

*Texts in this examination paper have been edited: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets [ ]; deletions of text are indicated by ellipses in square brackets [...]; minor changes are not indicated.*

Extract from "Metamorphosis in the Culture Market of Niger." by Elizabeth A. Davis. In *American Anthropologist* 101:485-501 (1999) (pages 488-490).

5 The recent history of the Tuaregs of Niger (West Africa) is a story of novelties: of broad geographic dispersal [from their original Saharan desert homelands], the dissociation of classes, and the development of new associations with non-Tuareg people. [...] [In the course of the twentieth century,] the forced emancipation of Tuareg slaves from the slaveholding nobility, the confiscation of nobles' lands, and the accelerating poverty and disorganization of the nobles themselves encouraged Tuareg artisans to leave their noble patrons and move into town throughout the North region of Niger.

10 Tuareg artisanry, consequently, has urbanized and commercialized over the past four decades. [...] Hausa and Senegalese merchants began to buy artisanal objects, often in bulk, to resell in burgeoning commercial markets on the coast. Western tourists, too, flocked to the desert region during the 1960s, a time in which Western aid workers started to settle the North. These groups provided Tuareg artisans in the North with their first cash-paying clientele and soon came to be their most lucrative and reliable customers. Though old ties might exist between nobles and artisans (in the form of  
15 debt obligation, for example), artisans could no longer rely on nobles for their livelihood. [...]

20 In ideal precolonial Tuareg society, [...] artisans were dependent on noble families who controlled herds (camels, cattle, goats), trade routes, and raiding territories. Tuareg artisans played a multitude of roles: they were storytellers, musicians, historians, mediators between noble families, counselors, hairdressers, child-care providers, ritual practitioners, and more.

25 Tuareg artisans were required to produce utility objects for Tuareg nobles such as camel saddles, turban pins, and the components of portable wooden beds, as well as the leather bags, knives, and jewelry that were later adapted successfully to the commercial market. While the artisans who produced these objects were, in essence, servants of the nobles, the daily necessity of the objects, and nobles' incapacity or unwillingness to produce them, rendered artisans indispensable to the survival of nobles and noble culture. The patron-client relationship between artisans and nobles was one of interdependence.

30 The shift to a Western clientele over the last forty years has brought about a fundamental transformation in Tuareg artisans' conditions of production. The novel uses to which artisanal objects are put by their new consumers describe the changing social roles of their producers. [...] These objects, in the hands of Western tourist, are purely decorative items. [...] Artisans became the purveyors of "traditional" Tuareg  
35 culture as they assumed the role of craftsmen within expatriate culture.

Over time certain of these objects—those, like eight-foot leather saddle bags, that were perhaps unwieldy or bizarre in the context of expatriate life—dropped out of the artisanal repertoire. The production of jewelry took more and more of artisans’ time and attention. Artisans are increasingly considered by their Western customers to be  
40 jewelers rather than blacksmiths, artists rather than artisans—due in no small part to the marketing concept that equates “cultural artifacts” with art objects.

As for objects, so for people. [...]Artisans see Western customers in part as patrons on the “noble” model, [but their relationship presents novel aspects], such as a personally meaningful identification between African producers and Western consumers. This  
45 identification is illustrated by the fact that non-Tuareg Niger citizens rarely purchase Tuareg artisanry; when they do, it is to give them to Western colleagues or friends, who are known to like Tuareg work.

Tuareg artisans’ reorientation toward a Western clientele has introduced new tensions into relationships between Tuareg artisans and nobles. Specifically, Tuareg nobles  
50 often perceive the commercialization of artisanry as an irreversible cultural loss, and the financial rewards of Western patronage for artisans have been a source of resentment for nobles. [...]In adapting their work to the taste and lifestyle of their Western customers, nobles say, Tuareg artisans have abandoned “traditional” Tuareg culture. I interpret this criticism, at least partly, as a competitive strategy [...]over the ownership  
55 of “traditional” Tuareg culture.

1. Compare the contemporary relationship between Tuareg artisans and their non-Tuareg customers with the relationship between Tuareg artisans and Tuareg nobles in former times. [6 marks]
  2. How can the tensions that underlie the triangular relationship between artisans, nobles, and customers in contemporary Niger be understood as a conflict over the meaning and ownership of Tuareg “traditional” culture? [6 marks]
  3. Compare the effect of global forces on Tuareg society in the last forty years with the effect of global forces on another society in recent history. [8 marks]
-