> Karin E. Tice, *Kuna Crafts, Gender, and the Global Economy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995): 10.

<sup>537</sup> Timothy J. Scrase, “Precarious Production: Globalisation and Artisan Labour in the Third World,” *Third World Quarterly* 24.3 (Jun., 2003): 449-450.

remains one of struggle, poverty and exploitation.”<sup>538</sup> On a policy level, what an artisan makes is in many ways incidental to their identification as an artisan, even if the aesthetic element is fundamental to an artisan’s experience of their work. It is an artisan’s labor that is a resource for the state, the labor that is the good that can be exploited for others’ gain.

This approach to labor confirms Hannah Arendt’s identification of the *animal laborus*, the laboring animal, as the favored understanding of the human *vita activa*, or the life of action, in the industrialized twentieth century. She noted that Locke identified labor as “the source of all prosperity,” Smith considered it “the source of all wealth,” and Marx defined it as “the source of all productivity and the expression of the very humanity of many.”<sup>539</sup> Arendt contended that industrialization has contributed to the triumph of the *animal laborus* over the *homo faber*, or the maker of the world that valued workmanship over labor.<sup>540</sup> Arendt characterized abundance as the great value of twentieth century industrial Western culture, and analyzed how this insatiable striving toward abundance resulted in consumerism, in which anything can be consumed:

Since mankind as a whole is still very far from having reached the limit of abundance, the mode in which society may overcome this natural limitation of its own fertility can be perceived only tentatively and on a national scale. There, the solution seems to be simple enough. It consists in treating all use objects as though they were consumer goods, so that a chair or a table is now consumed as rapidly as a dress and a dress used up almost as quickly as food. This mode of intercourse with the things of the world, moreover, is perfectly adequate to the way they are produced. The industrial revolution has replaced all workmanship with labor, and the result has been that the things of the modern world have become labor products whose natural fate is to be

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958): 101.

<sup>540</sup> Arendt 1958: 126.

consumed, instead of work products which are there to be used.<sup>541</sup>

Instead of consuming food and water, and using other objects, a consumerist approach relies on the constant proliferation of commodities, regardless of need, or even of people's capacity to use all of the commodities that come into their possession.

Arendt's writings on labor are especially relevant because she took up the *animal laborus* and the *homo faber* to explore metaphors of making in order to offer proposals for constructing democracy. Arendt's student, Richard Sennett, has since revised her thesis in theoretically and potentially materially productive ways that are even more salient to the subject of this chapter, in which governmental and nongovernmental actors, Nigerian and foreign, use artisanry as a means to represent and sometimes replace nation-building. Sennett seeks to redeem Arendt's *animal laborus* in his argument: "first, that all skills, even the most abstract, begin as bodily practices; second, that technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination."<sup>542</sup> He proposes the term "craftsman" to include more skills and actions than the "artisan." For Sennett, the "craftsman," or the person drawing on Arendt's *animal laborus* model of working within the world, "represents in each of us the desire to do something well, concretely, for its own sake."<sup>543</sup> He argues for the valuing the physical skills of artisanry, of craft to recognize the physicality of human production and imagination today, no matter how complex the machinery involved.

Holding Arendt's thesis that labor produces capital, while workmanship produces objects of utility, development ideology insists that artisans cease producing

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<sup>541</sup> Arendt 1958: 124

<sup>542</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 10.

<sup>543</sup> Sennett 2008: 144-146.

objects for their own use, or using workmanship, so that they can labor to produce objects that can be exchanged for cash—but not too much cash.<sup>544</sup> A structural characteristic of artisanry in Niger is that artisanal labor and expertise is never adequately valued to allow them to accumulate capital for themselves. Sociologist Olivier Meunier and development analysts in Niger have consistently observed that artisans in urban areas rarely own homes and do not save money.<sup>545</sup> Business and budgeting skills have been regularly included in artisanal training programs in Niger since the 1980s. Development proponents assume that artisans lack the appropriate knowledge to navigate globalized capitalism, rather than analyzing the systemic limits place on artisans.

In her insightful essay on the shifts she observed in what she calls the “culture market” of Niamey in the 1990s, Elizabeth Davis observed the increasing numbers of artisans seeking out expatriate customers and commercialization opportunities.<sup>546</sup> She diagnosed much of these expatriates’ motivation for purchasing as a sense of guilt for the inequity in wealth in Niger, which they assuaged by characterizing patronage and clientele relationships as friendships—and most importantly, through the act of purchasing the work of Nigerien artisans. Contextualized within the global, intertwined phenomena of “primitive art,” “tourist art,” and philanthropic consumerism, the dynamic between Nigerien artisans and their foreign markets

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<sup>544</sup> Scott Cook, “Craft Production in Mexican Capitalism Today,” in June C. Nash, ed., *Crafts in the World Market: The Impact of Global Exchange on Middle American Artisans* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993): 60

<sup>545</sup> Olivier Meunier, *Formation, Organisation Du Travail Et Maintenance Dans Les Entreprises En Afrique Subsaharienne: Anthropologie Des Techniques Dans Les Pmi-Pme Du Niger* (Paris: Harmattan, 2001): 54.

<sup>546</sup> Elizabeth Davis, “Metamorphosis in the Culture Market of Niger.” *American Anthropologist*, New Series 101.3 (Sept. 1999): 485-501.

reflects broad trends in extractive capitalism nurtured and camouflaged by good intentions.

Handmade aesthetically valued objects come to be categorized as craft instead of art for many reasons, often because of media, for post-Enlightenment valorization of painting and sculpture and the derogation of functional objects continues to influence art criticism, even in digital media. Feminist interventions have increased the presence of fiber arts and other craft media in contemporary studio art, but artists generally must prove literate in certain art historical and conceptual discourses in order for their art to be granted admittance. Works labeled as craft fulfill very specific consumerist desires, which are to paradoxically alleviate the effects of consumerism and industrialization. Sennett points out that the constant contestation of taxonomies of art and crafts results from attempts to understand autonomy.<sup>547</sup> The objects labeled as art represent the artist's expressive autonomy, while the name "craft" is applied to works made by makers understood to be less aesthetically, conceptually, and often, politically autonomous.

David Howes, Timothy Scrase, Patricia Nickel, and Angela Eikenberry each have observed that artisanry and the desire to own artisanal work persists in industrialized cultures because of nostalgia for the pre-industrial.<sup>548</sup> The desire to own handmade art from nonwestern cultures is also rooted in a primitivism in which such objects prove the modernity of industrial Western cultures by acting as foils. They

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<sup>547</sup> Sennett 2008: 65.

<sup>548</sup> Patricia Nickel and Angela Eikenberry, "A Critique of the Discourse of Marketized Philanthropy." *American Behavioral Scientist*. 52.7 (2009): 974-989; Scrase 2003; Constance Classen and David Howes. "Epilogue: The Dynamics and Ethnics of Cross-Cultural Consumption." In *Cross-Cultural Consumption* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

demonstrate colonial authority because the owner has the economic and political means to own a rare, beautiful, and exotic objects, or at least an object that refers to rare, beautiful, and exotic objects. Maria Mies argues that the twentieth century proliferation of home decoration items using traditional or pseudo-traditional designs in developing countries for export to industrialized countries results from and perpetuates the housewifization of women on both ends of the transaction.<sup>549</sup> Mies coined the term “housewifization” to describe the expropriation of women’s labor within capitalist economic development. “Housewifization” describes the process by which women’s labor is made invisible *as* labor, thus legitimizing it as unwaged and uncounted contribution to the economy. The labor of women craft producers is understood as supplementary to the primary income of an imagined male household head, and as such, it is undervalued. Women in industrialized countries are encouraged to imagine themselves only as consumers, and the decoration of their home is important unwaged work that defines their social worth.

In its 1996 report intended to encourage the manufacture and export of garments and home decoration in and from Africa, the World Bank inadvertently demonstrated the colonial assumptions about the lack of worth of African design and African labor, as well as the persistent housewifization of the women in their target markets in Europe, who are responsible for the domestication of the home even as they are increasingly engaged in waged labor outside of the home:

Why are Hand–crafted Products Popular for Home Decoration?  
Simple Yet Unique Designs that Appeal to a More Conservative,  
Post–Recession EU. The demand for unique, handmade items is strongest in

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<sup>549</sup> Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1986): 118

Europe in the home products market, as we noted earlier. European consumers are spending an increasing share of income on their homes and want to create a comfortable environment which reflects their personal style. One-of-a-kind hand-crafted products can contribute to a home decor which feels tailored to the individual or family. They also fit into the simpler, more conservative lifestyle which is evident in Europe after the boom years of the 1980s and the subsequent economic bust of the early 1990s. In 1995, Europe has emerged from its worst recession since World War II; however, unemployment rates remain in the double digits in many countries. Consumers are spurning ornate housewares in favor of more basic products. The growth of non-traditional families, due to rising divorce rates and greater participation by women in the labor force, has also contributed to this trend since fewer households engage in formal entertaining.<sup>550</sup>

This relatively low price relies on the structural exploitation and superexploitation of Africans. As Mies has demonstrated, nations calculate their GDP without including subsistence agriculture, domestic labor, or artisanal production for use, because these forms of labor are not exchanged for cash. In Arendt's terms, these represent work and workmanship, or as Mies puts it, this is the production of life upon which capitalism must count but which it does not give monetary value. In effect, subsistence farmers must subsidize the cost of the crafts that they make for the market in order to gain access to any cash at all.

Fair trade organizations and other self-described alternative trade organizations attempt to ameliorate systemic inequities by defining fair wages and work conditions for farmers and artisans, and then by promoting the resulting commodities in markets in the developed world. They often succeed in getting capital for producers, but they do so by treating artisanal and agricultural expertise as natural resources. For people in industrial cultures, such ventures limit their political imagination by refusing their

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<sup>550</sup> Tyler Biggs, Margaret Miller, Caroline Otto, Gerald Tyler *Africa Can Compete! Export Opportunities and Challenges for Garments and Home Products in the European Market*. World Bank Discussion Papers, Africa Technical Department Series (Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 1996):17.

ability to act as anything but consumers. Slavoj Zizek has called this “cultural capitalism at its purest. You don’t just buy a coffee. You buy your redemption from being only a consumerist...This generates a kind of ...semantic over-investment or burden. You know that it’s not just buying a cup of coffee. It’s at the same time you fulfill a whole series of ethical duties.”<sup>551</sup> This redemption adds unique dimensions of pleasure to purchasing, owning, consuming, or giving a beautiful object, which is itself meant to be pleasurable. It is also one way to construct an identity as a social responsible person in conformist, consumerist vein. A person who purchases Tuareg earrings at 10,000 Villages or a pair of Tom’s Shoes at Whole Foods is taking part in capitalist, globalized forms of self-identification intertwined with a person (who might be the same one) who purchases their food at a Wal-Mart (whether organic fruit or Mountain Dew) or Nike shoes at a mall. Importantly, though, a vast majority of the people who purchase philanthropically-marketed products are women.<sup>552</sup> Mies defines the labor of consumption as part of domestic work that comes to subsidize wages and capital accumulation through the process of housewifization.<sup>553</sup> Philanthropic consumerism adds to the gendered burden of labor for women: while they earn wages and do domestic work that includes buying commodities, they are also supposed to believe themselves to be acting against the very capitalist processes

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<sup>551</sup> Slavoj Zizek, “First as Tragedy, Then as Farce: The Economic Crisis and the End of Global Capitalism, Talk at the RSA.” November 24, 2009. <http://www.thersa.org/events/video/archive/slavoj-zizek-first-as-tragedy,-then-as-farce>. [Accessed June 9, 2012]

<sup>552</sup> Patrick de Pelsmacker, Liesbeth Driesen, and Glenn Rayp, “Do Consumers Care about Ethics? Willingness to Pay for Fair-Trade Coffee,” *The Journal of Consumer Affairs* 39.2 (2005): 363-385. Mary A. Littrell and Marsha A. Dickson. *Social Responsibility in the Global Market. Fair Trade of Cultural Products* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999).

<sup>553</sup> Mies 1986: ix.

that bring the commodities to them.<sup>554</sup>

Alternative trade organizations and other forms of philanthropic consumerism, or marketized philanthropy, do not offer alternatives, but they reinforce and perpetuate capitalist exploitation. Nick and Eikenberry suggest “that marketized philanthropy is an especially insidious case because it creates the appearance of giving back, disguising the fact that it is already based in taking away. Such an appearance creates the false impression that marketized philanthropy leads to systemic change rather than stabilization.”<sup>555</sup> Davis’ guilty expatriate clients in Niamey in the 1990s could not imagine themselves interacting with artisans as anything but consumers. They ameliorated their anxiety about their relative privilege and wealth by claiming patron-client relationships as friendship, but it was actually the producer-consumer relationship in which they were most comfortable. The human affection in such relationships obscured its perpetuation of extractive capitalist systems in which the expatriate consumer is presumed to have exponentially greater access to capital and commodities than the artisanal producer.

### *Mining Artisanry in Niger*

AREVA, the primary French mining company, which is, significantly, majority-owned and –controlled by the French nation-state, and its precedent SOMAIR, also have participated in the representation of Nigerien culture and the training of Nigerien artisans in ways that both reconfirm French authority over the Nigerien nation-state and Niger’s economic raison d’être as a resource for fuel, the

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<sup>554</sup> Pelsmacker et.al. 2005; and Littrell and Dickson 1999.

<sup>555</sup> Nickel and Eikenberry 2009: 975.

prices of which are subsidized by unwaged labor in subsistence agriculture and unwaged domestic and artisanal labor, to develop and maintain industrial consumerism in France, where nuclear power now relies primarily on uranium mined in Niger. At the same time, artisans self-organized and shaped identities as Nigerien artisans, choosing aesthetically-focused manual work, or as it is defined by the Government of Niger, artisanry of art, for many reasons, but often because of a desire to continue an inherited art imbued with cultural significance and equally often as a way to earn capital outside of waged labor. Artisans have consistently aspired to economic autonomy, and have resisted organizational structures they have found exploitative, especially those involving waged labor.

The National Museum invited artisans to work on the grounds in 1963, where they produced work for both the galleries of the museum and the museum shop. Pablo Toucet, the director, worked with artisans to innovate in their designs and he personally strictly oversaw quality control of all objects, and he would destroy anything not up to his standards. Early on, he insisted that artisans take French language and literacy courses. Individual artisans were invited because of their expertise in their media, and while the museum was conceived of as an educational and nation-building institution for a largely illiterate Nigerien population, artisans' education was considered a byproduct of this larger project, and it was their pre-existing knowledge that brought them to the museum as representatives of their ethnicities and media.

The artisans at the museum had focused their sales efforts on expatriate, export, and tourist markets since the 1960s. In 1977, the museum published a

catalogue of works in order to facilitate this. The catalogue attempted to codify types of objects to be purchased. Objects were given coded labels, and individual artisans did not receive attribution. The textile section further reiterated the narrow canon of textiles displayed in the Costume pavilion. The textiles included are the *tcharka*, *kounta*, *mougnouré (munyuure)*, *téra-tera*, and *krou-krou*, along with a tablecloth and placemat. Object TI 6001, a sample band of a *tcharka* features the careful tapestry work to create the *gite ngaari* (bull's eye) motif and interlocking and layered diamonds. (Figure 4.15) Objects TI 6005 and TI 6008 are both *kounta* textiles that use the alternating rectangles of black and white that are now the most popular way of weaving the *kounta* at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. (Figures 4.16 and 4.17) Each type is carefully labeled with an ethnicity, and these are the genres that the Toucet and Ferral believed marketable to an international audience—and those in which weavers at the museum specialized. The *sakala* wall hangings so popular among women throughout Niger at the time were omitted. The increase in tourism, uranium business, and travel opportunities in the late 1970s made up for the huge exodus of French volunteers and government employees immediately after the 1974 coup d'état. Increasing numbers of artisans arrived to work at the museum in the 1970s, but artisans still remember it as a period in which there were many foreign customers. Albert Ferral maintained the museum's system of purchasing all work produced by artisans, but this became untenable as the museum shop was accumulating more stock than it was selling.

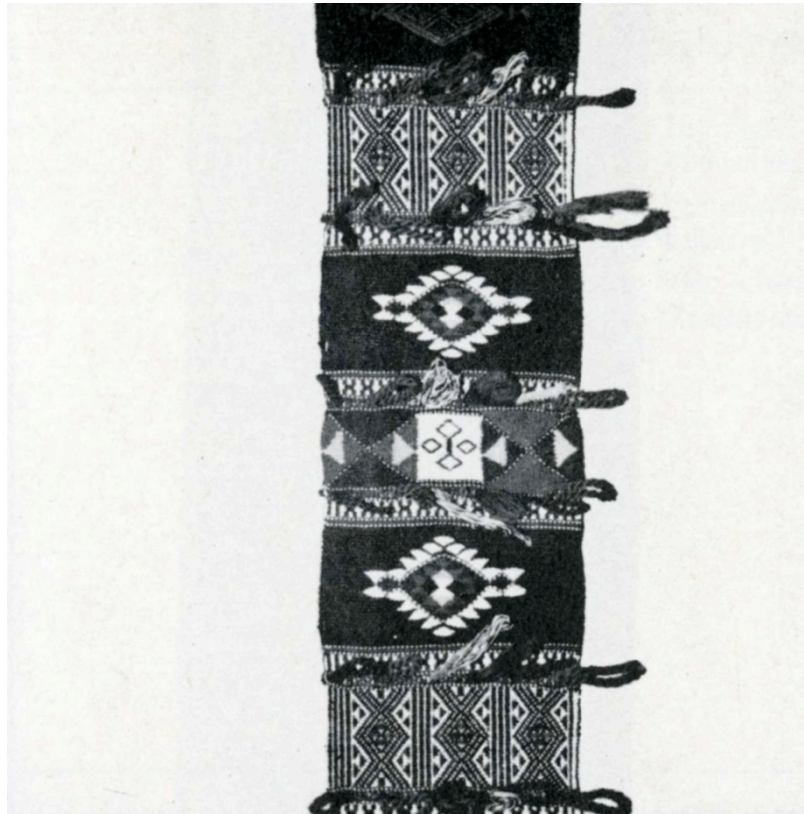


Figure 4.15: *Tcharka*, TI 6001, in Musée National du Niger. *Musée National Du Niger: Catalogue Des Œuvres Artisanales*. Niamey, Niger: Ministère de la jeunesse des sports et de la culture, République du Niger, 1977: 178.



Figure 4.16: *Kounta*, TI 6005, in Musée National du Niger. *Musée National Du Niger: Catalogue Des Œuvres Artisanales*. Niamey, Niger: Ministère de la jeunesse des sports et de la culture, République du Niger, 1977: 181.



Figure 4.17: *Kounta*, TI 6005, in Musée National du Niger. *Musée National Du Niger: Catalogue Des Œuvres Artisanales*. Niamey, Niger : Ministère de la jeunesse des sports et de la culture, République du Niger, 1977: 181.

In 1984, as the Nigerien state grasped for new ways to maintain itself, the World Bank became the first international organization to fund a large artisanal education project in an extractive economic development model in Niger. They allocated funds for the construction for a second museum shop building, and they backed a leather artisanry enterprise that was constructed across the street from the museum. The World Bank turned its attention to African art in the late 1970s and early 1980s as part of its collaborations with UNESCO to take culture into account as it shifted from strict modernization approaches to neoliberal developmentalist ideologies. Following up on Graburn's work and Dean McCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, the World Bank and UNESCO convened economists and other social scientists to discuss tourism, development, and culture in 1979.<sup>556</sup> At

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<sup>556</sup> Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); E. J. De Kadt, ed., *Tourism--Passport to Development?: Perspectives on the Social and Cultural*

that conference, Karl-Ferdinand Schädler echoed the French colonial education administrator Georges Hardy's 1937 *L'Art Negre*, asserting that "that which is art for the European is function for the African and is justified by its use in religious and tribal ceremonies."<sup>557</sup> Schädler encouraged the World Bank to view African art as an irrational manifestation of isolated, primitive cultures. In fact, it was not art at all.

In 1981, the World Bank began buying numerous pieces of African art in "reputable African art galleries in Europe" to decorate the offices of the African Regional Vice Presidency.<sup>558</sup> This collection, and its mode of acquisition, valorized African art through the primitivist French high modernist interpretation of African art, in which African art served as a source of aesthetic inspiration for early twentieth century Western avant-garde artists and collectors disaffected by the dehumanizing capitalist modernity of twentieth century Europe. For the World Bank, arts and culture were seen as humanizing antidotes to formerly purely economic, quantitative approaches. However, the art was in World Bank offices in Washington, D.C., and the World Bank encouraged the export of objects in craft development projects. African art in development did not help the World Bank to treat Africans as fully human, but instead, it was used to humanize the economics and the economists of the World Bank itself.

Masks had heavy representation in the collection, especially those that upheld

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*Effects of Tourism in Developing Countries* (New York: Published for the World Bank and UNESCO by Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>557</sup> Karl-Ferdinand Schädler, "African Arts and Crafts in a World of Changing Values," in E. J. De Kadt, ed., *Tourism--Passport to Development?: Perspectives on the Social and Cultural Effects of Tourism in Developing Countries* (New York: Published for the World Bank and UNESCO by Oxford University Press, 1979): 146; Georges Hardy, *L'Art Nègre: L'Art Animiste Des Noirs D'afrique* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1927): 83.

<sup>558</sup> Alexandre Marc, *African Art: The World Bank Collection* (Washington, D.C: World Bank, 1998): xiv.

Schädler's neocolonial interpretation of African art. For example, Western fascination with Dogon masks such as this Kanaga mask harken back to Marcel Griaule's magico-religious ethnographies of the Dogon, who were elevated to a prototypical status of the African "primitive" in French scholarship. (Figure 4.18) In a World Bank Office, this mask's rabbit ears accentuated primitivist fantasies of linking animality and Africa, and when mounted on a wall, it pulled the gaze upward, vaguely affirming the heavy and sky's significance for imagined "tribal ceremonies." Few textiles had been admitted into the Western art historical canon at the time, but the collection included some examples of Asante *kente* cloth from Ghana and selected Baule weaving implements from Côte d'Ivoire. (Figure 4.19) The elaborate heddle pulleys from Baule looms were considered wooden sculpture, and kente cloth won its privileged status because of Asante cultural association with royal prestige and Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah's promotion of the genre as a Panafricanist and Ghanaian nationalist symbol. This example typifies Kente favored by Western collectors, with the predominance of yellow that evokes the mineral found there that gave the region its colonial name, the Gold Coast.



Figure 4.18: Kanaga Mask, Dogon, Mali, 20<sup>th</sup> Century.  
In the Collection of the World Bank.  
Alexandre Marc, *African Art: The World Bank Collection*.  
Washington, D.C: World Bank, 1998: 26.3.4.

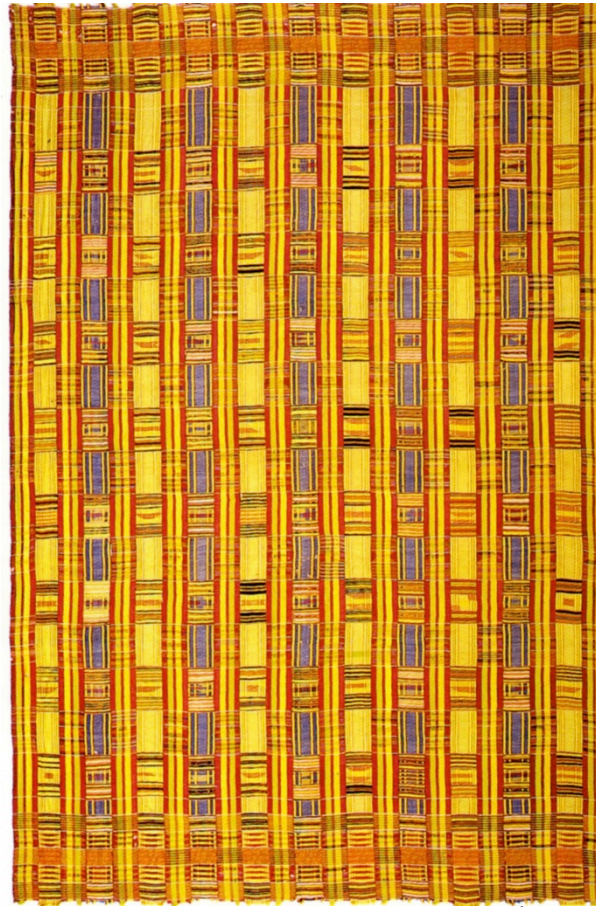


Figure 4.19: Kente Cloth, Asante, Ghana, Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.  
In the Collection of the World Bank.  
Alexandre Marc, *African Art: The World Bank Collection*.  
Washington, D.C: World Bank, 1998: 32.3.14.

The number of artisans at the Musée National du Niger grew quickly in the mid-1970s, reflecting the growth in Niamey's population. The second director, Albert Ferral, had worked with the artisans to transfer the administration of their work and sales to a cooperative form, and he now sought to expand the space and resources available to them. He presciently envisioned a network of artisanal centers in Niger's urban centers: Niamey, Maradi, Zinder, and Agadez. The Museum solicited land from the Candian Embassy (which, notably, had formerly been the site of a ceramics center), and under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, received a World Bank loan of 760,000 dollars for a "Modern Center of Artisanry."

Foreshadowing the shifting of arts and artisanry from ministry to ministry over the next few decades, the construction of the project was put under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Commerce, and Industry. Ferral expected the Center to remain affiliated with the museum, and some leather artisans began working at the site as early as 1978.

Opened in February 1980, the Centre des Métiers d'Arts du Niger was envisioned as an enterprise where artisans would be trained in "modern" leatherwork, so that they could produce work for an export market. Italian and French leather artisans were brought in to train the Nigerien ones in both unfamiliar hand techniques and the new machinery. The managers of the project sought to pay the artisans wages for their work. Most of the artisans refused this arrangement, and the most expert ones returned to the museum, where they resumed working on their own account. The center would later completely abandon the waged labor system and organized attempts to export, and its formal relationship with the World Bank ended. Ferral had hoped that the Center would be an educational institution, but the form that the center first took, in which artisans were paid monthly wages totaling less than their usual income, and in which Nigeriens were expected to volunteer their knowledge while Italian consultants were paid, focused not on education, but on the exchange of Nigerien-made commodities for foreign capital. The educational aspects of the project were only considered valuable to World Bank-funded consultants and managers insofar as they contributed to capital generation.

In 1985, Nigerien and French mining agencies funded the construction of a new pavilion at the national museum while Nigeriens were reeling from the droughts,

famines, and uranium price drops that had rocked the nation since 1983.<sup>559</sup> The Uranium Pavilion was a small gallery that advertised the uranium industry through displays on the mining town Arlit's industrial modernity and scientific explanations of uranium's use as an energy source. The mining agencies hoped that the gallery would convince museum visitors of the ongoing promise of uranium mining for Nigerien citizens, despite two years' of evidence to the contrary. The profile of Arlit conveyed the French fantasy of conquering nature to create an industrialist enclave in a remote desert location of a nation-state in which most people did not have regular access to electricity.<sup>560</sup> Didactic materials lingered over mechanical details of mining and processing uranium. These kinds of scientific educational materials emphasized the complexities in order to evoke an industrial sublime while simultaneously undermining it to assure viewers that the technology is ultimately controllable. The museum, COMINAK, and COGEMA also published a small pamphlet advertising uranium.

In the pamphlet, only Africans are portrayed, belying the predominance of French citizens in positions of power in the mining industry in Niger. On the cover, an image of the new gallery was imposed on a photograph of a vast mine, communicating a new way of compressing Niger into a safe, consumable exhibit. (Figure 4.20) In one photograph, three technicians stand before complex machinery, reading from screens,

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<sup>559</sup> The agencies were the precedents to AREVA: COMINAK (Compagnie Minière d'Akouta) and COGEMA (Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires).

<sup>560</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, Nigeriens and French expatriates alike spoke of Arlit as the "Deuxième Paris," because of the consumer luxuries and high standard of living available to French and elite African employees there. Many miners and residents recognized the dangers to their health, and the decimation of Niger's uranium-based economy in the early 1980s revealed Arlit's status as a "Second Paris" to be a mirage. See Idrissou Mora Kpäï's documentary film on Arlit: *California Newsreel (Firm) and Idrissou Mora Kpäï. Arlit, Deuxième Paris California Newsreel Presents* (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 2005).

and two men in hard hats use an instrument to measure air quality in another. (Figures 4.21 and 4.22) These were new images of Nigeriens working, but at the museum, they inevitably contrasted with those working on display there. This was modern work, in contrast to the traditional artisary—this was Niger’s great contribution to the modern global economy. However, not all of the artisans and mine workers were different people. Many Tuaregs of all classes worked dangerous and/or menial jobs in and near the mines, and many other Nigeriens sought employment there, too. Zinder native and Hausa leather artisan Sahuwa Nana described his tenure at Arlit:

I worked at Arlit, in the mines of COMINAK, for nine months. Ooooh, it was difficult. I was looking for money. I went there in 1978. I had come to the museum to work in 1974, and then I left—before I returned again. In Arlit, I worked in the mines. There were machines to find uranium. There was road underneath the ground, and it took us far beneath the earth. Oooh! It was very, very dangerous! It was more than dangerous! It is death there. Uranium is very dangerous. People had many different illnesses. Every three months, you went and had a medical exam. Oh, it was dangerous. There were hard hats.<sup>561</sup>

Artisanry and mining were commensurable career options for many Nigerien men who were “looking for money.” However, despite the Nigerien state and AREVA’s suppression of information about uranium and their half-hearted and late marketing efforts, many workers recognized the dangers of the mines—just as many Tuaregs who lived in the region recognized the environmental hazards of the mines to their homes.

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<sup>561</sup> Sahuwa Nana, Interview, January 8, 2010.

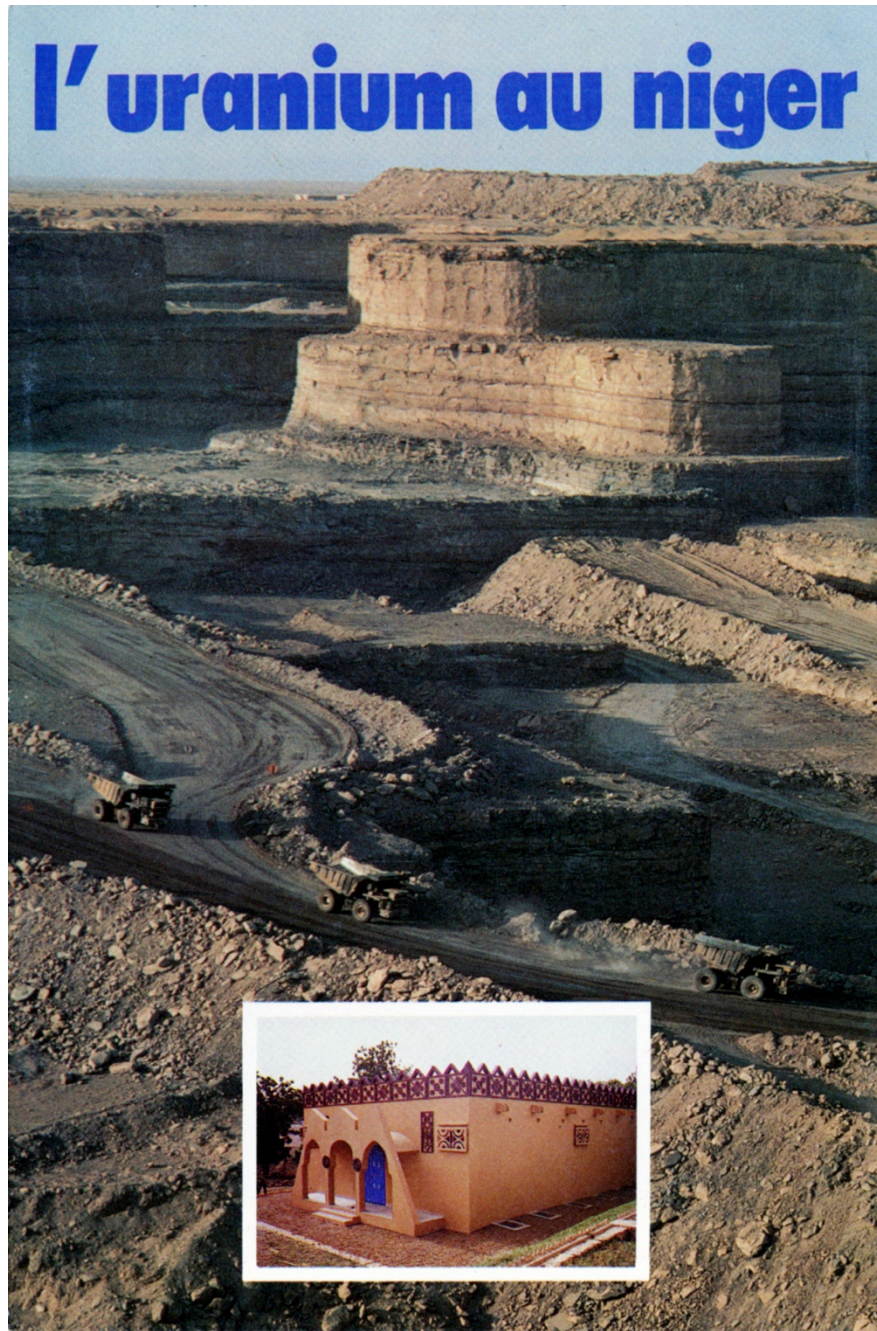


Figure 4.20: Cover of pamphlet, *L'Uranium au Niger*, published in conjunction with the inauguration of the Uranium Pavilion, funded by AREVA, at the Musée National du Niger in 1984. Musée National du Niger, *L'Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).



Figure 4.21: "COMINAK Command Room," Musée National du Niger, *L'Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).

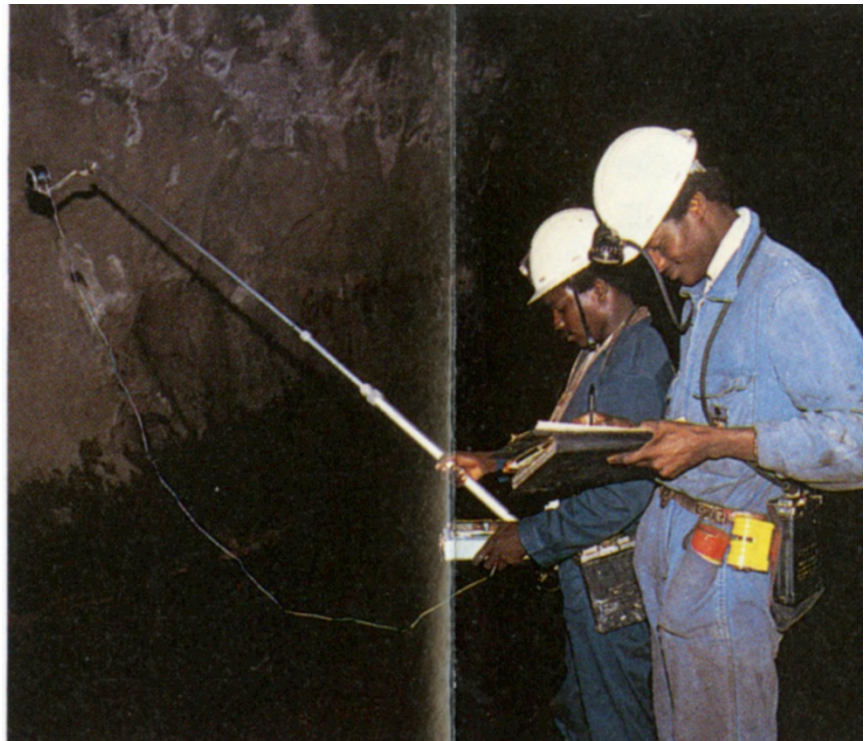


Figure 4.22: "Measuring Air Quality in a Mine," Musée National du Niger, *L'Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).

The new gallery at the museum showed the neatly planned streets in Arlit, which was in many ways an enclave, with French managers and workers flying most products they used into small airport there. The pamphlet also touched on life outside of work, nodding to the Tuareg population by showing a mother and father tending to their baby. (Figure 4.23) In another, it is a wallhanging that indicates the cosmopolitanism of Arlit, betraying the fact that, as had been the case in the colonial bureaucracy of a few decades before, many higher status jobs in Niger went to Africans not from Niger. (Figure 4.24) The *sakala ye-ye* depicts the flag of Burkina Faso in a scene of contented domesticity with all of the trappings of twentieth century bourgeois consumerism in Niger: sofas, a coffee table, a lamp, a cabinet full of imported dishes, and a handwoven wall hanging.



Figure 4.23: “Life in the Mining Cities,” Musée National du Niger, *L’Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).

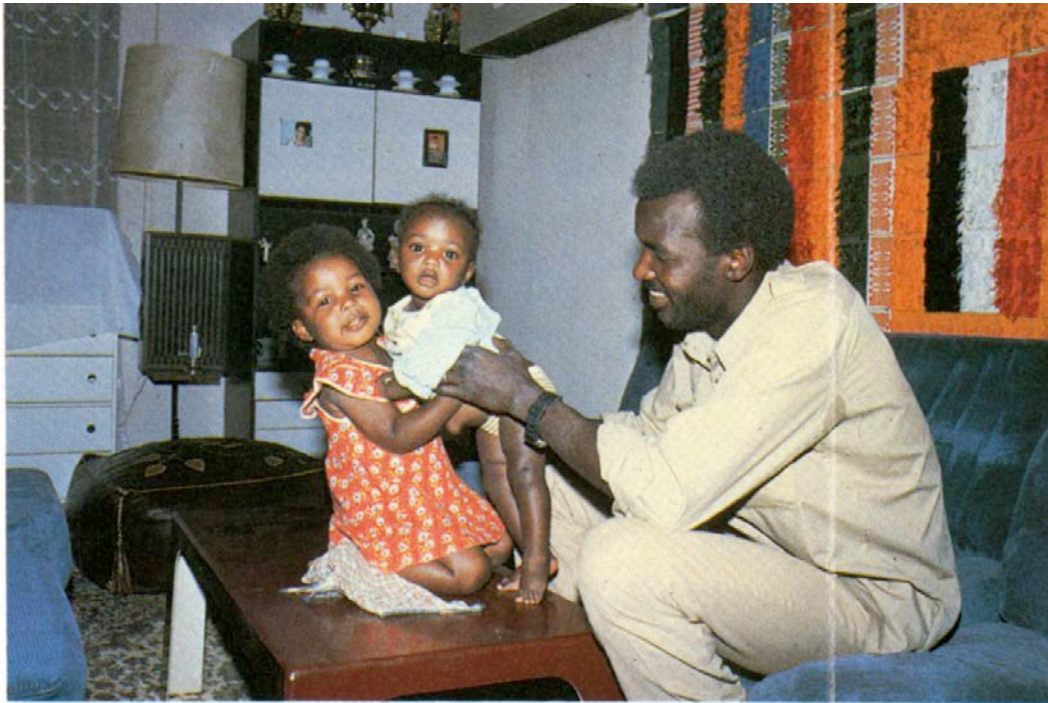


Figure 4.24: “Life in the Mining Cities,” Musée National du Niger, *L’Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).

The pamphlet and the exhibit did not shy away from the industrial sublime, and various kinds machinery are represented to show exactly how extraction took place. In Figure 4.25, large trucks cart rocks up a hill, the perspective cropped to decontextualize this hill, and by extension Arlit, from Niger and from the world. Arlit was distant, and its removal from the daily lives of most Nigeriens—and the French beneficiaries of the uranium—enabled their complicity in the extraction and its dangers to the mines’ neighbors and the workers. In Figure 4.26, a pipeline leads the eye to a large industrial facility in the middle of the desert, which in 1984, could no longer promise that the industrial sublime would sustain and grow life in Niger through the creation of capital. As the “conjoncture économique” continued, the industrial sublime of the Nigerien state was revealed as similarly extractive as that of the colonial state.



Figure 4.25: “Open Air Mine, SOMAÏR,” Musée National du Niger, *L’Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).

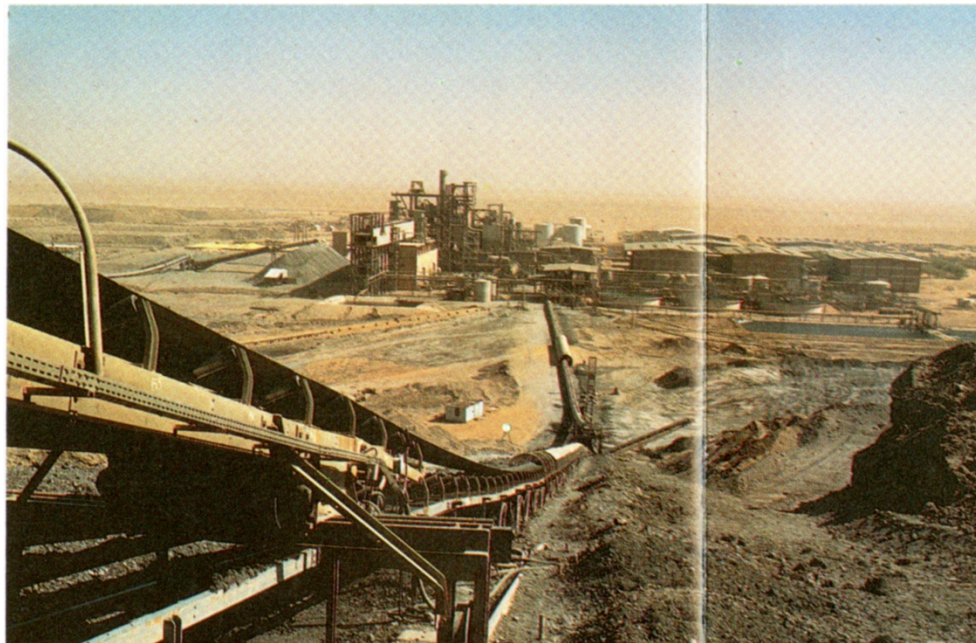


Figure 4.26: “General View of the Factory for Treating Minerals, SOMAÏR,” Musée National du Niger, *L’Uranium au Niger* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1984).

In 1987, key government actors, including Albert Ferral, gathered for two related events. The first was a workshop for bureaucrats and businesspeople, Days of Reflection on Nigerien Artisanry, and the second was a large public celebration, the

First National Week of Artisanry.<sup>562</sup> Notably, the realm of artisanry was a way that a few women who had gained prominence in Nigerien bureaucracy in the 1970s could successfully navigate the challenges of the 1980s “constriction of work.” Such women used international regimes of housewifization to bolster their professional goals by bringing a presumed natural connection between women, beauty, the body, and the home to political and commercial spheres. One of the most influential advocates to emerge from this period is Aïchatou Boulama Kané, who gained increasing authority in developmentalist artisanal projects in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>563</sup> Kané began her career as a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Mines, Energy, Industry in 1982, when she was assigned to the Direction of Industry and Artisanry. She noted that she developed her passion for artisanry after first having been assigned to it, but it being considered appropriate work for women opened up avenues for her to prove her talents in the patriarchal environment of Nigerien government. Hadjiya Fadimata Marcel left her government position to start a business in buying and selling artisanal work. Marcel has been very active in export-oriented artisanry development projects, and has been one of the few actors to promote Nigerien hand weaving in them.

Artisans and women bureaucrats recognized the gender and class discrimination against them in the increasingly neoliberal capitalist economy in Niger in the 1980s. Developmentalist discourses around artisanry offered novel opportunities for both groups to access the cash that was more and more necessary, as the prices of food and other goods rose due to Structural Adjustment Programs. Yet, this extractive

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<sup>562</sup> In this, Niger was ahead of a curve that the United States would join in 1993, when President George H.W. Bush would proclaim that year the Year of American Craft: A Celebration of the Creative Work of the Hand. United States Proclamation 6517, December 23, 1992.

<sup>563</sup> Kané left SAFEM when she was elected the Governor of the Region of Niamey in 2011.

approach came with great costs to most members of both groups. By consigning their work to artisanry, the Nigerien government strictly upheld taxonomies of art and craft, in which the World Bank paid top dollar to French galleries for African art, but funded projects in Niger to train artisans to make craft that would not be too expensive in the European market. Likewise, women confirmed the housewifization process by legitimizing their political and commercial work through its association with their domestic responsibilities, as defined by gendered assumption of Nigerien cultures, the Nigerien state, and international lending institutions.

The results of a contest held for artisans as part of the 1987 National Week of Artisanry reflected the fluid categories of economic and aesthetic work Nigeriens were negotiating nationally as part of a regional and international context of animated conversation on craft and artisanry. The jury also judged objects in the category of utilitarian artisanry, which included food items. They gave the following criteria for their decisions: Finishing, aesthetics, originality, creativity, and legibility. Nine of the thirty-two artisans were identified with the National Museum of Niger or other formal working groups. The selected objects include those intended for Nigerien markets and those for expatriate and export markets. The contest was in the tradition of expositions and fairs in which African artisans had been participating for decades. The better-known international expositions of the early twentieth century were only a part of a culture in Europe that included smaller regional fairs, which was adopted in West Africa beginning with the Foire de Dakar in 1951. Contests were important aspects of these events, and when the important regional artisanry fair Salon International de l'Artisanat de Ouagadougou (SIAO) was founded in Burkina Faso in 1984 as part of

related developmentalist approaches to artisanry in the region, it put further accent on the significance of the contest as a form of recognition and exhibition.

The division of categories in the Nigerien contest revealed the difficulties of maintaining boundaries of aesthetics, media, use, and artisanal identity. As a category of objects coveted by elite Nigeriens and represented by numerous Tuareg *inadan*, jewelry had its own section, although it used some of the same techniques and materials as the works in metalsmithing. Despite a shared use, Ide Oumarou's necklace and bracelet landed in sculpture because they were wooden or ivory. Fashion designer Alphadi's participation is notable as he experimented with the Nigerien categorization of his work as artisanry before training in Paris and identifying his work as fashion and design on the world stage.<sup>564</sup>

The categories were loosely, although not strictly, divided according to gender. No Tuareg women leather workers won a prize, reflecting that leather artisanal commercialization projects at the museum and the Centre de Métiers had drawn from Hausa leatherwork practices, historically an exclusively male vocation. Women won prizes in basketry, pottery, weaving, and clothing: the media considered feminine work in both Western and Nigerien divisions of labor. Significantly, women who had commissioned weavings from male weavers won all three weaving prizes. As discussed at length in Chapter Two, the conventional weaving production system in the region required women to procure the yarn for a textile, and to feed and house a weaver for the duration of the work on the textile. Women often collaborated with

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<sup>564</sup> For more on Alphadi, see Introduction and Chapter Five, in addition to Kristyne Loughran, "The Idea of Africa in European High Fashion: Global Dialogues," *Fashion Theory: Journal of Dress Body and Culture* 13.2 (2009): 243–272.

weavers on the design. Some urban women in the twentieth century conducted successful businesses by hiring multiple weavers and selling the resulting blankets.

One businesswoman explained in 2010 that hiring weavers and selling the resulting textiles was a good business for women, because it required so little labor on their part.<sup>565</sup> Women with the capital to buy thread and maintain at least one weaver were able to multiply their own capital because weavers' labor was not waged and weavers, most of whom were also subsistence farmers, operated largely outside of the cash economy. It was in the 1980s that weavers, along with most other Nigeriens, began needing increasing amounts of cash and attempting to negotiate for higher compensation for their work. In Western gendered assignments of media, weaving is feminine work. Thus, both Nigerien class-based patronage systems and Western assumptions about gendered work colluded to make weavers' labor invisible to developmentalist artisanal promotion. Although official understandings of artisanry relied on manual labor, women's purchase of the material and their presumed design invention took precedence in the attribution of merit in weaving. The weavers themselves were invisible.

The winning works also indicated the tension between the fundamental character of artisanry and craft objects as functional, and the attempts to keep the "artisanry of art" a viable category separate from both utilitarian artisanry and fine art. Most objects are suitable for use in Nigerien dress or home decoration. In addition to the hand woven textiles, which would have been used as wall-hangings, prize winning objects included woven reed floor mats, ceramic vessels, a horse harness, gowns,

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<sup>565</sup> Hadjiya Fati Souri, Interview, January 20, 2010.

shoes, and a bed. The objects not expressly utilitarian were those intended for export or expatriate customers, and each of them were figural representations that drew from and fed into primitivist stereotypes of Africa. This is especially notable because by the 1980s, sculptors at the museum disagreed on whether or not figural representation was permitted within Islam. The First Place Ceramics Prize went to miniature huts by Ide Ibrahim. The artist Rissa Ixa, better known for his romantic painted depictions of nomadic life discussed earlier, entered a miniature Tuareg tent. He won first place in Decoration, which was the same category in which his painting would have been judged. Oumarou Boureima's giraffe sculpture in bronze represented a steady production of sculptures of animals produced in metal and wood at the Musée National du Niger, where artisans capitalized on the many zoo animals to authenticate their sculpture as Nigerien for the foreign expatriates and tourists who constituted their market. Finally, although not their motifs are not specified in the records of the event, most batik wall hangings produced at the Musée National du Niger depicted imagined scenes of rural African life for a foreign market. An invented tradition introduced by American Peace Corps volunteers, Nigerien batik was interchangeable with much other batik in West Africa. The standard perception of batik as unique from traditional Nigerien artisanry was born out in its category separate from both clothing and weaving—rather than including all three in a textile category. Proving their difference, batik artisans trained at the Education Center founded their own cooperative at the museum, instead of joining the one already there.

By the late 1970s, the Kountché administration acknowledged artisanry as an important economic sector, but as pointed out by Emmanuelle Braun, these initial

moves were solely bureaucratic and vaguely sketched, as when the five-year national plan for development, begun in 1979, included a chapter on “Industry and Artisanry” but offered no concrete strategies nor allocated any funding.<sup>566</sup> As the Centre de Metiers et d’Arts Modern reorganized itself after the departure of the World Bank, artisans at the national Museum chose to form a self-governing cooperative in 1984. Inspired by the agricultural cooperatives Kountché had been touting for most of a decade, they sought greater control over the sales of their work. As state support and foreign museum visitor numbers both dwindled, the numbers of artisans had grown. Directing a far more complex institution than his predecessor had, Ferral did not enforce Toucet’s strict quality control. Especially after the economic downturn of the early 1980s, the museum gift store no longer paid artisans quickly for their work. Whereas at one time, they could be assured of payment within a month, their products now lingered on the shelves, and the store lacked sufficient capital to give advances. A theft of objects at the store in 1982, for which artisans took a loss, was the last straw.

Artisans at the museum navigated the bureaucratic requirements, and with the support of Ferral, they began forming themselves as a cooperative in 1984. In 1993, they filed their extensive bylaws and officially named themselves the Cooperative d’Approvisionnement, de Production et de Commercialisation des Produits Artisanux du Musée National (CAPCPA), although members and others generally referred to the cooperative of the National Museum. In 1985, the Bureau International du Travail launched a project jointly with the Office de Promotion de l’Entreprise Nigérienne, which was funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

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<sup>566</sup> Emmanuel Braun, “Rapport de Pre-Formulation.” *Projet DANI NIG/914*. (January 9, 2003): 2.

NER/88/OIA, “Formation et appui aux entreprise artisanales du Niger,” conducted trainings and purchased materials for artisans in Dosso, Tillabéry, and Tahoua.

In 1987, Kountché died in office, and he was replaced by a close lieutenant, Ali Saibou, who spent only four days as the Interim President of the Supreme Military Council that Kountché had established before assuming the title of President, which he held for about two years. He attempted to ratchet up Kountché’s repressive social policies, but the developmentalist fantasies of the 1970s had been tied to Kountché’s ascetic and strict military image, and many Nigeriens began to protest Saibou’s apparent intention to extend military rule indefinitely. International lenders, the United Nations, and other international bodies also began to pressure Saibou to conduct a transition to a democratic government. In May 1989, he headed the Supreme Council of National Orientation before being elected in rigged elections to become president of the new Second Republic of Niger in December 1989. It was an unsteady political and economic moment in Niger, as Saibou sought to hold onto power, and individuals’ and the nation’s economic opportunities continued to dwindle.

In 1988, following up on the previous year’s events and supported by the deceased Kountché’s call for governmental organization and “encouragement” of artisanry, a Day of Reflection was organized by Ferral, Kané, and other government employees who saw how the economic strains were hitting artisans especially hard. There, curators, businesspeople, and bureaucrats sought to define what they meant by artisanry and to propose new governmental initiatives. In his comments, Albert Ferral analyzed the global dynamics that created the growing economic approach to artisanry. All too aware of the ways that artisanry and artisans were being regarded as

resources for the maintenance of the Nigerien military state and the capital accumulation of others, Ferral called for a critical approach that prioritized artisans' lives and how their work could serve a Nigerien market:

Artisanry is having its moment—it is the most fashionable sector in less advanced countries.

The world economic crisis, the failure of a too rapid industrialization, the complete ignorance of the real socio-political situation in Africa has contributed to this shift, at least an awareness of this sector...

Our politicians who had bet on industry, have thus judged necessary this return to artisanry, which is the most flexible, the least onerous, and the most recommended internal development of our populations. Artisanry plays the role of an economic stabilizer, and slows down the rural exodus. It also reduces unemployment.

Unfortunately, this sector has a complex, multifaceted reality. It is difficult to define it, and to discern all of the problems that impede its development...

In sum, in all of the countries of the third world, the need to develop artisanry is urgent, but no governmental policy has been issued.

Industrialized countries are interested more for reasons of increasing revenues and jobs, stimulating purchasing power than for touristic or commercial reasons.

The problems in all of our countries come down to these five points:

1. Organization, structure, and supervision
2. The financing of artisanry
3. Training of artisans
4. The flow of production
5. The definition of a true policy on artisanry by a legal institution.

...

This leads me to four reflections:

1. What role does or could artisanry play in our development ?
2. What place have we reserved for it in the plans of action and the strategies of government?
3. What are the domains within the promotion of artisanry?
  - Is one the satisfaction of the essential needs of the population?
  - Is one the trend toward technological independence?
  - Is one the support of a realignment of our economy?
  - Is one a choice for more appropriate technology and its

- diffusion?  
--Is one a decentralization of economic activities toward an informal training?  
--Is it a choice of a less extroverted development?  
4. What can the public powers do for artisans?<sup>567</sup>

Necessarily working within a developmentalist paradigm, Ferral all the same obliquely challenged the exploitative instrumentalization of artisanry then being portrayed as aid, charity, and philanthropy.

Ferral insisted that the Nigerien government establish a policy on artisanry, in order to make the cultural and economic systems more coherent for artisans. His observation that industrialized countries were less interested in the “touristic and commercial” aspects served as a caution to those who envisioned a Nigerien artisanry with an exclusively foreign market. He emphasized training, portraying artisanry as a profession resulting from education—rather than an alternative to education. Finally, he asked his audience to imagine an alternative economic system for artisanry, one not based on extractive mining, but one that prioritized Nigerien perspectives and needs instead of the mercurial consumer desires of a globalized market. Meeting the essential needs and creating technological independence of those living in Niger were not necessarily compatible with increasing Niger’s GDP and enabling it to pay interest on its debt, but artisanry could be promoted to achieve any of those at times contradictory ends. His pointed question about a “less extroverted development” suggested the dangers of relying on distant, uncontrollable markets. The crash of uranium prices had demonstrated all too clearly such dangers, and Ferral encouraged

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<sup>567</sup> Albert Ferral, “Réflexion sur l’Artisanat au Niger,” Journées du Réflexion sur l’Artisanat. May 1988. Archives of the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry, République du Niger.

his audience to imagine Nigeriens meeting Nigerien needs.

That year, in 1988, a governmental office for the Promotion of Artisanry (separating it from Industry) was created, and while Ferral retired from his position at the museum in 1989, bureaucrats and policy makers attempted to heed some of his most significant proposals. In his 1997 master's thesis in public administration, Souna Adamou Dabal identifies the years between 1988 and 1991 as the "period of the rise in power of Artisanry. It also coincides with the decline of modern activities and the revival of interest in the informal sector, which includes artisanry."<sup>568</sup> Even as he constructs an optimistic teleology for the development of artisanry, Dabal here reveals that overall development was not unidirectional at all, and in those forms of labor considered "modern," Niger was perceived to be regressing.

The Nigerien government approached the state international aid organization of Luxembourg, Lux-Développement, which already had nutrition-focused development projects in Niger. In 1991, Lux-Développement began the first stage of the project Development of Artisanry in Niger, or DANI, and constructed the Artisanal Village of Wadata, which had small ateliers available for rent to artisans. Many artisans at the museum again moved to the new site, and the organization recruited other artisans as well. Lux-Développement invited the cooperative at the Musée National du Niger to participate, but members, remembering their poor experience with the World Bank, voted against it. Some moved back because they had fewer customers at Wadata, but others were able to take advantage of the small market

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<sup>568</sup> Souna Adamou Dabal, "Contribution de l'Artisanat Utilitaire dans l'Amélioration des Conditions de Vie des Populations Nigériennes," Unpublished master's thesis. *Memoire, Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Etablissement Public à Caractère Administratif*, 1997: 2.

that DANI created for itself in the form of the European development and design consultants working for DANI. DANI also funded participation in trade shows.

In 1992, the Prime Minister signed the new National Policy on the Development of Artisanry. Nigerien bureaucrats had worked with consultants from Bureau Internationale du Travail and the United Nations Development Programme to write the policy over four years.<sup>569</sup> On March 24 and 25, 1992, the policy was initiated at a meeting that included other international organizations: the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the European Development Fund, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), Lux-Développement, the World Bank, USAID, Coopération Française, and Caisse Française de Développement. This was a national policy crafted in distinctly international circumstances, demonstrating that Niger's negotiations to realize national sovereignty were still ongoing. Kountché may have dismissed Diori's French "technical assistants," but he had obeyed the commands of international capital, and he had wholeheartedly adopted a teleological developmentalist paradigm in which Niger could advance by exchanging its resources, primarily uranium, but also meat, leather, peanuts, and less successfully, cotton, for cash. Kountché and Saibou also eagerly accepted loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to achieve this ever-distancing goal of development.

The National Policy on the Development of Artisanry (PNDA: The Politique Nationale de Développement de l'Artisanat) defined artisanry as a form of labor that should be cultivated to expand the cash economy in Niger. It opened with a reference

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<sup>569</sup> Project PNUD/BIT NER/ 87/ 010, "Elaboration d'une Politique de l'Artisanat," Archives of the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry, République du Niger.

to social discrimination against artisans, which cast pre-capitalist exploitative labor as a non-modern foil to the developmentalist understanding of third world artisanry as a natural resource for global capital:

Artisanry, formerly penalized by social and cultural prejudices, today constitutes one of the major elements of socio-economic development. By the diversity of its activities, its important contribution to the creation of national wealth, its capacity to generate jobs in all economic milieus with a minimum of capital, by its dynamism and flexibility that permit it to resist and adapt to economic shocks, by the creative genius of its members, artisanry appears as an indispensable and incontrovertible sector in the implementation of a hardy policy of development.<sup>570</sup>

The laborers and artists defined as artisans were flexible because they were inventive in their production, because they generally balanced several kinds of work to meet their needs, and because their work was not highly valued in cash. Additionally, since many were also subsistence farmers, and they met life needs with little or no cash in other ways, they were effectively subsidizing the prices of their goods with their labor in other fields. Women's agricultural and domestic work was especially crucial, as they were often responsible for the crops to feed their family, in addition to procuring water. The PNDA saw artisans' labor as a natural resource of the nation, and further incorporation of their labor into a cash economy and their products into global commodification as a sign of development. Despite its reliance on international organizations' funding and constant consultation, which would continue in the years after its implementation, the PNDA made national claims on artisans.

The "Development of Artisans" mirrored the development of the nation, which presupposed the need to cultivate a supposedly naturally defined group of people into

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<sup>570</sup> République du Niger Ordonnance N°92-026, "Politique Nationale de Développement de l'Artisanat," July 1992: 1. Archives of the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry, République du Niger.

a state: “The National Policy on the Development of Artisanry emphasizes the capacity to generate an endogenous development based on the natural resources, material and human, and the activities having an effect on the balance of trade.”<sup>571</sup>

The language of the policy echoes that of French colonial policies and other colonial writings on development in Africa. In particular, the goal to “mettre en valeur” one resource or another was a frequent refrain for Henri Lyautey, Jules Brevié, and many others before and after them.<sup>572</sup> In English, it is translated as “to develop,” “to exploit,” or “to enhance value.” Notably, Marcel Griaule had criticized this language as hollow in his introduction to Gallois’s drawings in 1946.<sup>573</sup> For French colonial policy, any production in their colonies that did not contribute to capital accumulation for private French companies and the French state was not adequately enhanced in value. Production for life and living was not adequate and the PNDA demonstrates this heritage:

The public powers will be sure to enhance the value [*mettre en valeur*] of human resources. The enhancement of the value [*mise en valeur*] of human resources being a factor that contributes to the emergence of high performing and competitive enterprises, it is consequently necessary that the public powers take measures to develop and facilitate the training of trainers in the direction of flexibility, and of the rehabilitation of manual labor.<sup>574</sup>

Again echoing the colonial policy writers discussed in Chapter Three, the PNDA vague goal of the “rehabilitation of manual labor” obscured the great amount of manual labor performed in Niger. It actually reinforced the caste and class divisions it claimed to challenge. Bureaucrats and foreign consultants did not perform manual

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<sup>571</sup> République du Niger Ordonnance N°92-026: 2.

<sup>572</sup> See also Chapter Three.

<sup>573</sup> Gallois and Griaule 1946: 8.

<sup>574</sup> République du Niger Ordonnance N°92-026: 6.

labor, but called for all of those without capital to be willing to do so.

The meeting established a national network of artisans, which was organized along the patterns of national and regional governmental bureaucracy. Under the National Federation of Nigerien Artisans (FNAN: Fédération National des Artisans Nigeriens), there were regional federations, and then further organizational divisions among cities, city neighborhoods, villages, and towns. It also established an annual Fête de l'Artisanat, to be celebrated by each regional federation, as a way to promote artisanry as a respectable form of labor, to advertise members' products and services, and to provide additional sales opportunities. This network laid the groundwork for the Luxembourgish project DANI's quick growth, and for the later work of GIE-DANI, SAFEM, and FNAN after DANI's end. This period of the "rise of the power of artisanry" was actually the beginning of a period of intensive bureaucraticization and self-organization of artisans. Some artisans, most of whom had acquired a middle school education, were able to gain new leadership positions and access governmentally-mediated resources more directly than others. Artisans already part of the cooperative at the Musée National du Niger, the Centre des Metiers et des Arts Modernes, and other groups were among the first to be recruited for the new federations. The artisans at the museum were proud of their self-organization, and artisans elected governing councils of the regional and national federations. Yet, they also heeded the authority of a quickly forming cadre of bureaucrats who were cultivating an expertise in the organization and promotion of artisanry. The bureaucrats selected the artisans to participate in fairs abroad, and increasingly, in projects with international organizations in Niger.

Following the 1991 construction of the first studios at Wadata, DANI recommenced construction there in 1993. The complex included studios for artisans to work and a central building that had office space and a store. Led by consultants selected and paid by Lux-Développement, the projects also supplied machines, other tools, and technical training. Nigerien bureaucrats were also extremely involved. Aichatou Boulama Kané played a prominent leadership role in DANI, from organizational work to selecting specific artisans. Fadimata Marcel left her government position in 1990, and she moved her import-export business to one of the studios in Wadata.<sup>575</sup> She worked with DANI and other governmental organizations and projects to train men and women in various textile techniques, including weaving, dying, and handsewing. She developed products intended for an export and tourist market, such as yardage for upholstery and stuffed animals from bogolanfini. She took regular sales trips to Europe and the United States, and in addition to selling the products made in her workshop, she sold wooden sculptures from Ghana, beads sourced from across Africa, brass objects from Burkina Faso, and a variety of other works produced for the West African export and tourist art and craft market.

On the suggestion of an American undergraduate student from Boston University, Illiassou Addoh and other Hausa leather workers at the Musée National du Niger began incorporating handwoven textiles into their works around this time, which would prove to be a boon to many weavers, whose markets among Nigerien women were fast shrinking. Several models were created, but the most common was, and remains, a briefcase with a handwoven insert (See Figures 4.27 and 4.28). In

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<sup>575</sup> Fatimata Marcel, Interview, January 14, 2010.

developing this innovation at the museum's cooperative, the artisans generally used a textile also associated with the Musée National du Niger, the *kounta*. These examples commissioned in 2009 for participants in a Roundtable on the National Program of Agricultural Investment include *kounta* sections woven in cotton and acrylic by weavers at the museum specifically for this commission. These briefcases further attest to the national government's longstanding, if at times sporadic, policies of patronizing Nigerien artisans—which has continued across every regime, to some degree. This style of briefcase was first developed for a tourist market, but it was an item that became popular among government officials and other office workers. A briefcase indicated an office job, and many men sought to assert their nationalist and traditionalist sentiments through the conspicuous, but selective consumption of Nigerien artisanal goods. The textile insert added a distinctive familiar symbol of Nigerien cultural heritage to an otherwise nondescript briefcase. Many Nigeriens recognize the motifs as historically Songhay, but the maroon and gray color scheme defines the weaving as modern—appropriate for the modern Nigerien office worker and policy maker.



Figure 4.27: Leather briefcases for sale at the Cooperative of Leather Artisans in Zinder, Niger. March 2010.



Figure 4.28: Cooperative of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, Leather briefcases with handwoven textile inserts, 2009. These were produced for a commission by the Niger Interministerial Committee of Strategy Planning for Rural Development, or the Comité Interministériel de Pilotage/Stratégie du Développement Rural (CIP/SDR).

In 1995, DANI introduced its most ambitious stage. It formalized the cooperative at Wadata, and it determined to create a network of cooperatives across the nation. It was at this time that project leaders approached the Musée National du Niger cooperative and the Centre des Métiers et des Arts Modernes to invite their participation and the groups, both suspicious after the World Bank project of fifteen years earlier, declined. In 1995, in addition to continued work at Wadata, DANI constructed centers at Dakoro, Maradi, Zinder, Tamaske, Tahoua, and Dosso. It also built new buildings and facilities for the Gamkallé tannery in Niamey. The focus was on developing products for an export market, and DANI conducted trainings for artisans in business skills. It groomed a circle of artisans, primarily men, as leaders, and it gave them additional training meant to better prepare them for trade fairs, participation in which DANI was also funding. DANI's cooperatives formed a parallel, but intersecting network to the federation system initiated by the PNDA. Most of the participating artisans were men, as they were better positioned to work at studios, while few married women between twenty and fifty could afford to leave their domestic responsibilities to do their artisanal work at a studio outside the home. The media represented depended on the location, with Wadata being the most diverse in its composition. Although it emphasized the aesthetic and the traditional, Wadata included artisanry from the entire spectrum, and in the auto mechanic studio, there is a well-known woman mechanic practicing this work usually done by men.

Marcel's textile studio emphasized weaving, but none of DANI's new centers otherwise directly recruited weavers. At Wadata, they were essentially represented by Marcel, and at the other new centers, other members may have purchased their work

to modify or sell, but they did not rent studio space. Although their market was waning, weavers maintained a steady local market in the 1990s, and as most were also subsistence farmers accustomed to periods of itinerancy in Niger, and many were attuned to the possibilities of migrating permanently or seasonally to Ghana and other coastal nations, weavers did not see advantages to paying even a nominal fee for space to work. The patronage system for weavers was also much more deeply entrenched than some other artisanal commodity exchange patterns in the 1990s, and it operated further outside of the cash economy longer. Most weavers relied on their patrons to supply thread, workspace, and their food when working, and thus they needed no cash to begin working. This system also gave weavers little money for their work, which most subsidized through subsistence agriculture.

Some *Inadan* and *Tinadan*, or Tuareg artisans, on the other hand, quickly capitalized on romantic stereotypes of the Tuareg ethnicity to appeal to an international market for their jewelry while many of their traditional patrons, Tuaregs of the upper “noble” caste, became displaced, impoverished, and war-engaged during the Tuareg rebellions in Mali and Niger in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>576</sup> Although the violence was traumatic, dangerous, and disruptive for artisans, they were also, in many ways, better prepared for the forced integration into a global neoliberal economy. The upper caste had relied on the labor of artisans and the enslaved, and on profits from

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<sup>576</sup> “Editorial: West Africa: Containing Mali’s Tuareg Rebellion.” *All Africa* February 14, 2012 <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201202140975.html> [Accessed February 17, 2012]; Tor A. Benjaminsen, “Does Supply-Induced Scarcity Drive Violent Conflicts in the African Sahel? The Case of the Tuareg Rebellion in Northern Mali.” *Journal of Peace Research* 45.6 (Nov., 2008), pp. 819-836; Jeremy Keenan, “Tuaregs Take up Arms,” *Review of African Political Economy* 33.108, North Africa: Power, Politics & Promise (Jun., 2006): 367-368; Susan J. Rasmussen, “Reflections on Witchcraft, Danger, and Modernity among the Tuareg,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 74.3 (2004): 315-34; Andre Bourgeot, ‘Revoltes et rebellions en pays touareg’, *Afrique Contemporaine* 70 (1994): 3-19.

long distance trade. Caste restrictions forbid them from many forms of production, and taboos against working with materials such as metals and leather were strictly observed. As all of these forms of support, exploitation, and profits were systematically, and at times violently, undermined by the national governments of Mali and Niger (following decades of related colonial efforts), along with regular droughts and famines, the upper caste, especially women, faced great difficulties in supporting themselves and their families. In the 1990s, many men emigrated to Libya to work, and many women and children went to cities across West Africa, including Accra, Ghana, where they often begged in the streets. DANI and related projects that fostered artisanry as a vocation in a global neoliberal economy provided an organized structure for some Tuareg artisans. Some successful operated businesses outside of these structures, and in the 1990s, an informal community of Tuareg jewelry shops emerged to cater to expatriate and tourist markets in the Chateau Un neighborhood of Niamey, since French and other tourists had stopped traveling to Agadez during the conflict.

During the 1990s, the DANI project in Niger represented the latest trend for promoting artisanry as a viable avenue for economic development, which had occurred before in the 1930s, and again in the 1970s. The World Bank's publication *Africa Can Compete!* was published in 1996, strengthening the case for DANI's focus on an export market. As she worked with Lux-Développement, Kané reflected on the gender dynamics of the projects. She felt that more women artisans could benefit from training and resources than were able to access them as DANI was organized. She also hoped that Niger could be cultivated as a market for objects and food products

artisanally produced in Niger—and she knew that Nigerien women made the most important decisions about these kinds of purchases. She began discussing these observations with other prominent women in her social and professional networks.

In 1998, DANI incorporated the cooperatives at the Museum and the Centre des Métiers et des Arts Modernes. Members had observed their colleagues receiving what appeared to be a bounty of resources and training. They also recognized the usefulness in this highly managed national network, which had stronger international contacts since its leadership was Luxembourgish, unlike the Federation system that was managed by councils of elected artisans, often in consultation with Nigerien bureaucrats. Members were then eligible for participation in training programs and sales opportunities organized by DANI.

It was also in 1998 that DANI published a catalogue of objects produced in Niger, which was intended to attract foreign buyers. In 2009, Julien Bondaz recognized its similarities to the 1977 catalogue for the Musée National du Niger by simply calling the DANI publication the “new catalogue.”<sup>577</sup> However, in twenty years, the landscape of artisanal production had changed drastically, and this small volume differed in many ways from its predecessor. While the 1977 catalogue was published by the museum about the products made there, the 1998 DANI catalogue was published by Lux-Développement about products made at thirteen sites across Niger. The catalogue was one part of DANI’s marketing plan. It included the following sections: Leather Artisanry, Metal Objects, Stone Artworks, Clothing and Textiles, Basketry, and Miscellaneous. Like the 1977 Musée National du Niger

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<sup>577</sup> Julien Bondaz, “Imaginaire National Et Imaginaire Touristique: L’Artisanat Au Musée National Du Niger.” *Cahiers D’Etudes Africaines* XLIX, no. 1–2 (2009): 371.

catalogue, makers were not attributed, communicating the assumption that any number of capable artisans could replicate the photographed objects. Leather items included both briefcases and backpacks incorporating handwoven cloth (Figures 4.29 and 4.30).<sup>578</sup> The items in the catalogue feature the *garbey kopto* motif associated *tera-tera* textiles. Nodding to the Boston University undergraduate student of a few years before, the briefcase is called an “American Shoulder Bag.”



Figure 4.29: “American Shoulder Bag.” Item Cp029 in Lux-Développement. *L’Artisanat Au Niger*. Lux-Développement: Agence de la Coopération au Développement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1998.

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<sup>578</sup> Lux-Développement, *L’Artisanat Au Niger* (Lux-Développement: Agence de la Coopération au Développement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1998).



Figure 4.30: “Multipurpose Bag.” Item Cp038 in Lux-Développement. *L’Artisanat Au Niger*. Lux-Développement: Agence de la Coopération au Développement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1998.

“Clothing and Textiles” is one of the last sections, and the short introduction emphasizes the cultural significance of the *boubou*, especially the Hausa *babban riga*, although none are included in the catalogue. The *boubou* is a large, draping garment worn by both men and women across the region of West Africa. This may reflect some dissonance between the interests of the Nigeriens consulting the Luxembourgish authors and the marketing decisions that the authors were making. Authors thank Adamou Aboubacar, then an assistant-lecturer at the Abdou Moumouni University, for providing “valuable information on Niger’s artisanal sector,” but no other citations are included.<sup>579</sup> The catalogue includes a tablecloth and eight napkins much in the style first introduced by Pablo Toucet at the museum in the 1960s. (Figure 4.31) During the 1990s, Fadimata Marcel was experimenting with variations on the basic theme of brightly colored floating weft motifs on white tablecloths and napkins in her Wadata studio. The only full large textile included is a folded *tera-tera*, labeled a “Sakala tera-

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<sup>579</sup> Boubous are, in fact, an extremely important form of garment in West Africa. See the volume that accompanied a museum exhibition of the same name; Bernhard Gardi, *Le Boubou--C’est Chic: Les Boubous Du Mali Et D’autres Pays De l’Afrique De l’Ouest*. 2e édition augmentée (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2002).

tera,” giving no indication of its usage—suggesting that the Luxembourgish consultants themselves had ambiguous or multiple understandings of *tera-tera* usage in Niger and its potential market in Europe and the United States.<sup>580</sup> A *sakala* strip is listed as a “Bande/rug,” which could indicate a confusion of translation between French and English as much as a lack of clarity regarding its potential use as a floor covering.<sup>581</sup>



Figure 4.31: Tablecloth and napkins. Object Ta 001 in in Lux-Développement. *L'Artisanat Au Niger* (Lux-Développement: Agence de la Coopération au Développement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1998).

There are two children’s vests made with handwoven textiles, one a *tera-tera* and the other a *sakala*.<sup>582</sup> (Figure 4.32) The small vests suggest the wider experimentation that Fadimata Marcel was doing to put handwoven textiles to diverse

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<sup>580</sup> Object Tb201 in Lux-Développement 1998.

<sup>581</sup> Object Tb205 in Lux-Développement 1998.

<sup>582</sup> Objects Tb202 and Tb203 in Lux-Développement 1998.

new uses, including tailored clothing. She found that it was difficult to tailor, because most Nigerien handwoven textiles unravel easily when cut. Marcel and the Luxemburghish consultants may have hoped that European consumers would purchase the vests and other objects as a luxury item or as a kente-type sign of PanAfrican pride. However, the vests, miniature tropes of Western business dress, confounding exoticist stereotypes sought in African export items, never found a substantial market in Niger or elsewhere.



Figure 4.32: “Gilets enfant/ Child waistcoat.” Item Tb 202 in Lux-Développement. *L’Artisanat Au Niger* (Lux-Développement: Agence de la Coopération au Développement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1998).

Most of the other textiles in the catalogue are industrially woven with hand embroidery, along with a single batik wall hanging. The only batik included in the catalogue depicted motifs found in the prehistoric rock paintings in the North of Niger, touting these distinctive features of Niger’s cultural and historic resources. With text in French and English, the catalogue offered the 1998 exchange rate between FCFA and dollars, although prices were only available upon request (1 US\$ = 560 FCFA in 1998). The small book has served as an effective reference for some artisans,

especially Tuareg jewelers and Hausa and Tuareg leatherworkers, whose works are well represented. It attests to the sustained invisibility of Nigerien weavers and weaving to the non-Nigerien artisanry consultants, despite their close work with Fadimata Marcel at Wadata.

DANI's grandest efforts took place in an environment in which the viability of Niger as a sovereign nation-state was severely challenged by the neocolonial dynamics in which it functioned. DANI's initiation in 1991 coincided with the implementation of the Third Republic. The Second Republic had been part of Ali Saibou's short-lived attempt to maintain rule after succeeding Kountché. The largest part of DANI, the construction of artisanal centers across Niger, was undertaken in 1995, while Mahamane Ousmane was president. It was also that year that the 1990-1995 Tuareg rebellion came to an end. In 1996, Ousmane was deposed in Niger's second military coup d'état by Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, who, after a transitional period, engineered elections that declared him the president of the Fourth Republic of Niger in August 1996.

Baré saw value in DANI's artisanry projects, especially since foreign donors funded them, and he echoed Kountché's military approach to instrumentalizing Nigerien artisanry to define a national identity. He visited the Musée National du Niger on a regular basis. He attempted to lead Niger in a hostile international environment, in which most governmental development agencies drastically reduced aid to Niger, because Baré was seen to have disrupted Niger's democracy. Baré renewed the longstanding but fractious diplomatic relationship between Niger and Libya, and he dealt harshly with dissent in Niger.

On April 9, 1999, Major Daouda Malam Wanka led a coup d'état, during which Baré was shot and killed. By November 1999, Mamadou Tandja, who had been a national political figure since participating in Kountché's coup d'état in 1974, was elected president of the Fifth Republic of Niger. Tandja worked to reestablish the foreign aid commitments that had dissolved in the wake of Baré's 1996 coup d'état, and he imposed austerity measures to reduce the government budget. He encouraged the French government and AREVA to expand uranium mining, and nurtured relationships with the Chinese government and Chinese industry, which increasingly pursued access to Nigerien uranium during Tandja's term.

DANI activity had been winding down, although Lux-Développement continued to fund artisans' and bureaucrats' trips to international trade fairs. The decrease in already paltry numbers of tourists during the Tuareg rebellion and military regimes coincided with a periodic lull in world interest in artisanry as a vehicle for national economic development. The new DANI centers each had opened with shops, and soon the new cooperative members found that almost no customers arrived after the Luxembourgish consultants left. The marketing training had applied to foreign customers, and the austerity measures of the late 1990s further compromised most Nigeriens' ability to purchase basic goods, and artisans now sought the higher prices that they knew foreign customers often were willing to pay.

In 2003, Lux-Développement started the third and final phase of DANI, which was intended to bring it to an end. Lux-Développement did not consider the project as important or successful as its other work in Niger and Africa, and it no longer wanted to be involved. Many artisans now occupied studios in the centers, though, and they

had expectations of participation in the global exchange of artisanal goods. They had specialized skills and cash needs. DANI had promised to refine those skills and enable them to meet those needs. DANI-III worked with artisans and bureaucrats to establish self-governance, which resulted in the formation of the Groupement d'Intérêt Economique - Développement de l'Artisanat au Niger, or GIE-DANI, an umbrella organization for the thirteen cooperatives that had participated in Lux-Développement's DANI project. The governing council traveled to all of the sites, and the individual cooperatives' councils came to Niamey for meetings. These trips enabled the kind of travel around the country most artisans had never undertaken. Even those in Niamey who might have traveled to Paris for trade shows or to Ghana for waged labor may never have been to Zinder or Agadez. For the people, who were almost exclusively men, who took part, it was a very educational, nationalizing experience that also taught them about the organizational and representative capacity of such a large group.

Yet, even as artisans in some ways became even more energized about the possibilities for their new organization, Lux-Développement looked back on their work somewhat ruefully. In the planning documents for DANI-III, Emmanuel Braun assessed the pertinence, efficiency, efficacy, and sustainability of DANI in its first twelve years:

Relevance: The project was and is always adapted to the needs of the targeted beneficiaries. None of its structures call this into question. The government also entirely supports the concept and hopes that the structures supervised by the project would be accessible to as many artisans as possible, especially the shared machinery workshops, credit access, trainings, commercialization, and organizational support.

Efficiency: The design and the work of the project being much too extensive, the technical assistance and the follow-up was not adequate to control all of the

activities at once. The work to carry out the project was not optimal.

Efficacy: The design and the project itself not being optimal, the anticipated results were therefore not achieved. What is more, the diversity, complexity, and number of stated objectives often resulted in an unrealistic timeline.

To organize cooperatives and groups on thirteen different, often very distant sites; to improve the conditions of life of several thousands of artisans and to thus fight against poverty; to enable the artisanal sector and to reinforce its public image; to train and perfect artisans; to accentuate the role of women; to develop plans for marketing, commercialization and export; to create a sustainable system of credit access; to make artisanal structures financially autonomous, with a clear business place; and what is more, to reinforce the capacities of the ministry in charge of the sector. Was it not illusory to plan all of that in so little time?

Sustainability: The viability of the project and the maintenance of the obtained benefits, after exterior aid, depends now on the directions that will be taken and the length of their execution.

The obtained results so far, regarding the local ownership of stated objectives; the responsibility for beneficiary structures and their technical financial autonomy; the institutional will of the government; and the sociocultural factors related to the artisanal sector are all definitely convincing, but must be still more consolidated after beginning the withdrawal of external assistance.<sup>583</sup>

Braun's description of the numerous ambitious goals of the DANI projects of the 1990s in Niger not only echoed Brevié's 1930s hope for a network of Maisons d'Artisanat across West Africa, but his exasperated, disappointed list also indicates how the DANI project was an aspect of Nigerien nation-building that attempted to parallel the larger project. Its scope was too large because it attempted to put in place national economic and educational systems because the existing ones were absent or so inadequate that people could not consistently feed themselves and their families. Through high taxation, agricultural policies favoring cash crops, ecological degradation, the expansion of the cash economy, and the hoarding of income from

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<sup>583</sup> Braun 2003: 14.

natural resources' exploitation, colonial and national governance had impeded many people's social reproduction and worsened their qualities of life. DANI's stated objectives were the idealized ones of a modern nation-state, and betrayed Niger's government's history of ignoring or working against these goals.

Lux-Développement and its Nigerien collaborators hoped that DANI would be transformative, but without certain features of a modern state in place and without Nigerien leadership, DANI could not craft a nation-state supportive of its citizenry from artisanal labor by itself, especially during a decade when control over that nation-state was constantly in question: France continued to exert authority in order for AREVA to maintain control over its uranium mining operations; Tuareg groups went to war to demand more benefits from the nation-state, especially from uranium mining; and Niamey-based politicians wrestled over institutional power through both elections and coups d'état. Braun's assessment invokes the government's support, which was by 2003, Tandja's first administration. Lux-Développement had been invited by Saibou's government in 1992 to do national work: improving lives, "fighting poverty," economic development, promoting women's perspectives, and even government ministerial bureaucracy. This was the aspirational work of the modern state. DANI, the primary method of which was modifying artisanal aesthetic and technical forms to better appeal to an export and tourist market, could not replace the state. Yet, Braun's assessment does not investigate the larger context in which such goals were imaginable; a decade in Niger that saw structural adjustment programs, war, two coups d'état, and rapid economic neoliberalization.

Like most nation-building projects in Niger, foreign "assistants" and

“consultants” held many of the most prominent leadership positions—Braun, as a European professional, had kinds of authority in Niger to write the preparatory documents for the final phase that literally no one in Niger did. Lux-Développement concluded DANI was not the best use of Luxembourgish international aid, and they were leaving. Yet, Nigeriens negotiated other kinds of ambitions and power structures within DANI, too. Some artisans learned bureaucratic skills that increased their self-identification as citizens of a nation through their activities as members of national networks of artisans. Aichatou Kané, Fadimata Marcel, Gountou Soumana, and other women attained validity as leaders in ways that would have been even more challenging in other sectors.

Yet, just as DANI’s perceived failures were due to the national government’s perceived failures, they also reflected them. In both cases, the stated institutional aims obscured the actual priorities of many actors. In the case of the Nigerien national government, the French nation-state has played a consistent strong role in its administration, and its primary goal in Niger since 1957 has been the extraction of uranium. The nation-state is a vehicle for the movement of resources and capital, and Niger strikingly demonstrates this. Although Niger is in its Seventh Republic, and has seen over fifteen years of military governance outside of those republics, the nation-state has never failed in Niger, in that it has consistently been used to facilitate the extraction of uranium and the accumulation of capital by a small group of Nigeriens, and on a far greater scale by French, and increasingly, Chinese and other national and multinational corporations.

Likewise, DANI did not diminish poverty rates, but it made artisans feel their

poverty more acutely, and increased their reliance on cash. The organizational structures of DANI reflected national bureaucracies, in which function may or may not be represented in name. Lux-Développement, bolstered by romanticized ideas of artisanal cooperatives, and Niger's own history of agricultural cooperatives, encouraged sites to form artisanal cooperatives, so that members could share profits and resources. Such efforts stem from the understanding of artisanry as a balm to modern, industrial capitalism, but are generally not sustainable within a neoliberal economy.<sup>584</sup> Thus, members have worked as groups and individually selectively, despite consistent and numerous Nigerien and foreign attempts to form artisanal cooperatives. In Niger, cooperative members eschew much economic cooperation, such as dues paying, revolving credit, formal pricing guidelines, and quality control. However, they also take advantage of the groups as bodies with which international aid organizations will work. The groups provide access to the international market, and the title "cooperative" facilitates this.

Braun noted that a primary goal of DANI-III was to pass ownership to Nigeriens, and when Lux-Développement closed their DANI office, they worked with the councils of each group and one national council to form GIE-DANI, to continue

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<sup>584</sup> Most work published on fair trade is promotional, rather than critically engaged or rigorously theoretical. As noted above, it is also primarily about fair trade and agriculture. For example, see the following: Elizabeth Barham, "Toward a Theory of Values-Based Labeling." *Agriculture and Human Values* 19 (2002): 349-360 Graham Young, "Fair Trade's Influential Past and the Challenges of Its Future." Brussels, Belgium: *King Baudouin Foundation*, May 2003; Laure Waridel and Eric St. Pierre, *Coffee with Pleasure: Just Java and World Trade* (Saint Paul, M.N.: Black Rose Books, 2001); Rose Benz Ericson, *The Conscious Consumer: Promoting Economic Justice Through Fair Trade* (Washington, D.C.: Fair Trade Federation, 1999); Littrell and Dickson 1999; Alex Nicholls, *Fair Trade: Market Driven Ethical Consumption* (Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Sage Publications, 2005); David Ranson and Anita Roddick, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Fair Trade* (New York: Verso, 2001); Joseph Stiglitz and Andrew Charlton, *Fair Trade for All: How Trade Can Promote Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the project under Nigerien leadership. GIE-DANI's specific goal is to cultivate export opportunities for Nigerien artisans. It emphasizes training artisans in aesthetic and technical considerations of the export market and making connections with the international market. It acts as a cooperative shop, carrying objects from across Niger in its store at Wadata and filling international orders accepted by telephone or on the Internet. GIE-DANI intermittently has maintained a website.<sup>585</sup> Payment is by commission—GIE-DANI is not an employer of artisans, and artisans are elected to its council to run it.<sup>586</sup> The group pursues relationships with international aid organizations, and has regularly worked with the West Africa Trade House, a project of the United States Agency for International Development. WATH provides trainings, and through meetings in West Africa and travel to international trade shows, facilitates relationships with international buyers.

The Canadian agency Centre d'Etude et de Coopération Internationale (CECI) was looking for organizationally sound groups with which to work, and approached GIE-DANI because it was the only nationally organized organization of its kind.<sup>587</sup> Lux-Développement may have removed itself, but it had developed infrastructure conducive for international development goals, interests and work patterns. Most development consultants spend only a few weeks or months in Niger at a time, and very few diplomats or development workers stay longer than two years. Nation-building, modernization, and development all require Foucauldian disciplining, and with the dearth of schools, hospitals, and for that matter, prisons, in Niger, aid

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<sup>585</sup> <http://www.gie-dani.com/> [Access February 17, 2012].

<sup>586</sup> GIE-DANI employs two salespeople in its shop and an administrative assistant.

<sup>587</sup> Moustapha Ouma Kaltoume, Interview, February 3, 2010. Centre d'Etude et de Coopération Internationale, Niamey, Niger.

organizations are eager for structures through which they can access greater numbers of individuals at a time. Paradoxically, as neoliberal economic processes increasingly propagated individualist conceptions of economic actions, agents of neoliberal expansion needed groups already in place because of this desire to reach as many people as possible.

Cautious of neo-imperial, misguided development projects, CECI did not want to impose Canadian goals, and it asked GIE-DANI, led by elected president Moussa Ibrahim, what the organization would like from a partnership. Ibrahim and other members of the governing council, reflecting on artisans' ongoing search for education and information, requested a two-pronged educational program, in which selected Nigerien artisans would go to Canada for training in their media and Canadian artisans would come to Niger to give classes to larger groups of artisans. CECI desired the participants to be evenly divided among men and women, and they wanted to choose two media that reflected the largest percentage of artisans in GIE-DANI. This question of numbers, as in the case of DANI, is presented as one of fairness and humanitarian intent. It also indicates a capitalist dedication to efficiency—to not spending too much on an individual laborer. Targeted participants or beneficiaries in development projects are not meant to accumulate capital, and so it is important to distribute the capital assigned to keep them productive as widely as possible. This goal had interesting ethnic implications for the CECI's project with GIE-DANI. They chose two media according to which ones had the largest proportions of male members and female members in GIE-DANI. These were jewelry and leatherwork, respectively, because they were the media traditionally worked by

Tuareg *inadan* and *tinadan*. Thus, inadvertently, CECI's project with GIE-DANI became one exclusively focused on Tuareg artisanry.

### ***SAFEM: Defining Women As Producers and Consumers***

As Kane and other women worked with the Luxemburgish consultants on DANI, they learned more and more about the difficulties for people to transition into a cash economy with little formal education, by transforming artisanry into a life-supporting, income-producing vocation. She explored an enterprise in which she or others might employ artisans and pay regular wages, but artisans were extremely resistant to this arrangement. Most artisans guarded their capacity to judge the worth of their work, and to work according to their own schedules. Kané and other women who identified as “femmes leaders,” met to discuss why artisans, no matter how much they worked and despite the ongoing large-scale assistance of Lux-Développement, were not able to make enough profits from their work to feed themselves and their families, and to attend to other basic needs.<sup>588</sup> These women, who had just participated in the rapid demotion of wall hangings in decorative fashion, disagreed with the overarching developmentalist emphasis on the export market:

With other women, we recognized that if artisans could not subsist from their work, it was because Nigeriens did not consume local products. Women determine household purchases, and thus we targeted them to encourage them to consume local artisanal products. But SAFEM is not aimed at a woman only in her capacity as consumer—it also targets her as a producer.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> The English word “leader” first was adopted into the French language in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the use of “femme leader” has a unique function that deserves further analysis. “Leader,” Portail lexical, Etymologie, Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales. [Accessed February 17, 2012].

<sup>589</sup> Franck Salin, “Le Safem: Pour l’Emancipation de la Femme Africaine Par l’Artisanat. Entretien avec Kané Aïchatou Boulama, Coordinatrice de l’Événement.” Afrik.com. (1 Décembre 2007) [Accessed January 31, 2012].

Encouraging nationalist consumption of locally, artisanally produced commodities has a storied, often anti-colonialist global history.

In neighboring Burkina Faso, inspired by Gandhian philosophy, Thomas Sankara's anti-neocolonial governance had nurtured Burkinaabe artisanry.<sup>590</sup> In particular, he exhorted Burkinaabe citizens to wear clothing sewn from locally woven cloth, and citizens embraced *faso dan fani*, a plain weave cloth. Women were instrumental to the efflorescence of *faso dan fani* as a staple of Burkinaabe fashion. Like Niger, Burkina Faso's weaving traditions were divided into gendered roles, in which women spun yarn and dyed woven textiles, in addition to acting as patrons, buyers, and users. With minor technical changes to the looms and the eschewal of time-consuming traditional designs, *faso dan fani* production became a nationalist vocation suitable for women. Mission projects in which Europeans had trained girls and young women in weaving had also eased perceptions of gendered restrictions. Burkinaabe women were proud to produce and wear *faso dan fani*—and they still sometimes attribute their attraction to it as a vocation to Sankara's inspiration.<sup>591</sup> Nigerien women also have loved to wear *faso dan fani* since the 1980s, and Kané and her peers looked around at each other, chastising themselves for not being as excited about Nigerien artisanal goods—even as some of them worked to sell them abroad.

These “femmes leaders” recognized that male artisans were disproportionately

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<sup>590</sup> Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy of handspinning and the weaving of *khadi*, the cloth handwoven from that handspun thread, was a central symbol and tenet of his nationalist, self-sufficient economic vision of an independent India. He famously proclaimed that if India could not manufacture its own sewing needles, then it did not need them. Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation: Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Mahatma Gandhi, *Khadi (Hand-Spun Cloth): Why and How* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pub. House, 1955).

<sup>591</sup> Lankaade P. Flora, Interview, April 27, 2010. Fête de l'Artisanat, Région de Niamey.

represented in DANI and other development projects, but that women were equally if not more prolific in the production of artisanal crafts and foods. They saw that developmentalist projects assumed women's uncompensated labor as capital for the nation-state. They hoped to disassociate caste and class from artisanry, but manual labor was still not a kind of work that would be socially acceptable for men or women with a high school or university education, such as themselves. "Femmes leaders" were obligated to become consumers, but other women, women with less formal education and less capital, were conceptualized primarily as producers and laborers. SAFEM also promoted male artisans from the beginning, as most of their markets were composed of women. Although appealing to a Western romantic notion of promoting women artisans, SAFEM was an unusual intervention into such discourses. It sought to change the entire national economy by recognizing the authority and power that women already had as producers and as consumers. In developmentalist narratives, women's labor in producing and consuming is invisible, unwaged, and absolutely crucial. SAFEM made such labor explicit and visible.

SAFEM also intended to educate Nigeriens about Niger in the tradition of the Musée National du Niger and Boubou Hama's scholarship. The Museum had suffered under the Structural Adjustment Programs and frequent national regime changes of the 1990s, as directors had less time to do more with less money. SAFEM's first organizers knew that children loved the museum for the zoological gardens, but they were not convinced that Nigeriens continued to learn much about other regions of Niger from Toucet's "pocket hankerchief" representation of Niger, which had not seen any new galleries or permanent exhibitions since 1984. They thus wanted to highlight

specific regions' artisanry. They also located their new ambitions within a regional and continental system of artisanal exchange and exhibition, and they hoped that artisans from other nations would participate and businesspeople from the region would purchase Nigerien products. The Salon International de l'Artisanat de Ouagadougou was a point of reference, but Kané told journalist Franck Salin in 2007 that they did not seek to duplicate SIAO, but that SAFEM was unique in its emphasis on women as producers and consumers of artisanal goods.<sup>592</sup>

The first SAFEM was in 2000, and vendors came from Togo and Benin to join Nigerien artisans. In 2001, one hundred women were part of the organization and they approached politicians and business owners to encourage them to buy Nigerien products. Having set up their offices in the building formerly occupied by Lux-Développement, they secured funds from Lux-Développement and the European Union, and invited all countries in the Union Monétaire Ouest Africain to send delegations. As the event grew, it was clear that a biannual event would be more appropriate, to allow for adequate preparation and so as not to saturate the local, regional, and international markets that they were carefully cultivating. In 2007, Kané pointedly noted that until that year, the Nigerien state was not involved.<sup>593</sup> She explained that she and others had lobbied the state for years as the event grew each year. In February 2007, the Nigerien government agreed to fund SAFEM, although it would function as an autonomous structure. President Tandja proclaimed his support and First Lady Laraba Tandja became the honorary sponsor that year.

SAFEM achieved national institutionalization as part of its mission to change

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<sup>592</sup> Salin 2012.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

the nation, but SAFEM also necessarily altered its mission when it was absorbed into the Nigerien nation-state, which exerted its own priorities. SAFEM's leadership was also prepared to expand its initial strategies by increasing attention to the export market. French designers worked with thirty women artisans in the month leading up to SAFEM 2007 to aesthetically and technically modify their products to appeal to an export market. The highlighted region that year was Maradi, and fifteen of the women came from there. The French designers used the products to construct an exhibit at SAFEM entitled "The Modern Bride's Bedroom."

Prestigious wedding gifts for the most stylish Niamey brides in 2007 were imported goods, and although much of the furniture from her family would be made from solid wood in Niger, it was meant to evoke imported European styles, with its heavy scroll ornamentation and velour upholstery. In contrast, the SAFEM model bedroom advertised Nigerien-made artisanry for both a Nigerien and an export market with a design aesthetic of French interior decoration. By their nationality and French training, the design consultants validated their aesthetics as appealing for an export market—and thus modern, because of its adherence to French consumer taste. Of course, popular Niamey fashion, with its rugs produced in Turkey and purchased in Dubai, satin curtains manufactured in India and sold at the Grande Marché, and furniture made in Niamey and alluding to European styles, exemplified the neoliberal, globalized capitalist modernity that Nigeriens constructed and navigated everyday in 2007. The International Monetary Fund had cancelled Niger's debt in 2005, and there had been yet another famine in that year, too. Niger's modernity was one of increasing cash needs and decreasing cash supplies. SAFEM's Modern Bride's Bedroom was out

of the price range of all but the most fabulously wealthy of Nigeriens. The “modern” in the title differentiated the artisanal products from the “traditional” ones, which were understood to have been produced outside of a cash economy for African use. Traditional objects were thus only suitable for museum display—or non-modern usage.

After 2007, SAFEM was an official, important force in Nigerien cultural and economic life. Along with the Festival International de la Mode Africaine (FIMA), it was one of the two international events in Niamey that regularly occurred and had governmental support.<sup>594</sup> SAFEM and GIE-DANI had intersecting leadership, in that artisans, men and women, who had gained prominence in GIE-DANI and the Fédération National des Artisans du Niger also worked on SAFEM. SAFEM continued to expand its work on commercialization, which meant creating systems of knowledge and systems of production that would result in more products being purchased and more monetary income for individual artisans, especially women. Kané stated in 2010 that “We have one goal: for an artisan to make a living from artisanal work.”<sup>595</sup> Kané and SAFEM attempted to create economic experiments that prioritized women’s capacity to live and feed themselves and their families through commercial projects that provide women with more cash for the work that they do. As Mies has pointed out, their methods do not challenge patriarchal constraints on women by demanding that women have greater control over land to produce food, or even greater control over their bodies. Instead, SAFEM facilitates undervalued artisanal labor so that women might access more cash. Women in Niger have increasing cash needs, and

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<sup>594</sup> See the Introduction and Chapter Five for further discussion of FIMA.

<sup>595</sup> Aïchatou Boulama Kané, Interview, February 17, 2010. Niamey, Niger.

they may gain adequate economic power to better negotiate other kinds of authority in their lives. Such experiments can also educate women about their roles and potential roles as consumers and producers in a global economy.

SAFEM 2009 was a pivotal edition for several reasons. SAFEM invited Katherine Pradeau, a French fashion designer who had first visited Niger as a participant in FIMA, to collaborate with a group of women artisans from around the country on a fashion line and home decoration items. For the six weeks leading up to SAFEM, Pradeau worked with women who had been recruited from across Niger: leather workers, embroiderers, a weaver, and others.<sup>596</sup> The clothing was presented during a fashion show and the home decoration items were on exhibit in a small building at the SAFEM fair, which took place at the Wadata Artisanal Village. In cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children, and supported with funds from the United Nations Development Programme, SAFEM hosted a colloquium on “Women Artisans and Fair Trade.”

In 2009, SAFEM launched its most ambitious project yet, the *Projet de Renforcement des Competences, Techniques, Entrepreneuriales et Commerciales des Femmes Artisanales du Niger (RC-TEC)*. First publicly announced as SAFEM “schools,” they were envisioned as short-term trainings intended to address specific challenges women artisans faced in design, technique, and business skills and commercialization. RC-TEC was again funded with a mix of foreign governmental

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<sup>596</sup> Djamila, a participant in the program and one of the few women who weaves in Niger, learned as part of a project of the nongovernmental organization *Tarbiyya Tatali* in Dogondoutchi. See Nicole Moulin, *Lougou Et Saraouniya* (Niger: *Tarbiyya Tatali*, 2007) and <http://www.tarbiyya-tatali.org/> [Accessed February 17, 2012].

and nongovernmental assistance that SAFEM coordinated. Funds were provided by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire (FSP), which were then managed by SAFEM and various governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the *Guilde Européenne du Raid*, the *Assemblée Permanent des Chambres de Métiers et d'Artisanat de France*, the NGO *ETHNIK.ORG*, the *Fédération Nationale des Artisans du Niger*, *GIE-DANI*, and the Nigerien Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry.

National events seemingly unrelated to artisanry also impacted SAFEM in 2009. In the same year, AREVA began constructing mining operations at the second largest uranium deposit in the world, Imouranen, and it was SAFEM's main sponsor for the year, as part of its surge of celebratory publicity in honor the mines that had first been discovered in 1966. A press release entitled "AREVA Supports SAFEM" was included in the publicity packet for SAFEM 2009. (Figure 4.33) It includes a photograph of the ceremony of the signing of the "SAFEM-AREVA Convention," during which AREVA committed to being the primary sponsor of SAFEM 2009 and to two years of partial funding of the nonformal educational program RC-TEC. Both "femmes leaders" and women artisans gather around a lone AREVA representative. The text casts AREVA as an entity that contributes to NIGER, obscuring its primary goal of extracting uranium in a tone that recalls the promises of the colonial state to "mettre en valeur" Africa:

A partner of the Nigerien state in the development [*mise en valeur*] of its natural resources for the past forty years, the AREVA group is a major economic actor in the Nigerien economy.

In effect, since its arrival in Niger at the end of the 1960s, the AREVA

group has financed several programs to benefit the population and supported the efforts of authorities in their battle against poverty and for the improvement of Nigeriens' conditions of life.

Since 2003, AREVA has included these initiatives in a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, in order to seek permanent improvement of economic performance and protection of people and the environment.

In addition, the AREVA Group is convinced that education is an critical factor of human development and that education of disadvantaged people is essential for their social integration.

Support of SAFEM, which will stretch over two years, consists of the training of thirty women artisans in Design and assistance with communications for the event. This training will permit them to adapt their savoir-faire to the needs of the international market.<sup>597</sup>

In this philanthropic statement, AREVA sets up a direct parallel between their *raison d'être* of mining and their contributions to Nigerien artisanry. In this paradigm, mining is not extracting, but the "mise en valeur" of uranium so that it can be used by French and other international consumers. Likewise, women artisans are to be trained not to transform the Nigerien economy in the manner that Kané and other "femmes leaders" had first imagined, but to meet the "needs of the international market."

In August 2009, President Tandja held a referendum to endorse the new constitution of the Sixth Republic of Niger that would begin, along with his third term, in December of that year. Much international funding was immediately revoked, and the state support that SAFEM had secured two years earlier took on new dimensions. In 2009, Tandja's administration used both the Festival International de la Mode Africaine (FIMA) and SAFEM as platforms to convey its legitimacy to Nigerien and international audiences. Laraba Tandja's sponsorship of SAFEM was emphasized

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<sup>597</sup> Salon International de l'Artisanat Pour la Femme, "AREVA Appuie le SAFEM," Press release. (Niamey, Niger: SAFEM, 2009).

during all events and in all press releases. President Tandja presided over a special ceremony for a National Day of the Woman Artisan, in which he named the improvement of the lives of women artisans as a priority of his administration. (Figure 4.34) Behind him, a specially painted background showed camels racing in a desert oasis, in an unacknowledged state claim on desert imagery as shared national wealth.



Figure 4.33: "AREVA Supports SAFEM," Press release for the SAFEM-AREVA Convention, AREVA's commitment to support SAFEM 2009 and RC-TEC for two years.



Figure 4.34: President Mamadou Tandja delivers his address at the National Day of the Woman Artisan as part of the 2009 SAFEM festivities. The mural behind him depicts a line of camels in a desert oasis. A line of television reporters record the event. (IMG\_1683)

After the festival came to a close, SAFEM launched RC-TEC, and worked closely with the NGO *Guilde Européenne du Raid*, which had supplied a consultant, Paul Armand Menye, to be based in Niamey and which facilitated short-term positions for French artisans to teach Nigerien artisans in 2009 and 2010. Menye had experience in development projects with crafts in Cameroon and Romania. The workshops introduced designs intended to attract new, foreign clients. Small exhibits were held periodically to introduce the new products and a delegation took prototypes to SIAO 2010 in Ougadougou with the hope of attracting international orders. The items were also featured in an exhibit dedicated to RC-TEC at SAFEM 2011.

In 2011, Kané left SAFEM to become Governor of the Region of Niamey.

Under the new coordinator Barry Bibbiata Gnandou, SAFEM has continued to strive for increased institutionalization and influence. It continued its work after the coup d'état in February 2009. Even as security concerns for French citizens heightened in 2009 because of the perceived increased risk of kidnappings of foreigners by Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), SAFEM brought women in distant areas to Niamey for their trainings instead of taking the French artisan-instructors to remote locations, especially in the West and the North of the country, for the workshops. It lobbied Mahamadou Issouffou's administration for ongoing support after his democratic election in April 2011. His first wife, First Lady Mahamadou Issouffou Aissatou was the honorary sponsor of SAFEM 2011. The state gave SAFEM a plot in the Green Belt of Niamey to construct a new headquarters, which will include classroom space. Because the highlighted region was Tillabéry, a region once home to several centers of weaving, after learning about this dissertation project, Kané initiated a workshop held at the SAFEM 2011, "The Revival of Nigerien Weaving," along with a workshop on "Gender, Access to Information, and Participation in Decision-Making."<sup>598</sup> There were numerous corporate sponsors, although AREVA did not play as prominent a role that year.

SAFEM seeks to make economic interventions that prioritize the lives of women, rather than simply creating capital, but it must navigate fundamentally exploitative systems and make compromises within them in order to effect change. The "femmes leaders," like Kané, must also overcome their relative lack of political

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<sup>598</sup> Funded by SAFEM, the Cornell University Graduate School, the Cornell University History of Art Department, and the Cornell University American Studies Program, I attended this workshop and gave a talk entitled "L'Histoire et l'Avenir de l'Art du Tissage Nigérien."

clout as women, although they have far greater power than the artisans with whom they work. SAFEM, in order to maintain its autonomy from the state and also as a feature of its global vision, relies on foreign contributions, which come as funds, labor, and expertise. Along with the asymmetries in economic power, these participants' perspectives heavily gear SAFEM's priorities toward external markets, in which these artisans and designers have expertise. Both artisans and women use SAFEM, GIE-DANI, and other structures to pursue their personal goals and the collaborative work between individuals, government agencies, federations, groups, cooperatives, and organizations provides venues for education and economic transactions that might otherwise be unimaginable for many participants.

One French-hired consultant described the advantages of pursuing economic development through export-based craft businesses in terms of capital investment. He explained that

In the domain of crafts, there are so many opportunities and it is so easy to start. You just need simple things. If you are well supported, you can start from nothing and create a real enterprise. It is possible with realm of craft, but not in others. If you want to work with small people and have a certain economic and social impact, this is the way to do it.<sup>599</sup>

Such businesses, especially those based upon the modification of indigenous artisanry that the consultant was discussing, do not start from "nothing." "Nothing" consists of artisans' aesthetic and technical expertise, along with their labor. Trainings may be required for artisans to produce for an export market, but the trainings usually assume proficiency in a technique, which can then be modified.

To capitalist development, such knowledge and labor is invisible because it has

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<sup>599</sup> Interview, April 16, 2012.

been dedicated to reproductive and life-supporting activities, and not necessarily capital accumulation. Yet, as the consultant points out, such projects are economic development on the cheap—“so easy.” It requires little investment on the part of businesses or nongovernmental philanthropic organizations because it relies on the undervalued knowledge and labor of artisans. He is also aware that in order to conduct this transition from producing objects for local use to producing commodities for an international market: “If you want to bring craftspeople from little things to enterprises, you must *change* their minds. You must restructure *their minds*.”<sup>600</sup> Development projects are lessons in capitalism, which teach that capital accumulation should be the primary goal. People who have been laboring in other systems are consigned to being “small people” doing “little things.”

Kané stated in 2010 that SAFEM was only at the beginning, and that artisanry was only one aspect of life that needed addressing. She gave the examples of food security and water access as issues that must be addressed in women’s lives and communities before any amount of informal design and business training can truly benefit them.<sup>601</sup> She also noted that sales would not benefit women artisans if their husbands immediately confiscated their income. She characterized SAFEM’s work as a combat. This is a combat for women’s labor to contribute to their and their families’ wellbeing—a combat to achieve the conditions for social reproduction. Kané lamented that the government did not adequately value Nigerien culture, and observed that since artisanry was promoted to ministerial titles in the 1990s, it had never been housed with the Ministry of Culture. She proposed that the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanry be

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<sup>600</sup> Interview, April 16, 2012.

<sup>601</sup> Aïchatou Boulama Kané, Interview, February 17, 2010. Niamey, Niger.

combined with the Ministry of Culture. Kané invoked the intellectual and institutional heritage of Boubou Hama to point out the ways that Niger has strategized to support artisanry in unusual ways, citing DANI and the official policy on artisanry. She suggested that had there been a twenty-first version of Boubou Hama, more progress would have been made.

Of course, as discussed in Chapter One, Hama regretted his attempts to do his work within a nationalist project, which, from his cell in Agadez during Kountché's military regime, he assessed as a neocolonial shell that had only disempowered Africans. As Kané stated and as Braun implied, artisanry education projects cannot redress economic injustices when constrained by the power imbalances and uneven resource distribution fostered by the nation-state. In fact, artisanry projects can reinforce certain kinds of authority—many Nigerien artisans complain that SAFEM only benefits the comparatively wealthy women who work there. This perspective dismisses the dynamism of SAFEM's work too easily, but it points to the resonances of patronage relationships in the organization's mission, which at times evokes a sense of *noblesse oblige*. However, in many ways, SAFEM was remarkably prescient in recognizing the failures of DANI and in insisting on the importance of gender and on quality of life.

### ***Conclusion***

It is not adequate to call for fairly traded crafts without also calling for fairly traded uranium. Advertising handmade goods that are luxury products by appealing to consumers' philanthropic urges obscures the larger system that has caused the poverty

from which artisans suffer and meant to evoke pity from customers. As Patricia Nickel and Angela Eikenberry have argued, “consumption philanthropy is not a discourse about transformation but rather a discourse about continued, even increased, consumption.”<sup>602</sup> Despite genuine intentions to improve the lives of laborers, what Nickel and Eikenberry term the “subordination to the market” necessitates prioritizing the commodities over people, and capital over lives. It also demands the conceptualization of people as either producers or consumers, rather than as laborers, workers, artisans, farmers, mothers, fathers, citizens, or eaters.

The costs of this artisanal hand labor is subsidized by the undervaluing of artisanal knowledge and cultural symbolism. Training people in craft making for the exoticist, often faddish markets in Europe, Japan, and the United States also supplants artistic education that emphasizes concept, critical thought, and yes, craftsmanship. In order to tailor products for the very specific price range that succeeds in the fair trade market, artisans must often simplify their work, although they must also adapt other unfamiliar markers of quality for the Western market. Artisanry is considered a tool for neoliberal development, rather than a means of expression. This is one example of what Shelley Errington has labeled “cultural strip-mining.”<sup>603</sup> Furthermore, in this system, women in the developed world, who are the primary market, are refused the opportunity to imagine themselves as anything but consumers.

The emphasis on artisanry with aesthetic value, with beauty distinct to Nigerien cultures, reflected the Nigerien state’s desire to offer the global market

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<sup>602</sup> Nickel and Eikenberry 2009: 980.

<sup>603</sup> Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 43.

distinctive commodities in exchange for the capital it so desperately needed. The state and its international lenders simultaneously promoted deskilling by incorporating artisans into a cash economy where they had increasing need for money, but in which their labor was not compensated with higher prices for their work. Thus, rich technical skill and knowledge, or beauty, was excised from artistic objects as part of this aspirational process to extract that very beauty. Through devaluing extant expertise, artisanal education within a teleological schema of economic development in Niger in the 1980s betrayed that it was education in neither art nor artisanry, but a process by which international lenders were attempting to educate the state to maintain power and pay its bills after the loss of its uranium revenue.

Nickel and Eikenberry follow David Wagner to suggest that those seeking social transformation would be more effective if they participated in labor organizing, political leadership, and social movement leadership.<sup>604</sup> In Niger, artisans have confounded development projects to pursue these strategies within projects that were formed by liberal and neoliberal developmentalist paradigms. Members of the Fédération Regionale des Artisans du Niger (FRANI) participate in May 1<sup>st</sup> celebrations of labor unions, and as demonstrated in this chapter, artisans consistently have refused waged labor employment in lieu of maintaining authority over their means and schedules of production. Others have learned important bureaucratic and public skills through artisanry projects. Fadimata Marcel has consistently encouraged young women and men to learn new skills, which they can then use to seek entrepreneurial opportunities. Gountou Soumana has an extensive network throughout

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<sup>604</sup> Nickel and Eikenberry 2009: 984; David Wagner, *What's Love Got to Do With It? A Critical Look at American Charity* (New York: New York Press, 2000).

Niger because of her participation in FNAN, GIE-DANI, and SAFEM activities.

These skills and networks could be parlayed into other kinds of social and political activity, and they will continue to be necessary for Nigerien citizens as they cultivate autonomy and sustain themselves and their families. Most notably, Aichatou Kané's position as the Governor of the Region of Niamey has cemented the political power that she built by emphasizing the economic centrality of artisanry in Niger and masterful organization of the multifaceted organization of SAFEM. While she may regret the absence of a twenty-first century version of Boubou Hama, she has in many ways taken up his mantle by combining cultural institution building with holding political office. She shares this heritage with another prominent Nigerien, the fashion designer Sidhamed "Alphadi" Seidnaly, who attempts to reverse extractive economic systems through the Festival International de la Mode Africaine.

## CHAPTER 5

### HOT AND HAUTE: AFRICAN FASHION, FIMA, AND GLOBALIZATION

*Thus, Africa's lateness is complex no matter how you look at it. In America, despite all of the oppression and the pressure, the African not only survived, but he animated the conceptual West with his joie de vivre. In the domain of art, no one denies the African contribution to Europe anymore.*

*Each time, the African spirit has come to change what exists, giving a new direction and a new breath—an open sensibility to the other avenues of hope for humanity. There, Africa ceaselessly proposes, in all of its diversity, an authentic human nature and a unique artistic representation, a possible human nature for humanity.*

*Boubou Hama*<sup>605</sup>

*In Niger, in this country, we have enormous creativity. We have so much to create, and you can create it yourself. It is you, the young people, who are the future—not just politically, but also culturally.*

*Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly*<sup>606</sup>

Fashion designer Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly trained in tourism, and in his first career in the 1970s and early 1980s, he worked for Niger’s Ministry of Tourism and briefly served as the Minister of Tourism. He thought carefully about how the Nigeriens and the rest of the world *saw* Niger. Born in 1957 in Timbuktu, Mali of the Tuareg ethnicity, he knew well the romantic French fantasies of both the ancient town and his ethnic group. He worked with other government officials to appeal to those deep-seated associations to cultivate a more organized tourist industry in Niger, especially in the Northern desert, where French and other tourists could reenact colonial exploration through car and motorcycle races or camel treks. At the same time, even as these same officials under the Kountché administration perpetuated a colonial primitivist fantasy in exchange for the capital tourists paid for it, they asserted

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<sup>605</sup> Boubou Hama, *Le Retard De l’Afrique: Essai Philosophique* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972): 51.

<sup>606</sup> Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly, Lecture, Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey, October 23, 2009.

a nationalist modernity in a rush of infrastructure construction in Niamey, which was meant to finally achieve an urban, industrialized capital city for Nigeriens and the foreign visitors attracted by either tourism or business opportunities. Both the most popular tourist attractions and the uranium mines were in the far north of the country, but the government intended Niamey to be at least a necessary stop-over, and preferably, a draw itself. In 1981, the state constructed Hotel Gaweye, which sits adjacent to the Pont de Kennedy, between the Niger River and the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. In 2012, it is still only one of two four star hotels in Niger. Kountché's Niger aspired to be a modern, sovereign state that gained capital through the sale of its natural resources and the sale of views of its peoples and landscapes.

Yet, Alphadi knew that Niger still had an image problem inside and outside of Niger. When French people were even aware of Niger, anything they saw was shaded by more than a century of gauzy stereotypes that had been manifested through exciting colonial expositions, museum exhibitions, travel writings, popular journalism, earnest scholarship, and colonial travel. Once considered a peripheral backwater by the French colonial administration, the desperate famines of the late 1960s and early 1970s that precipitated a military coup d'état had brought Niger to the front pages of international newspapers as a nation apparently unable to function as an independent state.<sup>607</sup> During the administration of the Conseil Militaire Supreme, Niger remained above all a site for French to extract desired natural resources, which they would refine and process elsewhere.

Still run by a military state in the early 1980s, Niger was viewed as hot in all of

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<sup>607</sup> Henry Kamm, "After the Drought, a Shaken Niger Faces Long Uphill Struggle." *New York Times*. New York, October 3, 1974.

the wrong ways. Especially after a series of droughts, its climate added to the sense of its extremity and remoteness. In Niamey, temperatures hover around thirty-seven degrees Celsius during the day during the average March, April, and May, and temperatures in Agadez and Arlit are often above forty degrees Celsius. Most international bodies and foreign governments considered the political situation too hot to touch, and even the French had backed off insofar as they could continue to exploit the uranium mines. The uranium itself was radioactively hot.

Alphadi often attributes his interest in fashion to a childhood surrounded by his Tuareg mother and sisters, who, always impeccably dressed, constantly attended to their dress.<sup>608</sup> The Niger and the Africa that he knew was populated by hot—as in stylish and attractive—Africans who cultivated their public personas by combining historic forms of dress with up-to-the-minute global fashion, just as his office at the Ministry of Tourism were cultivating Niger’s image by combining images of the past with communications savvy. The Niger he lived in was not remote, but a central part of the way that tourists imagined the world. The uranium that funded his government job was crucial to the lives of even the French who could not find Niger on a map. Alphadi knew that Niger was both hot and haute, despite all of its challenges.

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<sup>608</sup> Festival International de la Mode Africaine. *Press Kit for FIMA: Seventh Edition* (Niamey: FIMA, 2009); Kristyne Loughran, “The Idea of Africa in European High Fashion: Global Dialogues.” *Fashion Theory: Journal of Dress Body and Culture* 13.2 (2009): 258.

### *Hot and Haute in Niger*

Diverse dress practices characterized the ethnic and other kinds of communities in Niger in the last half of the twentieth century. The First Republic had used the Costume Pavilion at the Musée National du Niger to train Nigeriens to view themselves and others with an enjoyable auto-ethnographic gaze that distilled whole and dynamic ethnic identities into a neat collection of garments and accessories. During the regime of the Conseil Militaire Supreme, a new weekly newspaper, *Le Sahel Hebdo*, replaced the mouthpiece of the First Republic, *Le Niger*. At the end of each of these weekly journals editors published a portrait of a Nigerien, usually a woman, in what was considered traditional dress. With rare exceptions, no titles were given, as Nigeriens were expected to be capable of reading ethnicity and culture from the subjects' appearances.

Although men were occasionally featured, the portraits were almost exclusively of women. Although contemporary portraits by Nigerien photographers, the portraits served to link the state journal to an imagined shared precolonial, preindustrial history of ostensibly stable traditions. These women were portrayed as passive symbols, and not as modern political or economic actors, and they were placed on the back cover of each issue, silent and available for a reader's gaze.<sup>609</sup> Although all ethnicities were included, those considered marginal and exotic by the Nigerien state received more back covers. In this rare color photograph from the series, a young Tuareg woman stares at the camera. (Figure 5.1) A deep indigo veil frames her face.

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<sup>609</sup> Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism." In *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

Along with a coin, three silver pendants in the form of the cross of Agadez hang from her necklace. The Agadez cross is a kind of silver pendant associated with the desert town of Agadez in the north of Niger that has become an important symbol of both the Tuareg ethnicity and of Niger as a nation. The French had noticed its export appeal as early as 1937, and by 1972, Nigerien state already had claimed the cross of Agadez as a nationalist symbol.<sup>610</sup> Such portraiture claimed ethnic identities as property of the state. While identifying this young woman as Tuareg, the concept of the cross of Agadez was equally the property of all Nigeriens.

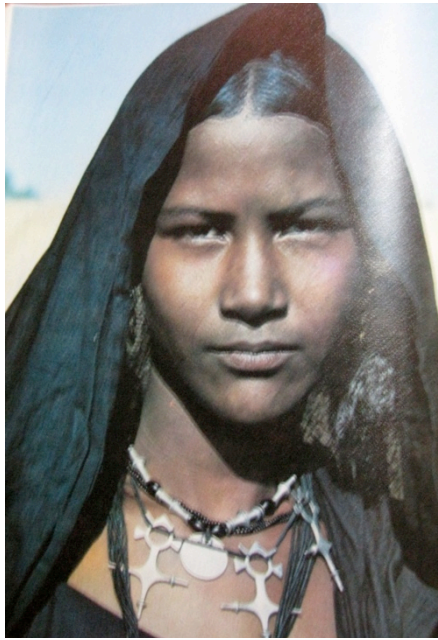


Figure 5.1:  
Portrait of Young Tuareg Woman. *Le Sahel*, March 21, 1977. No. 72.

The Wodaabe, or the Bororo, were another ethnicity often exoticized by scholars, tourists, and the colonial and postcolonial governments.<sup>611</sup> In a photograph

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<sup>610</sup> Niger Rapport Economique Annuel 1937. Archives Nationales du Sénégal.

<sup>611</sup> The Wodaabe have remained a popular topic of photography, and to a lesser extent, scholarship. For example, photographs of Wodaabe were most recently popularized by photographer Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher. See their book: Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, *African Ceremonies* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999). Corinne Kratz explored the ongoing ubiquity of Wodaabe visual culture in

by Hassane Issaka Toubi, another young woman engages the camera. (Figure 5.2) She stands in a three quarter profile, which enables the viewer to better see her elaborate hairstyle with bangs set high above her forehead. She playfully smiles and gives a slight eyebrow arch to Toubi, whose photograph washes out the background, which only emphasizes further the many tiny details of the subject's dress. Her facial scarification is barely discernable in the high contrast image, and her face is framed by long braids and seven large hoop earrings. She wears several beaded necklaces. On the back of another issue, Salif Garba's photograph depicts a Wodaabe man in ceremonial dress. (Figure 5.3) He is also in diagonal profile, but he has been photographed while singing, perhaps in a staged performance, for an audience member with no make-up or hat can be seen craning his neck for a better view behind the subject. Although not wearing as much make-up as required for the famed *Yaake* dances, the portrait's subject has distinct white dots painted on his face. His beaded necklaces lay over an intricate hand-embroidered tunic. Wodaabe men's dress defied both European and many African hegemonic conceptions of gendered dress, and their complex aesthetics historically have drawn immense scholarly and popular interest.

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Western popular culture in her keynote address at the 2011 Arts Council of the African Studies Association Triennial Symposium on African Art, "Recurring Wodaabe: Proliferating Images of Pastoralists, Gender, and Performance."



Figure 5.2:  
Portrait of Young Wodaabe Woman. *Le Sahel*, January 3, 1977.



Figure 5.3:  
Portrait of Wodaabe Man. *Le Sahel*, July 20, 1981.

Along with staged performances of ethnicity by the Wodaabe and the Tuareg, the back covers also suggest the regularity of staged traditionality of all ethnic groups, including the Djerma, the ethnicity of most of the powerful politicians up to that point in Nigerien national history. In Amadou Hassan's photograph, a woman poses, again in three quarter profile. (Figure 5.4) She wears a *téra-tera*, which, along with the coins draped on her head and neck, represented the Djerma ethnicity. She holds a decorated calabash, its cover, and a spoon. In the right background of the photograph, a man in a suit and tie watches her and the photographer, interrupting the imagined separate temporality of this "traditional" woman, who was likely to change into her waxprint ensemble once she left this event.



Figure 5.4:  
Portrait of Djerma Woman. *Le Sahel*, November 21, 1977.

By the late twentieth century, waxprint cloth also read as traditional in Niger, even when it was manufactured in Europe or Asia and imported to Africa. In Hamadou Niandou's 1982 portrait of another young woman in three quarter profile, she gazes down under a headwrap of waxprint cloth with a design of leafy tree branches on which birds nest. Her facial scarifications are not clearly discernable, but may suggest that she is Hausa. These photographs were one of the many ways that Nigeriens were visualizing themselves as Nigerien in Alphadi's early career as a government official in the Ministry of Tourism. In that period, waxprint cloth continued to play an important role in how Nigeriens imagined themselves as modern and African—as well as how Europe imagined Africa.

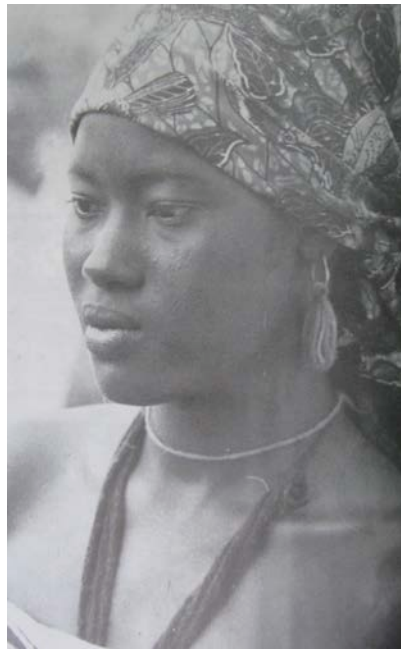


Figure 5.5:  
Portrait of Hausa Woman. *Le Sahel*, September 20, 1982.

Historians have emphasized the enormous quantity of textiles imported into Africa.<sup>612</sup> Marion Johnson states that in the 1770s, two million wrapper lengths were imported into the continent each year. As discussed Chapter Two, this did not always cause a decrease in African textile production. Some West African industries in the eighteenth century thrived through export to the Caribbean via European traders.<sup>613</sup> In addition to its durability and aesthetic advantages, West African textiles also retained competitive prices because of low (or, as in the case of some enslaved labor, no) wages, as argued by Johnson.<sup>614</sup> Richard Roberts aptly demonstrated how hand-spinning and weaving increased in the French Soudan in the 1930s, despite colonial officials' best efforts to replace all local textiles with French-manufactured ones, thanks to the French colonial introduction of American cotton, which women found superior for spinning and sent to weavers to be spun.<sup>615</sup>

Barbara Cooper identified the timing of the increase in access to imported cloth in Maradi, Niger as occurring in the 1930s, as more commodities made their way north after arriving in Kano on the new railway.<sup>616</sup> Because the French colonial government was just institutionalizing itself in Niger after the disastrous famine of 1931, largely with African staff from other colonies, it was also during the 1930s that officials became concerned that Nigeriens were buying more textiles imported from elsewhere in Europe, along with Japan, instead of French textiles. This preoccupation,

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<sup>612</sup> See Marion Johnson, "Commodities, Customs, and the Computer." *History in Africa* 11 (1984): 364; and Christopher Steiner, "Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth Marketed in West Africa, 1873-1960," *Ethnohistory* 32. 2 (1985): 91-110.

<sup>613</sup> Johnson 1984: 364

<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

<sup>615</sup> Richard Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800-1946* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996): 196.

<sup>616</sup> Barbara M. Cooper, "Cloth, Commodity Production, and Social Capital: Women in Maradi, Niger 1890-1989." *African Economic History*, no. 21 (January 1, 1993): 51-71.

and its aesthetic elements, reached the highest levels of colonial governance. In 1938, the Governor of Niger, the highest ranking official in the colony, wrote the Governor General of the Afrique Occidentale Française, the highest ranking official in the federation, a letter that included samples of the kinds of cloth he said residents of the colony of Niger preferred:

Economic Affairs and Customs

Regarding: Samples of the main fabrics sold in Niger

Monsieur Governor of Niger  
to Monsieur Governor General of the A.O.F. (General Direction of  
Economic Services) – DAKAR –

Following up on my earlier correspondence on the quotas and taxation of cotton fabrics, I have the honor to send to you this collection of fabrics preferred by the natives of Niger, to be given to the Department.

This documentation is intended for the textile union, to permit it to substitute our textiles for similar foreign ones.

Signed: Court

CC: Chief of Cabinet<sup>617</sup>

Of the six samples, three are white cotton of various weights. One is a gauzy dark blue, which would have offered a cheap alternative to the various kinds of hand-dyed indigo cloth used by many ethnicities in Niger. A tiny triangular piece of cloth is just large enough to show the familiar traits of industrial batik, or waxprint, as the layers of orange, blue, and yellow overlap one another irregularly, giving dynamism and movement to the partial flower motif. (Figure 5.6) The other patterned example contains blue and orange dots, triangles, and stripes on a white background. (Figure

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<sup>617</sup> “Échantillons des principaux tissus vendus au Niger,” February 1938. Archives Nationales du Sénégal 11G/2G v. 107.

5.7) France continued to aspire to dominate the textile markets in Niger and elsewhere in the AOF, keeping detailed records on the imports and exports of each colony. By the 1950s, colonial officials recognized that handweaving was most important for bedding and wall decoration, but that most people's quotidian dress was from imported industrially woven cloth. As indicated by the 1938 letter, the competition that worried them most were "foreign" European and Asian businesses.



Figure 5.6:  
Cotton cloth sold in Niger in 1938.  
Archives Nationales du Sénégal 11G/2G v. 107



Figure 5.7 :  
Cotton cloth sold in Niger in 1938.  
Archives Nationales du Sénégal 11G/2G v. 107

When African nations became independent, their governments sought, almost without exception, to establish state-owned textile factories as keystones of national economies and as symbols of national self-sufficiency. In 1969, Diiori reflected on the challenges to industrialization in Niger, naming the high price of energy, the low prices of imports, and the poverty of most rural Nigeriens as the key reasons for Niger's slow industrialization process.<sup>618</sup> Later in that talk, he lauded the recently constructed NITEX (Société Nigérienne des Textiles), a factory that manufactured thread and cloth, as well as printing the cloth. The French corporation Agache Willot owned a 70% stake, and the Nigerien government 15%. The project had been in planning since at least 1983, and the government had high hopes for the factory's progress.<sup>619</sup> It was able to produce cloth for special occasions, and in addition to producing for the Nigerien market, it also exported cloth. Compatible with both governments, it continued uninterrupted through the regime change in 1974, although its sales were harmed by the droughts that racked the region during its first five years of operation.

By 1976, problems in the factory were becoming evident to observers. French managers and Nigerien employees struggled to turn a profit, and Nigeriens continued to prefer imported cloth. A 1976 profile of NITEX in *Le Sahel Hebdo* begins with an account of employees begin arrested for stealing cloth, suggesting it was part of a longstanding, widespread theft at the factory. The article then cites the “numerous

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<sup>618</sup> Diiori Hamani, *Exposé Sur La Situation Économique. Discours Prononcés Au Meeting Populaire Du 11 Octobre 1969 Au Stade Municipal* (Niamey, Niger: Parti progressiste nigérien, 1969): 14.

<sup>619</sup> “L'Industrie Textile en Afrique,” *Le Niger* July 15, 1963.

strikes, more or less 'wild,' more or less justified, that have often paralyzed the factory."<sup>620</sup> The article emphasizes that the factory produced thread for handweaving, and portrays its highly industrial modernity through its lack of concern for a pleasurable aesthetics of production:

Everyone has had the occasion to admire a weaver at work. The agility with which he works, the joy he demonstrates through his songs, the rhythm of which match the incessant comings and goings of the shuttle, making a most fascinating spectacle. Little by little, the article is woven, strip by strip; it could be a blanket rug, a *téra-tera* garment, etc...

Our weavers here, which are the machines of NITEX, do not have any of that beauty or charm. The looms, as one calls them, number 450. They operate in an infernal noise and with an incredible rapidity and regularity.<sup>621</sup>

The loud noise, the incredible rapidity and regularity: these markers of global modernity had arrived in Niger, but along with them came financial risk.

In 1978, in response to ongoing losses at the factory, the state bought another 25% of the stakes in the enterprise, and another French company purchased the other 50%, and it was renamed SONITEXTIL. SONITEXTIL's first years made up the period of greatest growth at the factory, where they were producing two million meters a month. Management recruited promising students at the Université Abdou Moumouni, and sent them to French schools and factories for additional training. 80% of products during the 1980s were exported to Nigeria, because there was an advantage for Nigerien sellers in the exchange rate between the CFA and the naira. The naira began to lose value in 1989, and SONITEXTIL found itself in the

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<sup>620</sup> "La Nitex: Dernier Chiffre d'Affaires 1.807.000.000" *Sahel Hebdo*, Nouvell Formule N° 16, January 26, 1976.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid.

“conjoncture économique,” or “economic situation,” that was constraining the rest of Niger at that time. In 1990, the factory closed its thread-spinning and weaving sections, and only printed cloth. In 1996, a Chinese company bought a majority share, and the company was again renamed, this time as ENITEX. In 1999, the spinning and weaving sections were reopened. They would be closed again in 2008.

In the 1960s, the ever-growing access to imported cloth and cosmopolitanism in Niger’s urban centers nurtured experiments in fashion. Wealthy women, the epitome of whom was first lady Aïssa Diori, kept abreast of trends in regional centers like Dakar and Abidjan, as well as the fashions in Paris.<sup>622</sup> In April 1964, Maud Africa presented its first collection of haute couture in Niamey, and *Le Niger* included photographs of three of the ensembles.<sup>623</sup> Each has a sleeveless fitted bodice with a flounce at the waist over a wrap skirt. (Figure 5.8) In Figure 5.9, a model wears elegant white gloves and a beaded necklace with a pale ensemble, the print of which is not discernable in the photograph. Her hair is carefully set in chin length waves. This was self-consciously African high fashion. It was distinct from the evening dresses and minidresses of Western fashion in 1964, even as it drew select elements, such as the gloves and the sleeveless blouses, from Parisian influences. The collection adhered to Nigerien urban bourgeois standards of modesty, and used garments like the wrap skirts, which were preferred by Nigeriens.

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<sup>622</sup> See Chapter Two for further discussion on Aïssa Diori.

<sup>623</sup> “Collection de Haute-Couture,” *Le Niger* April 17, 1964: 5.



Figure 5.8:  
The first collection of Maud Africa was presented in Niamey in April 1964.



Figure 5.9:  
Ensemble by Maud Africa, April 1964.

On March 11, 1967, the Musée National du Niger hosted an event they called “Niger-Confection,” or “Niger – Clothing Creation,” which was intended to showcase the latest fashions.<sup>624</sup> The text accompanying the photographs in *Le Niger* emphasized the changing fashions in Niger and the event’s goal to reflect that change:

A new step was taken in the revolution of fashion in Niger. It is particularly important for women. In effect, since the creation of “Niger-Confection,” a clear evolution in fashion is in the making. From “Tchin Taboraden,” to “Ali Bio” to “l’Intente” along with wedding attire, each seek above all taste and elegance.<sup>625</sup>

This sense of perpetual change demonstrates some Nigerien’s conscious adoption of the tenets of global fashion, which is defined by the ongoing change in styles of dress due to the mass production of textiles and prêt-a-porter clothing enabled by industrialization. The ensembles and their names reflect a playful understanding of urban Niamey women—and men—within Niger, the West African region, and the world. The “Tchin Tabaraden” is described in the caption as “Low waisted and fitted wrap skirt with pleats.”<sup>626</sup> (Figure 5.10) The waxprint cloth is accented with a lighter colored solid fabric in bands at the wide color of the sleeveless blouse, the skirt’s waist, and the skirt at mid-length. The skirt fits tightly on the upper legs before a wide flare that begins above the knees. Tchin Tabaraden is the name of a town and district in the north of Niger, in the Tahoua region. Naming this ensemble, which employed elements of regional and global fashion, after a desert market town in the north associated with the Tuareg hearkened back to the historic Saharan exchange networks in which Niger was an important site. The “Kassan Mou Mou Tchesso” was described

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<sup>624</sup> “Special Niger-Confection.” *Le Niger* March 20, 1967.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

as “low waisted, wrapskirt with golden lace on both sides. Black dress of lamé cloth with sleeves.”<sup>627</sup> (Figure 5.11). The “Amin Yarabi” had a “long straight skirt with pleats, low waisted with fanned sleeves.”<sup>628</sup> (Figure 5.12)



Figure 5.10 :

The “Tchin Tabaraden” is described in the caption as “Low waisted and fitted wrap skirt with pleats. “Niger-Confection,” Musée National du Niger, March 11, 1967.

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<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.



Figure 5.11:

The “Kassan Mou Mou Tchesso” was described as “low waisted, wrapskirt with golden lace on both sides. Black dress of lamé cloth with sleeves.”  
“Niger-Confection,” Musée National du Niger, March 11, 1967.



Figure 5.12:

The “Amin Yarabi” had a “long straight skirt with pleats, low waisted with fanned sleeves.”  
“Niger-Confection,” Musée National du Niger, March 11, 1967.

Although women's fashion was emphasized, at least two men's ensembles were included. The "Entente" was composed of a "sky blue polo with black embroidery at the collar, cuffs, and pocket. Polyester white pants."<sup>629</sup> (Figure 5.13). Although in one description, an apparent typographical error names it as "L'Entente," or the "Initiate," it is more likely that it is named after the West African regional political federation of which Niger was a key member, the Conseil d'Entente.<sup>630</sup> For certain Nigeriens, the Conseil d'Entente represented Niger's substantial role in international, and especially regional, politics, where Chief of State President Hamani Diori was a renowned negotiator and diplomat. The shirt's simple round collar evokes the Nehru jacket, which was just becoming fashionable in the United States and Europe through the Mod trends in fashion. The minimalist aesthetic, popularized most broadly by the Beatles, represented a hip, urban modernity. Its formal relation to a garment associated with Indian independence underscored the political pride in the name's allusion to the Conseil d'Entente.

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> See Chapters One and Two for discussions of the Conseil d'Entente. See also Virginia Thompson, *West Africa's Council of the Entente* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1972) and Mamoudou Djibo, *Les Transformations Politiques au Niger à la Veille de l'Indépendance* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).



Figure 5.13:

The “L’Entente” was composed of a “sky blue polo with black embroidery at the collar, cuffs, and pocket. Polyester white pants.”  
“Niger-Confection,” Musée National du Niger, March 11, 1967.

The “Wedding Attire” was a *mélange* of African and European traditions:

“Long and white sleeveless dress. White grand boubou, embroidered with the cross of Agadez.”<sup>631</sup> (Figure 5.14) The model dressed as a bride wears a minimalist white dress that reflected the trends in wedding dresses in the mid-1960s across Europe and the United States. In many places in the United States, white wedding dresses were just beginning to become *de rigoeur*. Her large tiara and veil are also adopted from Western wedding traditions, while the model dressed as a groom wears a grand boubou, a marker of prestige and wealth across West Africa. Unfortunately, the embroidered cross of Agadez is not visible in the photograph, but this indicates the designer’s desire to claim Tuareg visual culture as nationalist—and to express a shared

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<sup>631</sup> “Special Niger-Confection” 1967.

nationalist commitment at one of the most transformative moments for a person and family.



Figure 5.14:

The “Wedding Attire” was a *mélange* of African and European traditions: “Long and white sleeveless dress. White grand boubou, embroidered with the cross of Agadez.”

Over the next decade, a lively fashion scene continued to emerge in Niamey and elsewhere in Niger. Many women purchased waxprint cloth to take to tailors housed in markets and homes for the latest styles. Some, especially groups of young, urban people, wore the mini-skirts and bell-bottoms that were all the rage in Europe and the United States out at dance clubs in Niamey and other cities in Niger. As the capital, Niamey remained fixed as Niger’s central node in the regional network of fashion styles and textiles. The rankings of prestige in West African fashion conformed closely to the rankings of power in the former structure of colonial authority. Dakar was the undisputed center, with Abidjan running a close second with

a reputation for fashion and cosmopolitanism. In Niger, establishing a real and imagined urban center and a connection to wider networks was a crucial part of defining fashion. In a profile of the Awa Boutique entitled “Fashion in the Heart of the City,” the author defines the store and the storeowner’s stylishness in both terms:

Located on the ground floor of the El Nasr building, the Awa Boutique, which opened in June 1973, offers its clientele a wide choice of waxprint cloth, dresses, boubous, and embroidered shirts in a charmingly decorated space. Having been seduced by the ensembles in the window and by the kind welcome from staff, we asked Madame Bana, the owner of this cosmopolitan store, to discuss her business with us.

Madame Bana: “It is true that I love fashion, in the sense of the enhancement of someone’s personality through the richness of a cloth or the originality of a style. I love artisanry and handwork. I myself make necklaces and beaded purses. I cut and sew my dresses and my children’s clothes—and I design cloths. I also like wrapskirts. Essentially, I am passionate about everything that concerns fashion and decoration....I also sell waxprint cloth from Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, and Nigeria. I carefully choose the motifs and the percale, and I try to always carry exclusive merchandise. I also sell hand woven strips of textiles from Mali and Senegal.”<sup>632</sup>

The Awa Boutique was defined by its location in the “heart of the city,” as well as the owner’s exclusive networks that allowed her to carry products not found anywhere else in Niger. (Figure 5.15) By averring her love for artisanry and handwork, “les travaux manuels,” she implicitly dismissed conventional Nigerien associations of low social status with such work. Because of her cosmopolitan business and clear material wealth, Bana could literally and figuratively afford to challenge such stereotypes.

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<sup>632</sup> M.C., “La Mode au Cœur de la Ville “ (Feature : Notre Page Feminine : Progres au Feminine) *Le Niger*, 14 Janvier 1974.

In fact, she rejected such conceptions to embrace Western ideals of the individual artist—or fashion designer—which prize individuality and passion, both qualities Bana mentions in her interview.



Figure 5.15:  
Madame Bana poses in her shop, the Awa Boutique, in the Nasr Building in Niamey, Niger. 1974.

In the photograph that accompanies the article, Bana leans against a display case in her shop. (Figure 5.15) She wears a blouse and wrap skirt made from industrially woven cloth hand tie-dyed, which probably was imported. Her pose imitates those in European fashion magazines, as the image elongates her profile. A pile of textiles lie at her feet—perhaps she has just shown examples to the reporter, or perhaps she is in the middle of making a garment. Stacks of imported waxprint cloth sit in the background, below one of two Josepha Paris signs. Josepha Paris is a brand

of haircare projects that was founded in Dakar and Paris in 1965. According to one of its websites, “In 1958 in Sékou Touré’s Guinea, Josepha Jouffret chose to reclaim the hairstyling customs of her ancestors. She decided to love her frizzy hair and to respect its personality by not assimilating and becoming ridiculous through mimicry.”<sup>633</sup> The brand simultaneously claims the cosmopolitan luxury associated with the former colonial metropole while it declares a Panafrican, anticolonialist pride in African women’s hair and dress practices. Likewise, Bana’s Josepha Paris signs and products identify her shop’s connections in Dakar and Paris—and the shop’s valuation of African aesthetic forms in combination with a selective adoption of Western fashion forms. Women’s dress was explicitly connected to larger political goals of independence as well as to questions of modernity and industrialization.

After the coup d’état on April 15, 1974, the rapid changes in social and economic lives under the Conseil Militaire Supreme inspired ongoing meditations on the meaning of changing fashion in Niger. In the August 9, 1976 issue of *Sahel Hebdo*, journalist R. Chérie Fatou described women’s fashion as key experience of Niger’s modernity:

In Niger, like elsewhere, fashion evolves. Gradually, our younger sisters abandoned our traditional clothes: black wrapping garments, the *téra-tera*, etc..., for clothes that are more or less westernized.

It is the mad rush to Western fashion. And the tailors profit from it. What else can they do, since they are seeking money, but to reject authentic values in favor of anything that evokes the White world.

In the end, we don’t know where we are going anymore!

It is true that we live in a world that evolves fast enough to make us

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<sup>633</sup> <http://josepha-afrikanie.com/> [Accessed May 25, 2012]. See also <http://josephaparis.com/concept.html> [Accessed May 25, 2012].

dizzy. But that does not mean we have to forget what still attaches us to our past.

We must be careful to only take from Western fashion what goes best with our personality.<sup>634</sup>

Fatou interviews the owner and designer of the shop Jeunebelle, Jeannette Schmidt, who explains that “I insist on authentic garments, because we can only gain by returning to our former traditions. But since everything changes, I combine Western fashion with our authentic values.” The accompanying unlabeled photographs demonstrate what Fatou and Schmidt seek to describe. In the first image, a young woman wears a headwrap, a modest loose blouse, and a wrap skirt. (Figure 5.16) While its machine tailoring and industrially woven cloth mark it as “modern,” the style of the headwrap and the wrapskirt are modeled on older styles associated with many Nigeriens’ ancestors. In the second image, a model smiles at the camera in a boubou accented with machine-sewn embroidery at the collar, sleeves, and on the chest. (Figure 5.17) The relatively low cost of machine-woven cloth and machine-sewn embroidery allows more people to wear this prestigious garment—and to buy new ones more frequently. The final ensemble includes a midriff-baring halter-top over a long skirt. (Figure 5.18) The skirt’s print has large sun printed across the thighs, and plants grow up from the hem.

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<sup>634</sup> R. Chérie Fatou, “Femmes et Devenir : Du Pagne Noir à la Robe Longue,” *Sahel Hebdo*, Nouvelle Formule 42, August 9, 1976.



Figure 5.16:

Image accompanying Chérie Fatou's August 9, 1976 article "Femmes et Devenir : Du Pagne Noir à la Robe Longue," or "Women and the Future: From Black Wrapskirts to Long Dresses."

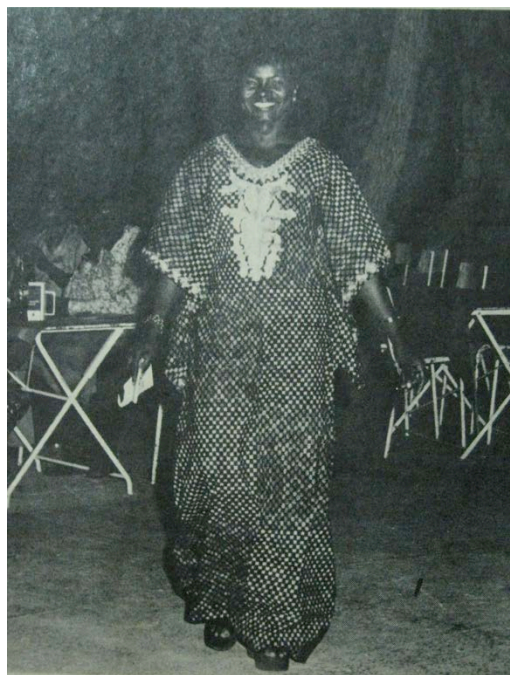


Figure 5.17:

Image accompanying Chérie Fatou's August 9, 1976 article "Femmes et Devenir : Du Pagne Noir à la Robe Longue," or "Women and the Future: From Black Wrapskirts to Long Dresses."



Figure 5.18 :

Image accompanying Chérie Fatou's August 9, 1976 article "Femmes et Devenir : Du Pagne Noir à la Robe Longue," or "Women and the Future: From Black Wrapskirts to Long Dresses."

Fatou's description of a dizzying world points to the fundamentally bodily experiences of modernity. Like many, she adhered to a teleological conception of time and human experience, in which Nigerien fashion, "like elsewhere...evolves." She assumed that the end goal was toward Western fashion, and she thus grieved the loss of the "authentic values" she saw represented in Nigerien dress of past generations. In the 1970s, Nigeriens dressed themselves with textiles that linked them to complex machinery in production processes for an unimaginably complex industrialized, globalized economy. They wore their modernity; the emblems of their simultaneous awareness of their positions in historical time in Niger and in geographic space related to the rest of the world. The beautiful cloths situated them both diachronically and synchronically. The designs that accompanied the article and Schmidt's explanation of her work both resisted Fatou's assessment that Nigerien fashion was evolving toward

Western fashion. All three ensembles were distinct from the floral long dresses, belted polyester separates, and casual blue jeans then in fashion in Europe and the United States.

The following year, another article insisted that changes in Nigerien dress, its incorporation into a fashion system of constant change, indicated a movement in a single direction toward Western fashion. Images of “traditional” dress, including young women performing dressed in *téra-tera* textiles, accompany Sophi Ledru’s article, “From Traditional Fashion to That of the West.”<sup>635</sup> (Figure 5.19). Ledru emphasizes the way dress identified ethnicity:

It was not that long ago that it was easy to differentiate each ethnicity from the others just by relying on styles of dress.

...Thus, the question, “What do you think of current fashion in Niger?” Mamadou Kané, a tailor at the Petit Marché, responded to us that “We cannot say that there is a true current fashion in Niger, but rather, there is an African fashion.”

To the same question, Madame Schmidt says, “Current fashion, it is the fashion of the past, but modernized, since now, we use new techniques, we have fine textiles at our disposal, and above all, we already have the style in our head: whether it is the two piece, the blouse, or the boubou. Nigerien women are conservative in fashion, and I think that it is a good thing. They must continue in that path, because they must not be ignorant that our traditional clothing is a kind of wealth that we just need to know how to exploit.”<sup>636</sup>

Mamadou Kané and Jeannette Schmidt both indicated how Nigeriens used fashion not to conform to an imaginary Western or non-African image, but to define themselves precisely as African. The photograph contrasts with those from the fashion shows,

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<sup>635</sup> Sophie Ledru, “De la mode traditionnelle à celle occidentale,” *Sahel Hebdo*, N° 94, September 5, 1977.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*

because they are in a line, intended to be watched as a group. Although each textile is different, the performance format does not ask the audience to carefully observe them singularly, as in a fashion show. The *téra-tera* is worn wrapped around the body, instead of being tailored to fasten with buttons or zippers. Wearing a *téra-tera* required more sartorial expertise than a blouse and skirt, and it indicated a connection to the past. Schmidt pointed to how ideas of traditional ethnicities were used as both inspiration for fashion innovations, and simultaneously as symbols in performances of Africanness, such as in the singing and dancing performance for which young women wore *téra-tera* textiles.



Figure 5.19:

Young women perform dressed in *téra-tera* garments. Image accompanies September 5, 1977 article by Sophie Ledru, “De la mode traditionnelle à celle occidentale,” or “From Traditional Fashion to That of the West.”

### ***Negrophilia: Images of Africa in Twentieth Century European Haute Couture***

As Africans were embracing waxprint textiles and using machine spun thread to innovate in hand weaving in the early and mid-twentieth century, images of Africa

went in and out of fashion in European haute couture and popular fashion. Building upon scholarly observations that Western and non-Western dress practices have been studied in isolation, Victoria Rovine has argued that “Temporality is central in this division between Western and non-Western dress practices, epitomized by the all too prevalent discussion of non-Western dress in terms of an ‘ethnographic present’ as opposed to the ‘perpetual future’ associated with Western fashion’s continual rush to the next season.”<sup>637</sup> These temporal paradigms were so widespread and deeply embedded that they shaped Fatou and Ledru’s autoethnographic analyses of Nigerien fashion. The Hegelian assignation of Africa to a permanent “primitive” past from which Europe could extract aesthetics and natural resources gave rise to some of the twentieth century’s most memorable fashions in Europe. Petrine Archer Straw analyzed the importance of figures such as Josephine Baker and Nancy Cunard in negrophilia, or the romantic primitivist phenomenon that vaunted African and African Diasporic visual and performing arts (and representations of those arts) in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>638</sup>

Western fashion had long appropriated elements from other cultures, and the adoption of aesthetics from colonized territories took on especially urgent and racialized terms in the heyday of negrophilia. Rovine argues that depictions of Africa in Western fashion resulted from “two simultaneous impulses: the desire to civilize (Westernize) colonial subjects, and to draw on their “primitive” practices in order to

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<sup>637</sup> Victoria Rovine, “Viewing Africa Through Fashion.” *Fashion Theory - Journal of Dress Body and Culture* 13, no. 2 (2009): 133–140.

<sup>638</sup> Petrine Archer Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000); Kristyne Loughran, “The Idea of Africa in European High Fashion: Global Dialogues.” *Fashion Theory: Journal of Dress Body and Culture* 13.2 (2009): 248.

enrich French culture.”<sup>639</sup> Paul Poiret, who most famously drew on “Oriental,” or Middle Eastern and Asian, visual tropes, also experimented with African inspirations in the 1920s.<sup>640</sup> Such appropriations, especially from textile designs, quickly grew more widespread, although, as pointed out by Rovine, they were always “located within a cultural narrative that reinforced French cultural superiority.”<sup>641</sup>

Paris was the epicenter of European negrophilia, and Josephine Baker, the African American actress, dancer and expatriate, the epitome of negrophilic performance. (Figure 5.20) Baker parlayed her Blackness into a successful performance career in Paris by plumbing the popular French imagination for primitivist stereotypes that she could perform and transform. She famously danced in skirts made from bananas, and her exposed body only partially covered in a kind of food invited the fantasies of a sexualized colonial male gaze desirous of consuming African land and African bodies. As argued by Archer Straw, she was particularly skilled in manipulating popular associations of animality with Blackness.<sup>642</sup> In Figure 5.20, she leans from her seated position to look at her pet leopard at eye level, and the large cat seems to return her gaze. The design on the loose, draping sleeves of her elegant evening dress echo the leopard’s spots, visually connecting them, just as their postures convey commensurability.

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<sup>639</sup> Victoria Rovine, “Colonialism’s Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion.” *Design Issues* 25, no. 3 (2009): 45.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid 57. Loughran 2009: 244.

<sup>641</sup> Rovine 2009: 54.

<sup>642</sup> Archer Straw 2000: 128.



Figure 5.20:  
Josephine Baker With Her Leopard, 1927

Along with leopard print, geometric textile patterns and beaded works were appropriated as shorthand symbols for the “primitive,” which then expressed an attenuated kind of modernist racialized transgression on the part of the wearer. Sonia Delaunay found inspiration in Kuba raffia textiles in some of the industrially produced textiles that she designed. Previously, popular textile designs had been solid, striped, floral, or plaid. Negrophilia and related Art Deco fashions introduced bold geometric forms to European fashion in the 1920s. The wooden sculptures collected by Guillaume Apollinaire and others were not the only artworks streaming from Africa into Europe at this time. Cut-pile raffia cloth also came to the attention of European designers, and the slightly irregular diamond pattern in Figure 5.21 is just one abstract motif that was valued for the artisanal mastery it required. Even on the wall, the design has a dynamism that suggests the movement of the human form that might wear it.

Delaunay reinterpreted this graduating diamond motif, and she reapplied it to the body. In one of her beachwear ensembles from 1928, the shorts, blouse, jacket, bag, and parasol all feature a textile inspired by Kuba raffia cloth. (Figure 5.22) Like their short haircuts and bold make-up, the geometric textiles on the models communicate their sense of playful confidence over the present moment in a quickly changing world.



Figure 5.21:  
Cut-Pile Cloth, (Democratic Republic of Congo), 20th century, Raffia, Private collection.  
<http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/arhistory/AfricanBodyArts/webpages/Kubacloth.htm>



Figure 5.22:  
Sonia Delaunay, Beachwear, 1928.

In the 1940s and 1950s, some European designers used African textiles to refer to the continent, but what Rovine calls “Africanisms” were rarely as widely in vogue during that period as they were during the 1920s and 1930s, or again later in the 1990s and 2000s. In the 1960s, countercultural activists in Europe and the United States, including “hippies,” feminists, Pan Africanists, Black Power advocates, anti-war protestors, and others appropriated non-Western dress elements to challenge racist, sexist, and nationalist power structures by celebrating, often in a romantic primitivist vein, avowedly superior non-Western cultures. Haute couture designers also quickly returned to non-Western aesthetics, and Yves Saint Laurent’s 1967 line of mini-dresses reintroduced Africa as daring and sexually alluring. (Figure 5.23)



Figure 5.23:  
Yves Saint Laurent, “African” Dresses, 1967.

Precisely because of the widespread and various uses of beads across the entire continent, Saint Laurent could construct an imaginary, commodified Africa unfettered

by specificity in his beaded mini-dresses.<sup>643</sup> Kaat Debo has observed that the mini-dress form symbolized for many the 1960s sexual revolution, and Saint Laurent's dresses made explicit the primitivist, erotic fantasies of a scantily-clad Africa.<sup>644</sup> Some of the dresses exposed the midriff through beaded netting. All of them featured geometric designs. The designs were not direct appropriations of African patterns, but instead they alluded to various textile, beadwork, and architectural motifs from different regions of Africa. The complex beadwork and raffia in the series were all that was needed to attest to their "Africanness." These symbols would remain salient shorthands in the global fashion system that Alphadi entered when he began his career in the 1980s.

### ***Alphadi: From Governmental Official To An Apolitical Artist***

While studying tourism during the day, Alphadi pursued his training in fashion and couture at the Chardon Savard Studio in Paris in 1983, and he launched his own label in 1984. When he became a designer as a second career in the 1980s, he encountered many business challenges in both Niger and Europe. As he sought out both European and African customers, he contemplated the history of the appropriation of African aesthetic forms by European designers and artists. In 2009, he told an audience of Nigerien university students that

We have been copied by so many European designers. It is up to you to protect African designers, sculptors, artists—it is up to you. Culture is

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<sup>643</sup> See Loughran 2009: 248; Amanda Gilvin, "Silent Beads, Modern Bodies: The Global Scope of African Bead Making and Beadwork." In *The Art of African Fashion*. 2nd ed. London: Thames & Hudson, Forthcoming; Victoria L. Rovine. "Waving to the Lion: Western Designers, African Style." In *The Art of African Fashion*. 2nd ed. London: Thames & Hudson, Forthcoming.

<sup>644</sup> Kaat Debo, "Beyond Desire: Introduction", in *Beyond Desire* (Amsterdam: Ludion, 2005): 22.

money. We need to take charge of it...Africa is sold too cheaply. But when I began, even Africans didn't understand what I was doing. Africans need to understand that their creativity has value.<sup>645</sup>

In his career as a designer, Alphadi has focused on his haute couture lines, but he has introduced several other branches to his brand, which has stores in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Paris, France; and Niamey, Niger. In 2001, he launched his perfume, *L'Air*. In 2005, he launched his line of sportswear, along with two more perfumes, *Alphadi for Men* and *Alphadi For Women*. In 2006, he launched a line of leather goods. He has also been a leader in organizing other designers and is a founding member of the African Federation of Fashion Designers (Fédération Africaine de Créateurs de Mode). He advocates fashion as a promising avenue for economic development in West Africa, especially Niger, to international organizations, African governments, foreign governments, and corporations. His most significant institutional contribution is the biannual festival, the Festival International de la Mode Africaine, discussed further below.

Alphadi established several of his signature styles early in his design career. In his 2004/2005 Autumn/Winter collection, he explored several motifs and styles from Mali and Niger. (Figures 5.24a-b) In the ensemble in Figure 5.24a, leopard fur lines a coat sewn from the handwoven, hand-dyed cloth know as *bogolanfini*, which originated in Mali and was introduced to world couture by designer Chris Seydou.<sup>646</sup> He references Western stereotypes that associate leopard fur with transgressive and hypersexual primitivism even as he reclaims the fur and the bogolan as African

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<sup>645</sup> Seidnaly 2009.

<sup>646</sup> For more on *bogolanfini*, see Victoria Rovine, *Bogolan: Shaping Culture Through Cloth in Contemporary Mali*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001.

symbols of luxury, protection, and status. One of his signature styles is the fitted bustier, and in this example from his 2004-2005 Autumn/Winter collection, he put the bustier under a skirt and jacket that evoked Wodaabe embroidery. (Figure 5.24b) He returned to Wodaabe embroidery in the collection of bright thread on equally bright silks in the collection he presented at the 2011 FIMA. (Figure 5.25) Alphadi reinterprets many other African aesthetic forms that have been used as trite stereotypical references by Western designers, and he introduces others, especially from West Africa and from the Tuareg culture. One of his signature motifs is the Agadez cross. (Figure 5.26) As a market of ethnic heritage and Nigerien nationalism, Alphadi uses the Agadez cross silhouette as a motif to be embroidered, silkscreened and appliquéd onto textiles. He builds upon exotic stereotypes in order to disrupt them from within, as the Agadez cross simultaneously becomes demystified and glamorized on these satin skirts.



Figures 5.24a-b: Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly, Ensembles from Autumn-Winter Haute Couture Collection. 2004-2005.



Figure 5.25 Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly, Ensemble from FIMA 2011 Haute Couture Collection.



Figures 5.26: Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly, Ensemble from Autumn-Winter Haute Couture Collection. 2004-2005.

During the 1980s, Madonna made Jean-Paul Gaultier’s designs based on lingerie, especially the fitted bustier, iconic. Perhaps nodding to the pervasive styles of the 1980s, Alphadi adopted the bustier as one of his favored elements. Like many of

Alphadi's works, these examples from the 2004-2005 collection clearly reference Western lingerie, with stitching that highlights the garment's boning and other construction elements. The cups of the bust are highly defined, and in the case of Figure 05.24b, further highlighted with embroidery. His recent works continue to explore the potential of the bustier, and in this dress from his 2011 Collection, Alphadi uses a smooth silhouette for the bustier of a garment that combines elements of a European evening dress and an West African boubou. (Figure 5.27) The bustier is decorated with beads and hand embroidery. The skirt of the dress is equally fitted to the body, but the matching silk sleeves evoke the voluminous form of the boubou. They hang loosely on the arms, or as pictured, they create a wing-like span that enlarges the body's form when the arms are raised. The pattern of the silk fabric is an abstracted print that includes bird feathers and leopard print. Here, nodding to Josephine Baker's legacy, Alphadi plays with primitivist stereotypes of African animality by combining such references with aesthetic forms, such as the beaded silk evening dress, associated with sophistication and luxury. As in the case of the coat in Figure 5.24a, the leopard print also refers to African traditions in which the animal skin marked men of high status and power.



Figure 5.27:  
Dress from Alphadi's 2011 Collection.

Alphadi vaunts his inspirations from African aesthetic systems, especially those of Niger. The Press Kit for the 2009 FIMA includes a description that he has published elsewhere:

In his designs, he brings the soul of Africa to life. Sometimes you find the spirit of the dunes in luminous ochre colors, while at another moment, you sense the river in the fluidity of blue veils... His originality stems from a blend of age-old Songhay, Zarma, Bororo, Hausa and Tuareg savoir-faire... And the bold lines and shape of Western design.<sup>647</sup>

In this characterization of his work, Alphadi reclaims ownership over the conflated African lands and African bodies of the colonial imagery discussed in Chapter Four. He also makes a nationalist assertion of rights over the aesthetic forms of the ethnic groups of Niger, as well as an anti-colonialist and modernist gesture of expertise over “the bold lines and shape of Western design.” He sees this amalgamation as central to

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<sup>647</sup> Festival International de la Mode African. *Press Kit for FIMA: Seventh Edition*. Trans. Amanda Gilvin. (Niamey: FIMA, 2009).

the modernization of design that he has achieved and continues to develop. His understandings of aesthetic change relate to his methods of production and desire to industrialize fashion production in Niger. He explained in 2010 that to modernize in design means to “try to give a chance to everyone to wear a product that pleases them: Africans, the French, Americans, even the Chinese. It is a question of industrialization, also a question of color, of trends. To modernize is to have *savoir-faire*, to simplify, to minimalize.” The capacity to meet the shared but mercurial tastes of a globalized market indicates modernity, as does the capacity to produce on a large scale in order to sell to diverse and farflung customers.

Alphadi frequently explains that he is “one hundred percent apolitical,” despite the broadly political implications of his goals for African economic development and intellectual property rights rooted in the fashion industry.<sup>648</sup> His refutation of a political identity is perhaps the savviest political element of Alphadi’s carefully crafted persona. First of all, it adds to his image as an autonomous, free-spirited artist in the Western modernist tradition; he follows his own inspiration, refusing political cooptation. Secondly, within the intricate national politics of Niger, a public claim to be apolitical excuses him from endorsing specific candidates or government officials over others. This is crucial in a nation-state in its Seventh Republic, especially since five of the eight successive governments have come into power since the beginning of the 1990s. Remaining “apolitical” permits Alphadi to work with any government. President Mamadou Tandja embraced FIMA in 2009 as publicity for Niger to bolster the Sixth Republic’s legitimacy after dissolving the constitution of the Fifth Republic,

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<sup>648</sup> Seidnaly 2009.

to the dismay of many Nigeriens and the international community. As part of the festivities, he named Alphadi a Commandeur de l'Order des Palmes Academiques de la Republique du Niger. Yet, because he is apolitical, Alphadi promptly met with representatives of the Conseil Suprême Pour la Restauration de la Démocratie after the February 18, 2010 coup d'état led by Salou Djibo, and the government led by democratically elected president Mahamadou Issouffou was extremely supportive of FIMA 2011. Alphadi's identity as apolitical is also useful in the international and corporate arenas, where he combines anti-neocolonial rhetoric and goals with diplomatic appeals for cooperation from powerful governments, corporations, and international agencies. Alphadi convinces donors and collaborators that they share his goals, and that supporting him and his economic and cultural projects will serve their own agendas. Finally, by stating that he is apolitical, Alphadi downplays the real economic and political power that he wields in Niger. Alphadi's international reputation and organizational prowess gives him considerable leverage in his relationships with the Nigerien government, as well as other groups and representatives in Niger. By claiming to be apolitical, Alphadi deflects any impression that he is seeking power for personal gain to emphasize his larger projects of pursuing his own art and effecting structural cultural and economic changes in Niger. A primary way he pursues his project, or as he frames it, "fights his battle," is through staging FIMA in Niger.

### ***Creative Madness: The Festival International de la Mode Africaine***

The first Festival International de la Mode Africaine was in 1998, and it took

place in the desert outside of Agadez from November 12-14. As intended, FIMA defied characterizations of Niger as a periphery to the global economy or to global cultural systems, even as it exploited fantasies of the remote and exotic Niger. Alphadi has called it a “folie creative,” or creative madness, to host an international festival in the remote location outside of Agadez at a moment of political uncertainty in the area and in Niger as a whole. Yves Saint Laurent attended the first FIMA, and the festival, which was funded by UNESCO, the French government, the Chinese government, Absolut Vodka, Yves Saint Laurent, and other prominent donors, included African designers along with prominent European participants. From the beginning, Alphadi promoted FIMA as a way to promote “Culture – Peace – Development.” Many of the designs shown at the first FIMA self-consciously combined African- and European-derived garments, but such works differed from the appropriation of African forms into world fashion because FIMA claimed African authorship, upending stereotypes of Africa as a mere repository of aesthetic natural resources to be mined by French designers like Yves Saint Laurent. By inviting and involving Yves Saint Laurent, Alphadi cleverly acknowledged Saint Laurent’s contributions to the fashion world’s recognition of the worth in African aesthetics, while arguing for the need for a shift in power so that Africans could economically benefit from African designs just as successfully as Saint Laurent had.

In Figure 5.28, two models wear ensembles that combine boxy button down shirts with pants that have very loose crotches, a style that is commonly worn by men under grand boubous across the West African region. Popularized for men by the rapper MC Hammer in world fashion in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they signaled

the porous definitions of world fashion and traditional dress at the first FIMA. A group of Wodaabe performers watch the fashion show in the background of the photo. FIMA always combines musical performances with the fashion shows, and the Wodaabe authenticated FIMA's references to the traditional. Some of the ensembles explicitly toyed with Western stereotypes of Africa and the "Orient," as in the case of the gauzy outfits worn by models who displayed Mikeal Krä's jewelry. In Figure 5.29, this model recalls colonial fantasies of scantily clad, submissive women hidden beneath their *hijabs*. The scarf over her head alludes to a titillating false modesty, while her sheer bandeau and wrap skirt with a high slit reveal much of her body. Krä's elaborate necklace covers her neck entirely and frames her body for visual consumption.



Figure 5.28:  
Image from FIMA 1998, near Agadez, Niger.



Figure 5.29:  
Image from FIMA 1998, near Agadez, Niger.

Alphadi told his audience of university students in 2009 that he founded FIMA to show that “We Africans, we also can do this. We are also geniuses. We are capable. We can do this. FIMA gives a positive image of Niger. Why shouldn’t we have a great designer? Why shouldn’t we produce things here instead of China?” That first FIMA increased Alphadi’s international profile, and increased his fame within Niger too. He won the prestigious Prix de la Fondation Prince Claus in the Netherlands in December 1998. Highlighting Africans designers as equals to a few European stars who also showed collections, FIMA seemed a complete success. When the preparations began, there was an uneasy unofficial truce between the Nigerien government and Tuareg rebels. The small airport in Agadez was closed. Alphadi cites the preparations for the first FIMA, which promised to bring attention, tourism, and economic development to the area, as a contributing factor to the June 8, 1998 peace settlement. The airport

reopened, and an eighty kilometer road was paved for FIMA. Afterwards, Alphadi gave away the thousands of tents and mattresses that guests had used to neighboring communities, most of whom were nomadic or semi-nomadic.

However, many Nigeriens were skeptical of FIMA, and resented the amount of money being spent on a celebration of luxury in a nation where so many could not feed themselves. The scantily clad models inspired great disapproval from many people who adhered to increasingly strict standards of modesty. Rumors began that all of the men involved with FIMA were homosexual and all of the models were prostitutes. The resistance to FIMA was itself part of a complex global economic and ideological landscape. In the 1990s, Nigeriens resented the increasing control of the World Bank, the IMF, and the United States over their government, and FIMA seemed to many like just one more foreign project ignoring Nigerien perspectives, despite Alphadi's leadership.<sup>649</sup> The criticism based in religion was no more provincial, because Muslims in Niger interact with Muslims around the world through education, video and audio recordings, travel to Mecca and other pilgrimages, business travel, and more to shape different religious approaches to modernity.

In 2000, Alphadi presented a preview of FIMA to President Mamadou Tandja, who backed the festival, which was to take place in Niamey this time. In the days before the actual festival, a few prominent fundamentalist Islamic clerics began to call for protests against FIMA, and riots broke out in Niamey, Maradi, and Zinder. Barbara Cooper has argued that FIMA was the igniting event for violence against single women and women wearing Western dress that was a larger protest by fundamentalist

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<sup>649</sup> Barbara Cooper, *The Anatomy of a Riot: Single Women and Religious Violence in Niger*. Working Papers in African Studies 241 (Boston, MA: African Studies Center Boston University, 2002): 6.

Muslim youth against neocolonialism and the fundamental ambiguity demanded by the secular humanist worldview that FIMA represented.<sup>650</sup> But rioters attacked women and threatened Alphadi's life because they were more available and vulnerable—especially women, unlike the abstract international organizations or the very real, and very armed Nigerien military. Scholars and others have criticized FIMA for other reasons, too, including the prioritization of spreading consumer culture over other kinds of economic development.<sup>651</sup> Cooper has suggested out that international organizations may like to support FIMA because it presents an attractive, passive, feminized version of Africa that can be purchased by Westerners like one more natural resource.<sup>652</sup>

### ***An Encounter between Africa and the West: FIMA 2009***

Alphadi persisted, and he continued to cultivate his networks of support on various continents. By 2009, FIMA was an entrenched institution, having outlasted three governmental constitutions, and Alphadi was circumspect, claiming universal support in an effort to undermine ongoing criticism of FIMA, which still inspires rumors about homosexuality and prostitution at every edition. Of course, both of these activities exist in Niger, but FIMA provides an opportunity to assert patriarchal disapproval of both, and a way to claim that they are foreign importations to legitimize that patriarchal disapproval. In 2009, Alphadi explained of the protesters from nine years before that “They didn’t understand. That’s normal. My parents are both

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<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Ousseina Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005): 157 and 194.

<sup>652</sup> Cooper 2002: 15.

important Islamic scholars. *I am Islam*. After the riots, we explained FIMA to people. It is an economic project. And now, they pray for us. I have had fashion shows in Mecca, and I go to Morocco for fashion shows all the time. We must not prevent an artist from showing his work! The most prominent Muslim women in Saudi Arabia wear sexy things and put their hijab over it. Islam is a tolerant religion.”<sup>653</sup> Here, Alphadi resituated Islam in Niger with diverse Muslim practices around the world. By invoking Saudi Arabia, he legitimized his definition of Islam that is opposed to the fundamentalist groups that continue to condemn FIMA.

In 2002, Alphadi held FIMA in Gabon, before returning a near-identical version of the festival to Niger again in 2003. That year, it was in Boubon, a small Djerma village only around twenty kilometers from Niamey. Due to his diligent outreach to Muslim leaders and the consistent support from the Tandja government, the 2003 edition saw no serious disruptions. In 2005, FIMA took place in Gourou Kirey, a small village fifteen kilometers from Niamey. In 2007, FIMA returned to Niamey itself. It has grown in scope, even through a period of economic and political tumult.

In 2009, FIMA had special saliency because Africanisms were again pervasive in global fashion, and scholarship and journalism on African fashion, especially in the English language, began to multiply.<sup>654</sup> New York Times Fashion critic Suzy Menkes

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<sup>653</sup> Seidnaly 2009.

<sup>654</sup> *Fashion Theory: Journal of Dress Body and Culture* published a special issue (13.2) dedicated to African fashion in 2009, which was based on a 2002 symposium on the topic. Els Van der Plas and the Prince Claus Foundation were working on the second edition of *The Art of African Fashion*, which is still forthcoming. Kristyne Loughran and Suzanne Gott's volume was due out the next year: Suzanne Gott, and Kristyne Loughran, eds. *Contemporary African Fashion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010). Two 2008 and 2009 exhibitions in New York city and their accompanying catalogues attracted increased attention to African textiles and fashion: Alisa LaGamma and Christine Giuntini,

observed,

In a hodgepodge of spring/summer offerings -- perforation and pattern, big sleeves here, harem pants there -- African inspirations were the overriding theme, from Galliano's high-rise hairdos (by the coiffure king Julien d'Ys) to Josephine Baker-esque fantasies at Louis Vuitton. The continent itself was sometimes given an ecological interpretation. Alexander McQueen brought together a Noah's Ark of endangered species, creating an urgent, discomfoting backdrop to the clothes. On a lighter note, fringe, a silken version of the tribal grass skirt, swayed through the summer season.

In previous years, references to Africa have at times seemed awkward, patronizing, even insulting. But there is a nobility and sensitivity to the current designs, which have arrived in tandem with a new fashion focus on diversity.<sup>655</sup>

Junya Watanabe incorporated waxprint cloth into his Spring/Summer 2009 collection, while Marc Jacobs included a vaguely "African" mask in stiletto sandals named "Spicy." Despite Menkes' optimistic reading of "a nobility and sensitivity" in European, American, and Japanese designers' collective embrace of Africanisms in their 2009 Spring-Summer collections, African designers still struggled to gain the international coverage by journalists like herself. At the same time, other actors launched efforts parallel to Alphadi's own. The first issue of the Nigerian ARISE Magazine was published in October 2009, and it organized a fashion show for African designers at New York Fashion Week that year.<sup>656</sup>

The theme of the 2009 FIMA was "The Encounter of Africa and the West."

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*The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008) and Lynn Gumpert, Kofi Anyidoho, and John Picton, *The Poetics of Cloth: African Textiles, Recent Art* (New York, NY: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2008). See also Lydie Diakhaté, "Cross-Cultural Patterns: 'Cloth is Like a DNA Swatch,'" *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 24 (Summer 2009): 158-167.

<sup>655</sup> Suzy Menkes, "The Bright Continent." *New York Times Style Magazine*, February 22, 2009, sec. M2. See also Nina Sylvanus, "The Fabric of Africanity." *Anthropological Theory* 7. 2 (June 1, 2007): 201-216.

<sup>656</sup> <http://www.arisemagazine.net/about>

The theme evoked the ongoing multiple, constant encounters between the two imagined entities of Africa and the West, as well as historic encounters of trade, culture, and colonialism.<sup>657</sup> By presenting the encounter between Africa and the West as the theme, Alphadi seeks to reorient neocolonial paradigms that limit him and other African designers. FIMA reimagined the perspectives of Africans in that encounter—an encounter in which Africans, too, are discovering and inventing Africa and the West, rather than passively being discovered by an imperial venture. Alphadi explained the theme by saying that this encounter at FIMA was

First of all, an encounter of peace. It is an encounter where I want to put love at the forefront, too. The European continent and the African continents were always in a relationship in which Europe was on top and Africa below. Today, we want to work together as equals, to work as partners. We want to make it understood that Africa also has savoir-faire. That is why the encounter between the West and Africa, it is a manner of being able to love Africa and to give a chance to Africa.<sup>658</sup>

Alphadi carefully cultivates the interest and enthusiasm of European, American, Asian and African participants, donors, and collaborators, and while he advocates for an empowered Africa, he delicately avoids alienating French governmental agencies and corporations (including AREVA) by assuming their good faith. The Chinese government was an early supporter of FIMA, and it has sent designers to participate in previous editions. While Alphadi continues to seek ways to work in China and with Chinese nationals in Africa, FIMA 2009 prioritized Africa and the West as an effort to first reshape understandings of the colonial past as Africans forge a future in a world

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<sup>657</sup> Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*. (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2001); V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

<sup>658</sup> Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly, Interview, November 10, 2009.

with a very different West than existed during the colonial era.<sup>659</sup>

FIMA 2009 took place over 6 days and nights. It was the first time that FIMA introduced a trade fair at which designers and other businesses had stands. There was a two day colloquium on business attended by Nigerien students and international guests like me. The first big event was the opening ceremony, which was an homage to the recently deceased pop star Micheal Jackson and Miriam Makeba, a South African singer and civil rights activist. As he had in 2007, Alphadi commissioned popular musicians to write a song about FIMA. The next evening, young Nigerien designers presented their work in a fashion show. On Friday night was a contest for young designers from across.<sup>660</sup> There was also a contest for African models. The final night was the Grand Nuit, which was an homage to another two recently deceased public figures, the French model of African origin, Katoucha Niang and the French designer Yves Saint Laurent. That night, more than twenty designers showed their work, including Alphadi himself, Kofi Ansah of Ghana, Xuly Bët of Mali and France, Jean Paul Gaultier of France, Jean Doucet of France, Jedda-Kahn of Brooklyn, New York, Claire Kane of Senegal, and Pathe-O of Côte d'Ivoire, Anderson D of Côte d'Ivoire, and Bazem'Se of Burkina Faso.

Designers' works were very diverse, and like Alphadi's, many of the biographies provided by the other African designers explained their dual influences of African "traditional" dress and Western fashion. Especially in 2009, when waxprint cloth had entered the palette of numerous designers outside of Africa, it equally

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid.

<sup>660</sup> See Victoria Rovine's profile of the contest. Victoria Rovine, "FIMA and the Future of African Fashion." *African Arts* 43.3 (September 1, 2010): 1–7.

identified garments as integrated into global fashion circuits just as it marked them as “African fashion.” Ivoirian designer Anderson Djakouré’s collection under his brandname, Anderson D, combined various waxprint fabrics with *bazin*, the dyed cotton damask popular throughout West Africa. Like much of his work, this collection used highly architectural elements to change the shape of the wearer’s body and the space around it. In Figure 5.30, a model wears a mini-dress made from blue waxprint cloth, and its large contrasting red collar and bustle accents coordinate with the floral pattern. The large sculptural collar enlarges the front of the model’s body, referencing human ribs, as well as the layered necklaces worn by Maasai women in Kenya. The bustle recalls the absurdity of the Victorian bustle by placing large poufs of cloth on the hips of a mini-dress. Yet, the bustle serves the same effect as those in the nineteenth century by exaggerating the hourglass figure of the model, which is also highlighted by the partial concealment of the triple collar. The waxprint cloths in Anderson D’s works appeal to his market in West Africa, where the bright aesthetic remains the favored dress of most women. The waxprint also represents the complex global exchanges in symbols and commodities in which Anderson D participates. Conceptual contemporary artist Yinka Shonibare dresses mannequins in period costumes tailored from waxprint cloth to question how historic European identities were constructed, and to point out the integral contributions of African cultures to those Western identities—and vice versa.<sup>661</sup> Anderson D’s waxprint ensembles are equally playful and complex in their exploration of the relationship between the

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<sup>661</sup> See Okwui Enwezor, “Modernity and Postcolonial Ambivalence.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109. 3 (Summer 2010): 595–620; and Yinka Shonibare, *Yinka Shonibare: Double Dutch* (Rotterdam: Distributed Art Publishers, 2004).

waxprint cloth, the bodies that wear it, and the eyes that see it.



Figure 5.30:  
Anderson D, Mini Dress, FIMA 2009.

Several designers incorporated handwoven African textiles into their designs at FIMA 2009. Bazemo Sébastien, who works under the name Bazem’Se, often uses *faso dan fani*, a handwoven cotton textile from Burkina Faso that became famous and widespread across the region when Panafrican President Thomas Sankara promoted its production and use as a nationalist Gandhian economic development project in self-sufficiency for Burkina Faso.<sup>662</sup> Genevieve Hill Thomas has observed that many Burkinaabe believe that *faso dan fani* has healing and protective qualities, and she suspects that there is a scientific basis to these beliefs based on the antiseptic qualities

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<sup>662</sup> <http://bazemse.e-monsite.com/> Accessed June 6, 2012; See n. 14 in Genevieve Hill Thomas, “Silk in the Sahel: Tuntun and Marka Faso Dan Fani in Northwestern Burkina Faso.” *African Arts* 45. 2 (2012): 58–69.

of indigo and other natural dyes sometimes used to produce *faso dan fani*.<sup>663</sup> *Faso dan fani* is most conventionally worn tailored into the modest blouses and wrap skirts, which are worn with a matching scarf. In Figure 5.31, this ensemble by Bazem'Se demonstrates the versatility of *faso dan fani*, and an example of Alphadi's description of modernizing designs that can appeal to diverse markets across the world. In West Africa, consumers would recognize that the fitted striped dress was made from *faso dan fani*, with its attendant symbolism of Panafricanism and protective powers. Outside of the region, the beige and grey colors suit a range of tastes in women's dress. The jacket's dramatic collar adds a glamorous layer to the understated dress. By using textiles woven in Burkina Faso, Bazem'Se perpetuates Sankara's nationalist ideals of Burkinaabe buying goods produced in Burkina Faso and valuing a distinctly Burkinaabe aesthetic. At the same time, Bazem'Se actively pursues a global profile and market. Not only does he promote *faso dan fani* as a viable export commodity, but his career demonstrates that African designers can produce *haute couture* and prêt-à-porter for export markets as well.

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<sup>663</sup> Hill Thomas 2012: 66.



Figure 5.31:  
Bazem' Se, Dress and Jacket, FIMA 2009.

Other designers incorporated handwoven African textiles, including Elie Kuame, a Paris-based designer of Ivoirian and Lebanese descent. His designs often feature hand embroidered gauzy tulle, laces, silks, such as the dress in Figure 5.32. In this collection, he also included accessories and accents made from *bogolanfini*. Along with the rich associations with Bamana culture and subsequent Panafrican adoption, the *bogolanfini* alludes to Chris Seydou, the Malian fashion designer who became the first African designer to achieve international prominence when he created his Chris Seydou line in Abidjan in the early 1980s.<sup>664</sup> Seydou began tailoring *bogolan* into Western styled garments in 1976.<sup>665</sup> The *bogolanfini* in this collection serves as an homage to Seydou, and it also takes on traditional Bamana symbolism of *bogolan*. Rovine has observed that *bogolan* is now produced under so many guises that bear

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<sup>664</sup> See Victoria Rovine, *Bogolan: Shaping Culture Through Cloth in Contemporary Mali* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

<sup>665</sup> Victoria Rovine, "Bogolanfini in Bamako." *African Arts* 30.1 (Winter 1997): 51.

little resemblance to its traditional production and usage that it can hardly been studied as a homogenous topic.<sup>666</sup> She and Sarah Brett-Smith also have explained that in traditional uses as garments for hunters, newly excised girls, and brides, *bogolanfini* serves as a protective cover that communicates the wearer's status.<sup>667</sup> Kuame creates women's clothing for exceptional events. Trained in a fashion house known for wedding dresses, he continues to specialize in them. His other dresses are intended for special occasions—or for creating special occasions for the wearer through the act of wearing them. His website claims that his motto is to “Make every moment of life a magical one.”<sup>668</sup> With clothing lines named “Women of Power” and “Africa, Dance with Her,” Kuame explicitly asserts gleaming, lacy versions of feminism and Panafricanism. In this ensemble, the subtle, shiny embroidery on the dress highlights the larger graphic symbols on *bogolanfini*, which is intended to evoke a sense of Panafricanist power and pride in African aesthetics.

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<sup>666</sup> Rovine 1997: 41.

<sup>667</sup> Sarah Brett-Smith, “Symbolic Blood: Cloths for Excised Women.” *Res* 3 (1982): 15–31.

<sup>668</sup> See <http://eliekuame.com/biographie.php> [Accessed June 5, 2012].



Figure 5.32:  
Elie Kwame, Dress and Shawl, FIMA 2009.

### ***Conclusion: Alphadi, Education, and Exhibition***

Alphadi has commented on the current economy that “In globalization, it is necessary to have knowledge. What New York does, what Paris does, Niamey can do.” He has been working for over ten years to found a school of art and fashion in Niamey, and FIMA also emphasizes education, through its workshops and through the prizes awarded to young designers in the form of trainings at fashion houses in Europe. At FIMA 2009, Alphadi presided over a ceremony to lay the first stone of the school building in land granted by the government in the Francophonie neighborhood on the outskirts of Niamey. Of that ceremony, the Press Kit read that “With the first stone being laid for the Ecole Supérieure de la Mode et des Arts in Niamey, new opportunities are opening up to creative artists. The teaching of excellence in fashion

and artistic professions will guarantee a viable future for related African industries.”<sup>669</sup> He, his staff at the Complexe Alphadi in Niamey, and his employees and collaborators in Paris and New York continue to work toward institutionalizing the school and building its facilities. He and his collaborators had worked with the Ministry of Culture of President Tandja’s Fifth Republic to draft a proposal, but that document has been in bureaucratic flux since the February 2010 coup d’état, although he continues to work closely with the new officials in the Ministry of Culture of the Seventh Republic. The school, which is based on the French educational model, is a key part of Alphadi’s vision for promoting fashion for African economic development and empowerment.

The school is also an important way that Alphadi hopes to change how Nigeriens, Africans, Europeans, Asians, Americans, and others around the world visualize and experience Niger. Kristyne Loughran noted that Alphadi understands the importance of “hype,” and in many ways, he never left his first career as an official promoting tourism in Niger. The 2009 Press Kit stated that “FIMA 2009 will encourage attendees to discover the many tourist attractions of the river region, which include river hikes, ecotourism, tropical fauna, and cultural festivities. Of course, FIMA is itself a prime tourist destination.”<sup>670</sup> Niger remains known in the international press for its famines, poor maternal health, and low literacy rates, but Alphadi hopes that his *École Supérieure de la Mode et des Arts* will become a magnet for fashion talent around the region, and a much-needed resource for talented young designers in Niger. In the discourses in economic development discussed in Chapter

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<sup>669</sup> Festival International de la Mode Africaine 2009.

<sup>670</sup> Festival International de la Mode Africaine 2009.

Four, extractive practices are obscured by images of Niger always being in need: of foreign capital in the form of aid, of foreign expertise from consultants, and of foreign labor from young volunteers. While Alphadi seeks contributions from diverse collaborators around the world, he intends for his school to promote Nigerien expertise and Nigerien aesthetics, even as students learn in a curriculum intended to be on par with higher institutions in fashion design in Europe and the United States.

Alphadi is particularly passionate about educating Nigeriens about industrialized production methods and information technology.<sup>671</sup> The internet has offered unprecedented potential for Alphadi and other African fashion designers to advertise their work. Alphadi maintains a website for FIMA, along with one for his own designs. He is also active on Facebook. He has provided tuition for one of his employees to study e-commerce at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Paris. In April 2012, *Who's She* by Tropics Mag announced their special issue dedicated to the 2011 edition of FIMA on Facebook, and it is available online.<sup>672</sup> (Figure 5.33) On the cover, Alphadi stands between two models, and all three wear clothing of his design. They are on the banks of the Niger River; an expanse of sand stretches over most of the background, and the river and the horizon meet their shoulders. The text proclaims “Alphadi, Prince of the Desert,” a nickname that the international press frequently uses for him. This magazine cover evokes the romance of the desert life, which is even more important for displaced Tuaregs and neighboring African groups than it is for the deep-rooted neocolonial French tourist imagination. However, this image also defies

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<sup>671</sup> Loughran also discusses this aspect of Alphadi’s business strategy. Loughran 2009: 261.

<sup>672</sup> [http://issuu.com/tropicsmagazine/docs/who\\_s\\_she\\_by\\_tropics\\_magazine\\_1\\_fima](http://issuu.com/tropicsmagazine/docs/who_s_she_by_tropics_magazine_1_fima) [Accessed June 1, 2012]

stereotypes of the Tuareg. Alphadi stands casually, and stares back at the camera through his sunglasses. He wears his *tagelmoust*, the scarf traditionally worn as a veil by Tuareg men, draped around his neck. Alphadi presents himself to be seen, but on his own terms—and as someone who creates and shapes what is around him. Unlike the Tuareg men on the cover of *L'Illustration* in 1931, Alphadi looks back at the reader from this magazine cover. (Figure 4.6) The models on either side of him wear bright colors that contrast with the blues, black, greens, and beige of Alphadi's cloths and the background. The hot pink and bold red convey the luxurious creative and material resources in Niger. The distribution of the magazine on the internet multiplies its audience.

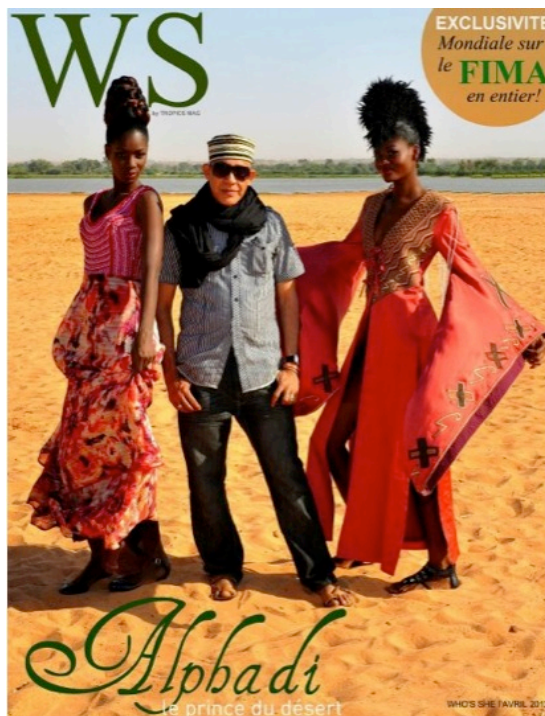


Figure 5.33:  
Cover of April 2012 Issue of Who's She by Tropics Mag,  
with exclusive coverage of FIMA 2011.

The internet opens up new possibilities for both virtual and material networks of exchange. More potential customers can see Alphadi's designs, and there are several videos available on You Tube and news sites in which Alphadi discusses his work in fashion and other projects.<sup>673</sup> Loughran notes the challenges in "virtualizing fashion," but the fundamentally visual character of the internet is compatible with Alphadi's mission to reshape Niger's image. Thanks to FIMA, a Google search of Niger might yield articles on haute couture in addition to ones on food insecurity and drought.

However, especially for the aspects of his work in Niger, where electricity supply, even in the wealthiest neighborhoods of the capital, can be unsteady, Alphadi continues to emphasize the construction of physical infrastructure for his educational and business goals. His Complexe Alphadi is located in central Niamey, and in it, there is studio space, a boutique, offices, storage space, and a popular nightclub and restaurant, the Havana Club.<sup>674</sup> Plans for the École Supérieure de la Mode et des Arts move steadily ahead, if slowly. Born on the eve of Niger's statehood, Alphadi's life compares in important ways to the scholar and politician Boubou Hama. Although the two men had different vocations, their multi-faceted careers share commonalities, and not simply just in the matter of breadth. Boubou Hama was an creative artist; his fiction, autobiographies, and written versions of Djerma oral literature remain his most popular literary contributions. Like Hama, Alphadi is a passionate educator who seeks

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<sup>673</sup> See Agence France Presse, *Niger's Alphadi Pushing African Fashion to Global Scene*, 2011. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoKDhOvmnMk&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoKDhOvmnMk&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

<sup>674</sup> A fire on September 30, 2011 destroyed some of the storage and studio spaces in the building, but the offices and shop were unharmed, and it did not affect FIMA 2011. Radio France Internationale, "Malgré L'incendie, Alphadi Maintient Le Festival De La Mode Prévu En Novembre." *Radio France Internationale*. Paris, September 30, 2011. <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20110930-malgre-incendie-alphadi-maintient-le-festival-mode-prevu-novembre>.

to educate in both informal and formal spheres. Hama and Alphadi adopted and adapted both Western and African institutions for their missions. Their imaginative work within Nigerien nationalist frameworks has been consistently global in scope. Alphadi reflected on the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger, the institution with which Hama sought to collectively re-envision Niger:

The museum is a contemporary history... The National Museum has always been for me an example of success. The museum is the best example that Niger has ever had, in terms of people's joy in it and in terms of the conservation of our cultural heritage. It is an example for the rest of the African continent. It is always cited everywhere as a well-protected, well-guarded, and well-loved example.

The combat that I lead is related to the work of the National Museum. We have done many fashion shows there. The museum is an extraordinary institution and conserves many extraordinary things. It gives a chance to Niger for inspiration, for creation, for textiles, for costumes, for jewelry, for everything that is art in Niger. We must conserve these arts... Everything that Niger has the most beautiful of, it is at the Museum. I could say, the National Museum is Niger in miniature. So it is fabulous for me that the museum is part of me—part of my inspiration.<sup>675</sup>

Alphadi incisively interprets Hama's temporal experimentation at the museum by describing it as "contemporary history." The museum, like FIMA, insists on the simultaneity of past, present, and future. Nigerien modernity represents not a break from the past, but shifting ways of interacting with time and symbols of time. Alphadi recognizes the museum's foundational contribution to his goals of imagining a cohesive, multiethnic Niger rich in beauty. He invokes Pablo Toucet's desire to miniaturize the nation to express his internalization of that beauty. Just as Hama and Toucet defied European taxonomies of art to display Nigerien arts as fine arts, Alphadi

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<sup>675</sup> Sidhamed "Alphadi" Seidnaly, Interview, November 10, 2009.

insists that dress in Niger can be haute.

As demonstrated by the fashion shows in Niamey in the 1960s and 1970s and by the innovative institution building of Boubou Hama, Alphadi builds on a long heritage of both fashion making and cultural education in Niger. That first FIMA may have been a “folie créative,” and his other nickname, “The Magician of the Desert,” is well-deserved, but FIMA has various precedents in Niger’s history as an independent nation. This does not make Alphadi less exceptional, but rather, speaks to his capacity to catalyze disparate and unrecognized interests, aesthetics, and talents in Niger into an international spectacle. Through FIMA, Alphadi promotes African designers on a world stage and just as importantly, he proves that there is a world stage in Niger. FIMA declares that Niger is not a hot, stereotypical periphery, but an important node in global haute couture’s economic and aesthetic network.

## CONCLUSION

*Today, becoming is returning.*

Boubou Hama<sup>676</sup>

*History is absolute time dissolved in the infinity of space...*

*History must serve people because, made for people and by people, it cannot be an object detached from them.*

Boubou Hama<sup>677</sup>

*Once you understand all of the models, anything that you can imagine, you can make.*

Ali Sinka<sup>678</sup>

The Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger remains an institution and site with rich potential for innovative education and decolonial work. Adamou Danladi explored the core educational mission of the museum to propose new programming to improve the depth of educational experiences of visitors and to strengthen connections with formal educational institutions in Niger.<sup>679</sup> The museum also participates in regional and international educational and museological work. As demonstrated by its successful hosting of the May 2010 West African Museum Programs workshop on textile conservation for curators from across the region, it continues its history as a regional hub for museological study. From 1981 until 1991, the Musée National du Niger organized and hosted an institute to train Francophone West African museum professionals, which was funded by the Nigerien national government and

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<sup>676</sup> Boubou Hama, "Le Devin. Temps Et Histoire Dans La Pensée Animiste De l'Afrique Noire." In *Le Temps Et Les Philosophies: Études Préparées Pour L'UNESCO* (Paris: Presses de l'UNESCO, 1978): 189.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid. 190.

<sup>678</sup> Ali Sinka, Interview, January 21, 2010.

<sup>679</sup> Adamou Danladi, "Musée National du Niger: Quelle Stratégie de Redynamisation de l'Action Educative?" Unpublished master's thesis. Institut National Supérieur des Arts et de l'Action Culturelle, 2006.

UNESCO.<sup>680</sup> After writing his 2009 thesis on strategies to improve conservation techniques at the Musée National du Niger, Maki Garba now works with a team of other curators in a newly renovated storage facility to catalogue and preserve the collection.<sup>681</sup>

Since the 1990s, the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (in its various incarnations) has sought to create a network of museums in Niger. This includes the Musée Régional de Dosso, which was founded in 1997 as part of Lux-Développement's DANI project. Haladou Maman, the director of the Musée de Dosso, works with the Nigerien Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, the Region of Dosso, the GIE-DANI affiliated artisans' cooperative in Dosso, the United States Department of State, the Zarmakoye of Dosso, and others to organize events at the Museum. The Musée Régional de Zinder was founded in 1986, and the Sultanate of Damagaram has also been organizing a museum for the last few years.<sup>682</sup> Museums are proposed for Maradi and Agadez as well.<sup>683</sup> The 2007 list of demands from the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice, the Tuareg rebel group once in conflict with the Nigerien

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<sup>680</sup> Mounir Bouchenaki, "The Niamey Center." In *What Museums for Africa?: Heritage in the Future: Benin, Ghana, Togo, 18-23 November 1991*, 103–104 (Paris: International Council of Museums, 1992); UNESCO, *Formation Des Museologues Dans Les Pays Africains D'expression Française: Résultats Et Recommandations Du Projet* (Paris: Programmes des Nations Unies, 1988); UNESCO, *Cinquième Cours De Formation En Muséologie Et Muséographie (19 Décembre 1985 - 20 Septembre 1986)* (Paris: Programmes des Nations Unies, 1987); UNESCO, *Quatrième Cours De Formation En Muséologie Et Muséographie* (Paris: Programmes des Nations Unies, 1986); *Fiche Des Contributions Du Gouvernement Du Niger Au Projet RAF/80/014 - Centre Régional De Muséologie* (Niamey, Niger: Musée National du Niger, 1981). Archives of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger.

<sup>681</sup> Maki Garba, "Perspectives Pour Une Gestion Durable Du Patrimoine Culturel à Partir De La Maîtrise Et De L'Application Des Techniques De Conservation Préventive: Cas Du Musée National Boubou Hama Du Niger". Unpublished Thesis. Alexandria, Egypt: Université Senghor, 2009.

<sup>682</sup> Mahamane Amadou, "Musée Régional De Dosso: La Région Dans Un Mouchoir De Poche." *Le Sahel*. Niamey, Niger, March 23, 2012.

[http://www.lesahel.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6914:musee-regional-de-dosso--la-region-dans-un-mouchoir-de-poche&catid=36:pages-culturelles&Itemid=55](http://www.lesahel.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6914:musee-regional-de-dosso--la-region-dans-un-mouchoir-de-poche&catid=36:pages-culturelles&Itemid=55). [Accessed February 28, 2012]; The museum at the Sultanate of Damagaram was not open in March 2010. Sanda, Siradji, "Le Musée Régional: Une Gestation Difficile." *Le Sahel*. Niamey, Niger, January 13, 2012. [http://www.lesahel.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9364:le-musee-regional--une-gestation-difficile&catid=38:les-dossiers-du-sahel&Itemid=57](http://www.lesahel.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9364:le-musee-regional--une-gestation-difficile&catid=38:les-dossiers-du-sahel&Itemid=57). [Accessed February 28, 2012]

<sup>683</sup> Direction de la Culture. *Projet De Creation Du Musée Régional d'Agadez* (Niamey, Niger: Direction de la Culture, Ministère de la Jeunesse, des Sports, et de la Culture, n.d).

government, included the construction of a museum in Agadez as one of the conditions for a peace agreement.<sup>684</sup> The branch of the Université Abdou Moumouni's Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines in Maradi has a small gallery dedicated to the archaeology and history of the Maradi region. There are plans to found a private museum on Mawri culture in Dogondoutchi. For many in Niger, museums are a unique institutional medium of national, cultural, and ethnic public self-representation that legitimize modern citizenry by consecrating a topic worth of display and education, and by interpreting a past with which to contrast a contemporary modernity.

Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger-based master leather artisan Amadou Addoh remarked about the museum galleries that “The museum, it is a history—it is necessary to change from time to time.”<sup>685</sup> As historiographic strategies adapt to the mercurial, ever-brief present, history changes, and Addoh expects representations of that history also to change. Likewise, as argued by Boubou Hama, history changes us. A Djerma version of a proverb widespread in West Africa chides that “The person who forgets yesterday is not taking care of today.”<sup>686</sup> This dissertation, while grounded in the past, ultimately aspires to contribute to the care of today. Critiques herein are not mere exercises, but lay the foundation—the warp—for proposals for paradigmatic changes in how the arts of Niger can be learned, practiced, and represented—in Niger, in European museums, in American-based art history, and in other discursive and exhibitionary spaces.

In an argument related to Gary Wilder's critique of colonial humanism and

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<sup>684</sup> Mouvement des Nigériens Pour la Justice, “Programme Des Revendications Du Mouvement Des Nigériens Pour La Justice (M.N.J.)”, 2007. [www.ipacc.org.za/uploads/.../MNJ\\_\\_Niger\\_\\_manifesto\\_5\\_07\(1\).pdf](http://www.ipacc.org.za/uploads/.../MNJ__Niger__manifesto_5_07(1).pdf) [Accessed February 28, 2012].

<sup>685</sup> Interview, August 15, 2009.

<sup>686</sup> Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition and Boubou Hama. *L'Essence Du Verbe* (Niamey Niger: Centre d'études linguistique et historique par tradition orale Organisation de l'unité africaine, 1978): 46-47.

Peter Bloom's of retroactive colonial humanitarianism, in Chapter Four, I analyze the exploitative nature of economic strategies that aspire and claim to be giving something to artisans who participate in "fair trade" and other philanthropically marketed projects.<sup>687</sup> To imagine an economy based on Maria Mies' feminist principles of sustenance (instead of consumption) and resource distribution (instead of resource concentration), it is urgent to reorient the teleological visions of time that undergird the hegemonic interpretations of development. If, as Hama tells us, becoming is returning, our shared aesthetic histories have significant roles in this reorientation. Heinze Kimmerle argues that "development, especially in its successful forms, has devastating consequences for the natural environment. Economic development leads at the same time to ecological retrogression."<sup>688</sup> It may necessitate an overhaul of lexicon, an abandonment of the term "development," but improvements to the quality of life of artisans, farmers, pastoralists, and most others in Niger will require the nurturing of the environment in which they live, rather than an exclusively extractive approach centered on capital. The limits of a neocolonial nation-state like Niger to protect its citizens manifest in the drastic evidence of global climate change in Niger, where desertification, erratic weather patterns, rising temperatures, and a dramatically shrinking Lake Chad bear witness to the effects of consumption practices elsewhere in the world.

I advocate for increased multidimensional educational opportunities for Nigerien citizens, which would include a robust arts and art history curriculum that emphasizes the arts of Africa and the Diaspora, but also introduces Asian, indigenous

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<sup>687</sup> Peter Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-state: Negritude & Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>688</sup> Heinze Kimmerle, "The Concept of Time as a Key-notion for New Ideas About Development." In *Temps Et Développement Dans La Pensée De L'afrique Subsaharienne* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998): 16.

American, Western, and other art histories. I distinguish this education from “cultural development” as interpreted to mean an aspect of economic development, in which the arts are instrumentalized to serve the interests of capital and the nation-state, instances of which can be found throughout this dissertation.<sup>689</sup> Such efforts result in what Shelley Errington has termed cultural strip-mining, a process by which a sanitized marketed sign replaces the referent, in which “if the threatening jungle has transmuted into the friendly rainforest in Euro-America, one of the reasons for its newfound appeal is that it and the people who live within it are threatened with extinction due to policies implemented and justified by the development narratives.”<sup>690</sup> Economic development projects, whether uranium mining in the desert or the deforestation of jungles in Errington’s example, render previous modes of life impossible and force incorporation into a cash economy. Cultural development projects then claim to valorize indigenous aesthetic forms by commodifying them on a global market.

As Pablo Freire and bell hooks have argued, educational systems are inherently political, and “teaching to transgress,” as hooks describes it, requires pedagogues and teachers to constantly reinvent and adapt a Freirian pedagogy of hope to the needs and perspectives of students and their specific situations.<sup>691</sup> A pedagogy of hope in arts education can “unveil opportunities for hope, regardless of the obstacles.”<sup>692</sup> This education can train students in rigorous handskills as well as conceptual aesthetic paradigms—in fact, both aspects of the pedagogy are required for the other to be most fully successful. Freire advocates education that encourages critical thought—a

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<sup>689</sup> See also Kimmerle 1998: 25.

<sup>690</sup> Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 43.

<sup>691</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000); bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>692</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1994): 9.

validation of the urge to ask “Why?” He explains that the “perception of the why of the facts...lead us to transcend the narrow horizons of the neighborhood or even the immediate geographical area, to gain [the] *global* view of reality.”<sup>693</sup> Or, as Sennett might describe it, most artisanry education is for the *animal laborens*, answering “How?” Education is needed for the *homo faber*, who asks, “Why?” Students in formal schools and artisans in cooperatives in Niger already participate in intersecting mediascapes and ideoscapes that they affect when they learn to embroider in a middle school home economics class or adapt jewelry designs when eyeing the Western expatriate market in Niamey.<sup>694</sup> They deserve an education that accounts for that embroidered sampler, those earrings, their wedding *tera-tera* textiles, and other objects of beauty that surround them within their histories and the complex global realities composed of layered ethnoscapescapes, technoscapescapes, finanscapescapes, mediascapescapes, and ideoscapes they regularly navigate in their quotidian lives.

SAFEM’s evolving educational programs and Alphadi’s Ecole Supérieure de la Mode et des Arts will have significant impact, but Niger requires far more comprehensive educational interventions—and inventions.<sup>695</sup> Most arts education in Niger at present neither identifies its topic as “art” nor its methods as “education.” Projects that condescend to artisans in the vein of economic development categorize their work as artisanry or craft, not by evaluation of the object, but by evaluation of the maker’s education, class, and mode of production. As Richard Sennett has suggested, taxonomic exercises about art and craft reflect larger anxieties about constituting human subjects: “Though ‘what is art?’ is a serious and endless question,

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<sup>693</sup> Freire 1994: 87.

<sup>694</sup> Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai invented the concepts of multiple “–scapes” to describe changing networks of cultural and capital exchange in a globalized world. He proposed five: ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, mediascape, and ideoscape. See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>695</sup> See Chapter Four for a discussion of SAFEM and Chapter Five for a discussion of Sidhamed “Alphadi” Seidnaly.

lurking in this particular definitional worry may be something else: we are trying to figure out what autonomy means—autonomy as a drive from within that impels us to work in an expressive way, by ourselves.”<sup>696</sup> To label objects art suggests the autonomy of a maker—the aura of authenticity of an art object no longer requires evidence of the hand, but evidence of an artist’s participation in certain globalized intellectual discourses and their assertion of individual autonomy. Reflecting widespread stereotypes about the lack of both art and autonomy in Niger, prominent Nigeriens and expatriate development workers alike asked me, upon learning that I was conducting art historical research, “What are you doing *here*?”

In artisanal and other development projects, Niger is beset with *formations* (trainings) and *sensibilisation* (awareness raising), but only those who attend formal schools gain what is recognized as “education.” Labeling educational efforts as “training” and “awareness raising” for most of the population perpetuates stereotypes of students’ lack of autonomy—and by extension their full citizenry and humanity. Such stopgap measures also distract from the need for systemic change—and in the case of Niger of systemic invention. Between 2005 and 2009, the primary school net enrollment/ attendance was at 38%. Between 2004 and 2008, the rate of literacy for young men between fifteen and twenty-four years old was 52%, and the rate of literacy for young women between fifteen and twenty-four years old was 23%.<sup>697</sup> As advocated by African leaders in the 1960s, the Nigerien nation-state needs a strong, multi-faceted educational system and an economy focused on the needs of its citizens, if those citizens are going to lead full, prosperous lives.<sup>698</sup>

The inclusion of a robust, critically engaged arts curriculum is crucial for

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<sup>696</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 65.

<sup>697</sup> “UNICEF - At a Glance: Niger - Statistics”, n.d.

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/niger\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/niger_statistics.html). [Accessed June 9, 2012]

<sup>698</sup> *Final Report: Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, Addis Ababa, 15-25 May 1961* (Addis Ababa: United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, 1961).

several reasons. First, students with artisanal ancestries must be recruited for a range of education opportunities, none of which should be conveyed as mutually exclusive with an artisanal identity or artisanal labor. Associations of enslavement and caste with artisanal work continue to justify discrimination against artisans in Niger, and many people both gladly and sadly abandon artisanal work or refuse to teach their children skills when they, or their children, gain middle or secondary education. Artisans and people with artisanal heritages should not be pressured to pursue artisanal or other artistic work because of their ancestry, but nor should they be prevented from finding potentially satisfying and lucrative opportunities in such work because it is considered socially incompatible with the class privileges associated with formal secondary and post-secondary education. Likewise, art education in higher levels of formal education is a valid intellectual pursuit in and of itself, and all students at the secondary and university levels could benefit from access to formal arts education. I advocate broad access to an arts education based on a Freirian pedagogy of hope.

As Nomoda Ebenezer Djaba and I have argued, innovation and economic success in African artisanry, which is now inevitably part of global systems of exchange, requires many kind of education, including formal education.<sup>699</sup> High school, college, and graduate school graduates can find expressive, intellectual, and economic opportunities in art and artisanry, without devaluing the substantial knowledge of artisans who have honed their craft in apprenticeships with family members and other individuals, as well as in participation in the occasional training or awareness raising program. Furthermore, as Sennett points out, experts in manual labor bring unique competencies to formal education, such as discipline and the “focus

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<sup>699</sup> Amanda Gilvin and Nomoda Djaba. “Gender, Education, and Aesthetic Change in the Krobo Bead Industry.” In *International Bead and Beadwork Conference: 22-25 November 2007 Istanbul*. Valerie Hector and Jamey Allen, eds. (Istanbul: Rezan Has Museum: 2007).

on concrete problems.”<sup>700</sup> Sennett explains that the equation of “manual routine with mindless labor, the *Animal laborens* of Arendt’s imagination” is a myth that does not serve the interpretation of history—or the weaving of futures.<sup>701</sup> Philosopher Jason Stanley recently has made similar arguments to both scholarly and popular audiences, in which he insists that practical and theoretical bodies of knowledge are necessarily intertwined.<sup>702</sup> The most abstracted digital labors in the contemporary economy require an understanding of the material in order to make objects or processes manifest. As Charles Duhigg, other journalists, writers, and activists have recently brought to American public attention, it has been the very material expertise of innovators at Apple that has enabled them to radically reinvent global technoscapes.<sup>703</sup> Even more importantly, the iPhone is *handmade* in China, or at least *hand* assembled in China.<sup>704</sup> Nostalgia for the handmade artisanal object conceals the very manual work that for many, defines the latest shared sense of modernity. If the iPhone is just as handmade as a *tera-tera*, then many art historians, economists, laborers, and iPhone users are asking the wrong questions.

Widespread customs of reserve can prevent Nigeriens from volunteering information, and a proverb offers inspiration to a historian for formulating research questions: “In order to receive good answers, you must ask good questions.” This

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<sup>700</sup> Sennett 2008: 266.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid.

<sup>702</sup> See Jason Stanley, *Know How* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

<sup>703</sup> Charles Duhigg and Keith Bradsher, “How the U.S. Lost Out on iPhone Work.” *New York Times*, January 21, 2012.

<sup>704</sup> Duhigg describes that last-minute production strategy described to him that preceded the public introduction of the iPhone: “In mid-2007, after a month of experimentation, Apple’s engineers finally perfected a method for cutting strengthened glass so it could be used in the iPhone’s screen. The first truckloads of cut glass arrived at Foxconn City in the dead of night, according to the former Apple executive. That’s when managers woke thousands of workers, who crawled into their uniforms—white and black shirts for men, red for women—and quickly lined up to assemble, *by hand*, the phones. Within three months, Apple had sold one million iPhones. Since then Foxconn has assembled over 200 million more.” [Emphasis added]. Ibid.

dissertation results from my longstanding questions about how taxonomies of art and craft condition and connect makers, objects, and users within global systems of aesthetics and exchange. An answer that I have repeatedly encountered confirms the connection between an artist's education and the kinds of discourses and markets she is able to access. In response to its questions about technology, environmental degradation, artistic aspirations, famine, and the potential for joy in labor, this dissertation challenges paradigms of technology that value miniaturization, automation, and consumption over human sustenance, intelligence, and aesthetic judgment.

Heeding Sennett's advocacy for viewing technology as a potential component of radical emancipation, I agree that working with various kinds of technology, from hand-built looms to digital sound recordings, and rigorously examining the material conditions of producing and using the technology, is the "radical, emancipatory challenge."<sup>705</sup> My weaving instructor Abdoulwahid Goumer recorded a video of Gourmantché dancers who performed at the 2010 Fête de l'Artisanat on his cellular phone, and I regularly use Skype to call him and other weavers on their cellular phones. According to Charles Duhigg and others, the computer on which I typed this dissertation was assembled in Shenzhen, China at a factory with very poor labor conditions.<sup>706</sup> The looms that Goumer and his colleagues at the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger construct have technological advantages, not least of which

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<sup>705</sup> Sennett 2008: 118.

<sup>706</sup> Charles Duhigg, and David Barboza. "The iEconomy: In China, The Human Costs That Are Built Into an iPad." *New York Times*, January 26, 2012. See also Charles Duhigg, "Tim Cook: 'We Care About Every Worker'." *New York Times*, January 27, 2012, sec. The Business of Technology; Charles Duhigg and Nick Wingfield, "Apple Asks Outside Group to Inspect Factories." *New York Times*, February 13, 2012, sec. Business of Technology; Charles Duhigg and Nick Wingfield, "Apple In Shift, Pushes an Audit of Sites In China." *New York Times*, February 14, 2012; David Barboza and Charles Duhigg, "Pressure, Chinese and Foreign, Drives Changes at Foxconn." *New York Times*, February 19, 2012.

being that weavers can construct and repair them. Olivier Meunier's monograph on industries in Niamey often reads like a catalogue of the different machines donated by foreign aid organizations that have broken down and are unused.<sup>707</sup> The looms produce no pollution. The narrow bands sewn together adhere to longstanding regional aesthetic regimes. Expert weavers can adjust any aspect of their loom, which can affect elements of the weaving of attend to the weaver's ergonomic needs.

In a fine potential example of becoming through returning, the handbuilt African loom might be on the cutting edge of technological and artistic production. The globe is inundated with industrially produced textiles, and the giant industry wreaks ecological and human damage at every stage, from cotton agriculture to toxic, harsh factory conditions.<sup>708</sup> Physicist Marcin Jakubowski's Open Source Ecology project designs small-scale industrial machines with the intention of posting cost-free, manageable directions for their construction on the World Wide Web. Jackubowski works with others to develop machines that have many of the advantages and relatively small scale of hand built West African looms.<sup>709</sup> West African artisans and their looms have many instructive lessons for other technological and artistic innovators of the twenty-first century. Instead of dividing the world between

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<sup>707</sup> Olivier Meunier, *Formation, Organisation Du Travail Et Maintenance Dans Les Entreprises En Afrique Subsaharienne: Anthropologie Des Techniques Dans Les PMI-PME Du Niger* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

<sup>708</sup> "Victoria's Secret Revealed in Child Picking Burkina Faso Cotton." *Bloomberg*, n.d. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-12-15/victoria-s-secret-revealed-in-child-picking-burkina-faso-cotton.html> [Accessed February 28, 2012]; Greenpeace. *Dirty Laundry*, July 13, 2011. <http://www.greenpeace.org/eastasia/publications/reports/toxics/2011/dirty-laundry/>; "China's Famed Pearl River Under Denim Threat." *CNN*, April 26, 2010. [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-04-26/world/china.denim.water.pollution\\_1\\_denim-pearl-river-factory?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-04-26/world/china.denim.water.pollution_1_denim-pearl-river-factory?_s=PM:WORLD) [Accessed February 28, 2012]; William Moseley, *Hanging by a Thread: Cotton, Globalization, and Poverty in Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008).

<sup>709</sup> "Marcin Jakubowski." *Open Source Ecology*, [http://opensourceecology.org/wiki/Marcin\\_Jakubowski](http://opensourceecology.org/wiki/Marcin_Jakubowski) [Accessed February 28, 2012]; Marcin Jakubowski: *Open-sourced Blueprints for Civilization | Video on TED.com*, [http://www.ted.com/talks/marcin\\_jakubowski.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/marcin_jakubowski.html), [Accessed February 28, 2012]; "Building A Village Starts With Building The Tractor: NPR." *NPR.org*, February 19, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/19/147110017/building-a-village-one-home-brewed-tool-at-a-time>.

producers and consumers, artists, educators, and government officials now must work to change institutions to facilitate Nigerian artists' and others' opportunities as instructors and students, as artists and inventors, as growers and eaters, and as innovators and experimenters.

## APPENDIX ONE: TIMELINE

- 1890 French occupy Niger.
- 1898-1900 Voulet-Chanoine Mission in West Africa.
- 1900 Territoire Militaire de Zinder established.
- 1906/1909 Boubou Hama born in Foneko.
- 1910 Territoire Militaire du Niger established.
- 1911 Zinder named capital of Territoire Militaire du Niger.
- 1922 Colonie du Niger established.
- 1926 Niamey named capital of Colonie du Niger.
- 1929 Boubou Hama graduates from Ecole Normale William Ponty and moves to Niamey.
- 1931 Severe famine in Niger.
- 1946 As representative of Parti Progressiste Nigérien, Boubou Hama attends the inaugural meeting of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain in Bamako.
- 1954 *L'Empire de Gao*, coauthored by Boubou Hama and Jean Boulnois is published
- 1954-1957 Boubou Hama is interim director of the satellite of Institut Français d'Afrique Noire in Niamey.
- 1956 Boubou Hama attends the *Congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs*.
- 1957 French locate uranium deposits in Air Mountains.
- 1958 Niger becomes autonomous republic of the French Community. Boubou Hama invites Pablo Toucet to Niger to found national museum.
- 1959 Hamani Diori's Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), or the Niger Progressive Party (NPP) defeats Djibo Bakary's SAWABA

- Party, which is officially dissolved. Bakary is exiled.
- 1960 Niger declares independence on August 3. Hamani Diori becomes president of the First Republic.
- 1963 Foiled military coup plot.
- 1965 Unsuccessful attempt by SAWABA to assassinate Diori and stage coup d'état.
- 1968-1973 Severe drought and famine. Student and trade union protests.
- 1969 Boubou Hama publishes *Kotia Nima: Rencontre Avec l'Europe*.
- 1974 Seyni Kountché leads a military coup and takes office as chief of state of a military regime. Hamani Diori and Boubou Hama imprisoned.
- 1975 – 1981 Foreign aid and rising uranium prices fund Kountché's government.
- 1977 Boubou Hama and Hamani Diori released to house arrest.
- 1981-1984 Drop in uranium prices.
- 1982 Boubou Hama dies.
- 1984 Alphadi introduces his first fashion line. Artisans at Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger establish cooperative.
- 1987 Kountché dies. Ali Saibou becomes chief of state.
- 1989 Constitution for Second Republic adopted. Saibou elected as chief of state.
- 1990 Structural Adjustment Programs implementation attempted. Police open fire on student demonstration against government austerity plan for educational system on February 9. The next week, more than 5,000 people participate in a protest march to cemetery where victims were buried. Thousands of Tuaregs expelled from Algeria and Libya. Rebellion by Tuareg against government begins. Ongoing conflicts between government and students, trade unions.
- 1991 Transitional government under Andre Salifou. Continued conflict between government and Tuareg rebels.
- 1992 Constitution of Third Republic of Niger, which allowed multiparty

- elections, ratified.
- 1993 Mahamane Ousmane elected president. Continued student protests.
- 1995 Ceasefire between government and the Tuareg's Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara, but conflict continues. Niger signs a Structural Adjustment letter of intent.
- 1996 Colonel Ibrahim Mainassara leads coup d'état. Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Niger ratified. New peace agreement with Tuareg rebels.
- 1998 First edition of FIMA (Festival International de la Mode Africaine).
- 1999 Inauguration of Fifth Republic of Niger. Mamadou Tandja elected president.
- 2000 Riots precede second edition of FIMA. First edition of SAFEM (Salon International de l'Artisanat Pour la Femme).
- 2003 United States president George W. Bush makes fraudulent claim that Iraq tried to smuggle yellowcake out of Niger.
- 2004 Mamadou Tandja wins second term as president.
- 2005 Severe famine. President Tandja refuses to acknowledge there is a famine.
- 2007 Tuareg rebellion renewed.
- 2009 Government and Tuareg Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice reach peace agreement. President Mamadou Tandja dissolves constitution, declares Sixth Republic of Niger. Kidnappings of Westerners by Al Qaeda in the Maghreb.
- 2010 Military coup d'état led by Salou Djibo. Inauguration of Seventh Republic of Niger. Famine.
- 2011 Mahamadou Issoufou elected president.

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## GLOSSARY

<i>A.O.F.</i>	Afrique Occidentale Française. Title of federation of eight French colonies in West Africa. It was an important category for bureaucratic management, in addition to how colonies were imagined. The eight colonies were Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey (now Benin) Guinea Française (now Guinea), Haute Volta (now Burkina Faso), Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Soudan Française (now Mali).
<i>babba</i>	Center section of a <i>téra-tera</i> textile, it has a greater concentration of complex motifs made with the floating weft.
<i>bazin</i>	An imported, industrially produced cotton damask cloth that is usually hand-dyed and starched in West Africa.
<i>Bellah</i>	Songhay term for people enslaved by the Tuareg and their descendants. The equivalent in Hausa is “buzaje” and in Tamasheq, it is <i>Iklan</i> . In interviews in 2009 and 2010, many Bellah weavers identified their ethnicity to me as “Tuareg.”
<i>bogolanfini</i>	Handwoven cotton textile sewn in strips and then dyed with earthen minerals. Associated with Bamana culture. Popularly known as “mudcloth.”
<i>boubou</i>	Loose-fitting garment worn by both genders in West Africa.
<i>CMS</i>	Conseil Militaire Supreme. The military government of Seyni Kountché, it was in power between 1974 and 1987.
<i>DANI</i>	Développement de l'Artisanat du Niger. Project of Lux-Développement, 1992-2003.
<i>damask</i>	A reversible figured fabric of silk, wool, linen, cotton, or synthetic fibers, with the pattern formed by weaving.
<i>Djerma</i>	Also spelled Zarma. This ethnic group is a branch of the Songhay, and they are located in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Benin.
<i>dress</i>	Any modification or supplement to the body.
<i>faso dan fani</i>	Striped textiles woven in what is now Burkina Faso. Now woven in cotton, they were once also made from kapok and silk.

<i>fashion</i>	The cultural construction of embodied identity. Fashion conventionally suggests changing cultural ideals of dress, which are impacted by industrialized systems of production and exchange.
<i>fatala</i>	Djerma term for white cotton cloth of hand sewn, hand woven strips from hand spun thread. This was the most common textile in the Sahel region in the pre-colonial era.
<i>FIMA</i>	<i>Festival International de la Mode Africaine</i> . Biannual festival in Niger founded by Seidnaly “Alphadi” Sidhamed in 1998.
<i>floating weft</i>	This refers to when the weft yarn passes over two or more warp threads instead intersecting with each one. The strategic arrangement of floats results in many of the designs in Nigerian hand woven textiles.
<i>FNAN</i>	Fédération National de l’Artisanat Nigerien
<i>Fulani</i>	An ethnic group that has members across West Africa, especially in Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Guinea, Senegal, and Cameroon. The Fulfulde language has several related dialects.
<i>garbey kopto</i>	Djerma term for a triangular leaf of a kind of acacia tree. Name of a textile motif.
<i>GIE-DANI</i>	Groupement d’Intérêt Économique - Développement de l’Artisanat au Niger. Nigerian-led umbrella group of thirteen cooperatives that participated in DANI. Founded in 2003.
<i>Hausa</i>	A mostly Muslim ethnic group primarily located in Nigeria and Niger. Historically, many Hausas were traders, and there are Hausa communities throughout West Africa. The Hausa language is Chadic, and about a third of its vocabulary derives from Arabic.
<i>housewifization</i>	Term coined by Maria Mies to describe the expropriation of women’s labor within capitalist economic development. In the nineteenth century, bourgeois women’s work within the home was constructed as free, while women were conceptualized as consumers. In the twentieth century and early twenty-first centuries, the export of housewifization through colonial and neocolonial projects has resulted in the devaluing of women’s agricultural and other subsistence work. Their labor is conceptualized as “income-generating activity,” instead of

	labor.
<i>horso</i>	Category of slave in Djerma culture, the <i>horso</i> had a higher social status and more rights than other enslaved people. They were often weavers.
<i>Imazighen</i>	Term preferred by many members of the indigenous ethnic group in North Africa often referred to as Berbers. In Tamazight, it means “the free people.” Amazigh is the adjectival version.
<i>Inadan</i>	Endogamous group of artisans in Tuareg culture. Traditionally, men ( <i>inadan</i> ) were metalsmiths and women ( <i>tinadan</i> ) worked with leather. They also had social responsibilities within the stratified Tuareg cultural framework.
<i>kounta</i>	Translation of designs from the wool and cotton <i>arkilla kounta</i> into industrially spun cotton thread. It is also sometimes used in Niger as a synonym for blanket or wall-hanging.
<i>kulnej gutumo</i>	Djerma term for bird’s eye. Name of a textile motif.
<i>RC-TEC</i>	Renforcement de Capacité Technique, Entrepreneuriale et commerciale. Project of SAFEM initiated in 2009, it consists of business and technical training programs for participating women artisans.
<i>SAFEM</i>	Founded by a group of “femmes leaders” in Niger in 2000, SAFEM is a biannual festival, and it now has yearlong educational and economic initiatives.
<i>Sahelian brassage</i>	The long history of intertwining cultures and ethnicities in the Sahelian has resulted in heterogeneous communities of longstanding. This “mixing” demands complex understandings of ethnicities, which have never existed in isolation.
<i>salvage anthropology</i>	Idea that Western anthropology needed to document so-called primitive cultures before they were inevitably absorbed and assimilated into a single, dominant homogenous European culture
<i>Songhay</i>	Umbrella term for related ethnic groups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Benin. The Songhay Empire was one of the largest Sudanese empires, and it lasted from the fourteenth until the sixteenth century.

<i>tapestry</i>	Tapestry weaving requires the weft threads be inserted by hand. It is weft-faced, and the weft threads are discontinuous.
<i>tera-tera</i>	Genre of hand-woven textiles associated with the Djerma culture. Exchanged at weddings, it has gained currency in other cultures in Niger and also has a long history of exportation to Benin.
<i>Tuareg</i>	Historically, the Tuareg were predominantly nomadic, and maintained a stratified society consisting of nobles, artisans, and slaves. The Tuareg language is Tamasheq. Most Tuareg live in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, or Niger. They are culturally and ethnically related to other Imazighen groups.
<i>warp</i>	1. Stable threads arranged for weaving. 2. To distort.
<i>weft</i>	The thread that is drawn through the warp in the act of weaving.
<i>Wodaabe</i>	Also known as the Bororo, they are a culturally distinct group of nomadic Fulani herders.