

## COLONIAL, POPULAR, AND SCIENTIFIC?

The *Exposition du Sahara* (1934) and the Formation of the Musée de l'Homme

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the collection and exhibition practices surrounding the *Exposition du Sahara* (1934), an exhibit organized at a key moment in the transformation of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro into France's modernized anthropological museum, the Musée de l'Homme. Through an analysis of archival material and exhibit publications, the article traces how the institutionalization of ethnographic collecting practices was shaped by interactions between museum personnel and collectors on the ground, and by the organizers' desire to make the *Exposition du Sahara*, and the Musée d'Ethnographie itself, simultaneously scientific, popular, and a successful colonial institution. The account also tells the story of some of the objects from North Africa now housed at the Musée du Quai Branly, where very different modes of interpretation have been applied. [Musée de l'Homme, Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, colonial collections, North Africa, Sahara]

On the evening of May 15, 1934, a crowd gathered at Paris's Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (MET) for the opening of a new exhibit, the *Exposition du Sahara*.<sup>1</sup> The guest list was packed with government officials and other public figures, and Pierre Laval, minister des colonies (minister of the colonies), officially inaugurated the exhibition. Men and women in evening dress from the world of politics, academia, the arts, the military, and the colonies filed up the grand entrance staircase past an honor guard of colonial troops. The presence of these African troops, the living incarnation of the mannequins behind glass in the exhibition, drove home the colonial message of the exhibit, which was as much about the Sahara itself as about France's presence in and control over the region. Late into the night visitors crowded around exhibit cases evoking every aspect of the Sahara—climate and geography, flora and fauna, peoples and cultures—and listened to French Sahariens (Saharans) tell stories of their roles in the exploration and colonization of this part of Northern Africa.

The *Exposition du Sahara* (May–October 1934) was organized at a pivotal point in the history of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. Director Paul Rivet and Assistant Director Georges Henri Rivière had taken over the administration of the museum in 1928 and were determined to transform it from a neglected and dusty collection of exotic objects into a modern scientific institution. The *Exposition du Sahara* played an important part in the renovation of the Musée d'Ethnographie, putting into practice many of Rivet and Rivière's ideas about standardizing the collections and enlivening the exhibitions. Their goal was to create an institution that was both scientifically grounded and appealing to the public, a goal ultimately achieved when the Musée d'Ethnographie was reborn as the Musée de l'Homme in 1938. The *Exposition du Sahara*, which exhibited both the latest scientific discoveries and more popular portrayals of the Sahara, was an important precursor to this rebirth. The collection practices associated with this exhibit were also important as a model for the future relationship between

France's main ethnographic museum and its colonies, a relationship that had not been fully developed in the early years of the Musée d'Ethnographie (Conklin 2002).

Based on original research in the Musée de l'Homme archives, this article focuses on the processes of collection and exhibition put in place for the *Exposition du Sahara* in order to explore the institutionalization of ethnographic research and collecting and the development of the ethnographic museum in France during the colonial period. It starts with three key principles that Rivet and Rivière saw as central to the renovation of the MET: the ethnographic museum's role as simultaneously "scientific," "colonial," and "popular." An analysis of the collection practices that led up to the *Exposition du Sahara*, and the choices made in exhibiting these objects, shows how these three principles shaped interactions between museum personnel and collectors on the ground. By exposing the interactions that took place between networks of collectors, colonial officers, anthropologists, and museum personnel, as collecting practices were developed that relied heavily on French colonial officers on the ground in the Algerian Sahara, the analysis builds on recent work that examines collecting practices and the development of anthropology (Bell 2017; Bennett et al. 2017; Joyce and Gillespie 2015). It also contributes to work that has discussed this crucial moment in the history of the French ethnographic museum, during the renovation of the Musée d'Ethnographie and the development of the Musée de l'Homme (Bennett et al. 2017; Conklin 2013; L'Estoile 2003). An analysis of the instructions prepared for collectors contributing to the exhibition and of letters back and forth between museum personnel and officers on the ground reveals the ways in which objects were defined and categorized through negotiations between museum personnel and intermediaries in the field. This analysis follows Bennett et al.'s work on the development of the Musée de l'Homme by highlighting "the active role that local collectors, native informants, administrators, and scholars played in the making of ethnological knowledge" (Bennett et al. 2017, 234).

Although the museum archives are largely silent on the role of local populations or individual artisans in the constitution of the collections for the *Exposition du Sahara*, the preponderance of certain types of objects in the collections does show the role of communities in determining which objects can be parted with or sold (Bell 2017, 248) and reflects the changing social and economic realities facing local Saharan populations under colonial rule (Bernasek 2008, 49–53). A focus on the discussions that took place as objects were identified, collected, categorized, and ultimately exhibited allows us to trace the networks of relations (Bell 2017) in which these objects were embedded, and reveals some of the hidden histories behind these objects. The significance of exposing these histories is emphasized by the fact that the objects originally collected for the *Exposition du Sahara* have now come to be housed at the Musée du Quai Branly, where, it has been argued, both the scientific and the colonial aspects of the collections have all but disappeared from view (Debarry and Roustan 2017; Dias 2008; Price 2007).

#### THE RENOVATION OF THE MUSÉE D'ETHNOGRAPHIE

Several authors have explored the early history of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (Dias 1991) as well as the establishment of the Musée de l'Homme and its relationship with the French colonies (Bennett et al. 2017; Clifford 1988; Conklin 2002, 2013; Herbert 1994; Jamin 1988; L'Estoile 2001, 2003, 2007). As they embarked on their project to revitalize the MET in the early 1930s, Director Paul Rivet and Assistant Director Georges Henri Rivière set out four realms in which the renovated museum would have an important role to play (Rivet and Rivière cited in Jamin 1988, xvii). These were the scientific realm, using collections and documentation

to contribute to the study of other regions and customs; the realm of popular education, through exhibits on major geographical areas that would educate the lay person on these scientific discoveries; the artistic realm, since these collections of arts and objects from other parts of the world could serve as a source of inspiration for artists; and the national realm, as the museum would serve as both an instrument of colonial propaganda for the general public and a useful tool for educating those serving in the colonies about the places they were being sent to govern (see also Rivet and Rivière 1930, 148). As mentioned above, the *Exposition du Sahara* was framed clearly as an instantiation of three of these realms; the fourth, the artistic realm, was not emphasized in the archival material related to the exhibit and was likely seen to be less relevant for the types of objects collected and displayed in it.<sup>2</sup>

As Alice Conklin (2013) describes, Rivet and Rivière saw the colonial dimension as a crucial element in their project to renovate the MET; a significant portion of the museum's funding in the early years of Rivet's directorship came from the Ministry of the Colonies (Conklin 2013, 199), and Rivet and Rivière argued on several occasions for the usefulness of ethnography to the colonial project. In drawing the connection between ethnography and empire, they argued that ethnographic research could be used to understand and better govern the populations coming under French control, and that ethnographic museums both in the colonies and in France could be used as sources of information to educate the public as well as those working in the colonies. The colonies were also seen as a key source for collections at the renovated MET since the connections established on the ground would help to facilitate expeditions sponsored by the museum, and the museum could also build up local networks of amateur collectors who could send objects, photographs, and information back to the museum (see especially Bennett et al. 2017, chap. 6; Conklin 2013, chap. 5).

Rivet and Rivière's efforts to form a closer connection between the museum and the French colonies and to make the museum a place for popular education gave rise to several exhibits and collecting efforts in the early 1930s. In conjunction with the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition, the Musée d'Ethnographie organized an ethnographic exhibit on the French colonies (*Exposition Ethnographique des Colonies Françaises*), in which they exhibited many of the treasures of the MET collection for the first time. In contrast to the exhibits at the Colonial Exhibition and its Musée des Colonies which emphasized France's current work in the colonies, the objects from Africa, Oceania, and Southeast Asia chosen for display at the MET were publicized as "old enough to have not come under European influence," giving the visitor a glimpse of art from these regions "in all its originality" (MET 1931b).<sup>3</sup> This exhibit was the first in a series of temporary exhibits designed to highlight the museum's collections and to "attract an ever-larger public towards a young science whose importance grows daily—ethnography" (MET 1931b).

In addition to exhibiting previously hidden works in the museum's collections, Rivet and Rivière began sponsoring collecting campaigns in the French colonies. These campaigns were part of the wider development of expeditionary anthropology, in which scientific research and exploration combined, facilitated by technological advances in transport and recording technology, and contributing to the development of key collections of objects, photographs, film and audio recordings, and accompanying documentation for museums around the world (Bell and Hasinoff 2015; Bell et al. 2013; Thomas and Harris 2018). As recent research has shown, these expeditions were integral to the development and institutionalization of anthropological research practices and ethnographic museums; they were also shaped by contexts of colonialism

(Hasinoff and Bell 2015). The expeditions and campaigns sponsored by the MET were no exception—they relied on the connections provided by colonial administrators, as well as the collaboration of local populations. Recent work has shown just how central local populations were both to facilitating research and to the production of knowledge in these contexts (Bell 2017; Bell and Hasinoff 2015; Schumaker 2001; Thomas and Harris 2018).

Perhaps the most well-known and widely publicized of the MET's collecting missions was the Dakar-Djibouti expedition in 1931–1933 (see Bondaz 2011; Clifford 1988; Herbert 1984; Jamin 1982, 1984). During this expedition the ethnographers Marcel Griaule, Michel Leiris, and their collaborators travelled through much of French colonial Africa, collecting objects, sound recordings, and photographs that would form the basis of the expanded collections from sub-Saharan Africa. The expedition also raised awareness of the important role colonial officers or others residing in the colonies could play in forming ethnographic collections. As part of the institutionalization of collecting practices that went along with the expedition, a booklet was prepared for distribution to interested intermediaries on the ground. This booklet, the *Instructions sommaires pour les collecteurs d'objets ethnographiques* (*Summary Instructions for Collectors of Ethnographic Objects*), outlined procedures for selecting, identifying, documenting, and shipping objects for the museum's collections (MET 1931a). These procedures and the criteria for collection set out in this booklet will be discussed in further detail below. The results of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition were exhibited at the Musée d'Ethnographie in a newly renovated African gallery, drawing in a large public interested in these objects from France's African territories.

#### THE EXPOSITION DU SAHARA

Following on the success of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, the 1934 *Exposition du Sahara* was another means of putting into practice Rivet and Rivièrè's ideas for transforming the Musée d'Ethnographie into both a colonial and a scientific institution that would appeal to a broad public. The collecting practices that developed in conjunction with this exhibit show the negotiations that took place as Rivet and Rivièrè extended the relationship between the ethnographic museum and colonial officers on the ground. It was also a very popular exhibit, bringing in more than 66,000 visitors in the five months it was open (MET 1934b); Conklin describes it as the museum's "longest and most successful exhibit to date" (Conklin 2013, 217). She ascribes this success to its broad public appeal and argues that "in its theatrical, patriotic, and propagandistic elements [it] resembled the Colonial Exposition more than any other of the museum's temporary exhibits" (Conklin 2013, 218).

The previous thirty years had been a time of significant expansion of French control over the Saharan regions, following the defeat of Tuareg resistance forces at the battle of Tit in southern Algeria in 1902,<sup>4</sup> and continuing until the territory was finally considered "pacified" around 1920 (see Brower 2009 on the violence behind this "pacification" of the Sahara). French control of the Sahara had meant new opportunities for French scientists and explorers to study the desert and its peoples, and the *Exposition du Sahara* was meant to highlight some of the major scientific accomplishments in the region. It also served as a celebration of some of the great names in French—as well as Italian, German, and British—exploration of the desert. Names such as Henri Duveyrier, Colonel Flatters, Père de Foucauld, and General Laperrine would have been familiar to the Parisian public who came in droves to see objects related to these famous figures.<sup>5</sup> By including the stories of these Sahariens, the exhibit foregrounded the French domination of the Saharan populations, and press reviews at the time applauded the



museum's contribution to the colonial cause, with one reviewer writing that "the propaganda thus achieved surpasses anything that has been undertaken until now" (*L'Echo* 1934).

Rivet and Rivière also knew that the idea of the Sahara, with its natural beauty and its romantic desert populations, was guaranteed to draw a crowd, and they played especially on notions of the mysterious camel-riding Tuareg warriors in publicizing the exhibit. The French public would have been familiar with the Saharan landscapes and the ideas of adventure associated with Saharan crossings from documentary films and expeditions (Bloom 2006, 2008). The exhibit's focus on the Berber-speaking Tuareg populations of southern Algeria drew on a long history of French fascination with some of the distinctive features of Tuareg society and their reputation for fierce resistance to colonial occupation (Boëtsch et al. 2002; Brower 2009). The popular film and novel *L'Atlantide (Atlantis)* (Benoit 1920; Feyder 1921; Pabst 1932), the story of a powerful seductress named Antinéa, fictional queen of the Ahaggar Tuareg and the last descendant of the ancient population of Atlantis, also appeared in publicity and in the exhibit itself as part of an effort to appeal to a broad public (Figure 1; see Bloom 2006 for a discussion of French travel documentaries that also drew on this imagery).<sup>6</sup>

In this combination of the colonial, the popular, and the scientific the *Exposition du Sahara* embodied many of the key principles in Rivet and Rivière's conception of the modern ethnographic museum. Before moving on to a discussion of the collecting practices developed for the exhibit, a description of the exhibit itself will help to show the diversity of the approach. The exhibit was built upon what has been termed a "*collection mixte*" (Bondaz et al. 2016), drawing on objects and information from prehistory and archaeology, the natural sciences, physical anthropology, and ethnography in order to build up a holistic picture of the Sahara and life within it. This picture, presenting the region's natural and human resources (and, importantly, France's control and domination over it) placed the *Exposition du Sahara* firmly within the context of colonial museum practices that made the colonies visible to the domestic population (Bondaz et al. 2016, 44). In this context it is also important to remember that the MET and later Musée de l'Homme were placed administratively within the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (National Museum of Natural History), showing the close link between collection and exhibition practices for both natural and cultural collections at the time.

The creation of the *Exposition du Sahara* was a collaborative effort, and the exhibit was co-sponsored by the MET and the Government General of Algeria. It involved the participation of various ministries, organizations, and individuals working in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, French West Africa,<sup>7</sup> and French Equatorial Africa,<sup>8</sup> as well as contributions from Italy, Germany, England, and Egypt. At the Musée d'Ethnographie, Rivet and Rivière were directly involved in the organization of the exhibit, working with an organizing committee headed by Conrad Kilian (1898–1950).<sup>9</sup> The secretary-general of the exhibition, Henri-Paul Eydoux (1907–1986), was the most directly involved in correspondence with colonial officers and other collaborators, and the archival material related to the *Exposition du Sahara* is filled with his letters about different aspects of the exhibit. Eydoux had been a journalist for the newspaper *Dépêche Coloniale* and had worked on the preparations for the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition. At the time of the *Exposition du Sahara*, he was working in the office of the government general of Algeria. Governor General Jules Carde had given the exhibit his full support and encouraged the participation of officers serving in the Saharan regions.

At the time of the exhibit, the MET's Saharan collections were distinguished but limited; through collaborations with these officers and other contributors the exhibit organizers managed

to produce a densely packed exhibit filling a large portion of the museum's exhibit space. The exhibit was organized into several broad sections: prehistory, the natural sciences, the ethnography of the French Sahara, and France's colonial presence in the Sahara. Italy organized an extensive exhibit, housed in a separate room, on the Italian presence in the Sahara, while England, Germany, and Egypt contributed small sections in the exhibit hall devoted to France's work in the Sahara. The exhibit compiled a dense field of information related to every aspect of the Sahara, from prehistoric rock paintings to the region's flora and fauna, its peoples and cultures, and France's accomplishments in its exploration and control. The sections on prehistory and the natural sciences contained important objects and information on the Sahara, and further analysis could be done of these collections and their trajectories through different museum contexts.<sup>10</sup> However, the discussion that follows focuses on the ethnographic collections since exposing the collecting practices behind these objects shows clearly how they were defined and categorized through interactions between museum personnel and intermediaries on the ground, in the context of the creation of an institution that was simultaneously scientific, colonial, and popular.

Ethnographic materials gathered by explorers, anthropologists, and colonial officers were found in two main sections of the *Exposition du Sahara*: "Ethnography of the French Sahara" and "France in the Sahara." The exhibit catalog contains a long list of names as the sources of these collections, including preexisting collections from Henri Duveyrier and others; objects from researchers working with the museum such as Conrad Kilian, Théodore Monod, and Henri Lhote;<sup>11</sup> military officers and other individuals; as well as the Musée du Bardo in Algiers.<sup>12</sup> The end of the list calls attention to the "considerable harvest (*récoltes*) made by the officers of the southern territories, in particular Captains Pinon, Pigeot, Duprez, Gay, Luchetti, Lieutenants Tisé and d'Armagnac, with the support of the Government General of Algeria" (MET 1934a, n.p.).<sup>13</sup> Several of these collectors will be discussed in a later section. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to provide background information on all these donors, it is interesting to note the number of military officers included and the lack of any named intermediaries from the local Saharan populations.

The first of the ethnographic sections was located on the ground floor with most of the rest of the exhibit. This was the true heart of the exhibition, and the Tuareg were the "stars" here: The place of honor in the exhibit has naturally been given to the Tuareg. The general public loves them, though without really knowing them, through Pierre Benoit and Brigitte Helm [in the novel and film *L'Atlantide*]; they have a well-deserved reputation as warlike and amorous knights. They are also great artists who have piously preserved, along with their noble ways, their costumes and traditional arts, and have not let themselves be weakened by European influence or the cheap goods of the African trading posts (Eydoux 1934c, n.p.).

From the large section of the exhibit devoted to the Tuareg, the catalog and press releases highlighted a few of the most impressive pieces: a "splendid" dancer's costume for the Sebiba,<sup>14</sup> an annual festival in Djanet (collected by Captain Gay, who also donated a small collection of photographs of the costume worn by a local woman);<sup>15</sup> a complete tent with its accoutrements; elaborate leather travelling bags and other leather pieces; shields and lances; a complete men's costume and swords; an older costume of the Ahaggar region with stone bracelets and arm daggers; saddles and camel harnesses, including French explorer Henri Duveyrier's saddle; and three cases devoted to women's costumes, jewelry, a series of Agadez crosses, and domestic

objects. A separate case illustrated Tuareg domestic life and artisanal techniques, and other Tuareg objects (locks and keys, harnesses from the southern Tuareg) were found throughout the exhibit space.

Although the Tuareg were the featured Saharan population, they were not the only group represented. Alongside the Tuareg cases were objects from Timbuktu and from the Toubou people of the Tibesti region. Two cases were devoted to objects from Mauritania sent by the governor general of French West Africa, officers in the field, and French researchers.<sup>16</sup> Another two were filled with arms, saddles, harnesses, and other objects from the Chaamba and other Arabic-speaking populations of the Sahara. Lieutenant d'Armagnac, a colonial officer who had published a book on the peoples of the northern Sahara (d'Armagnac 1934a), had gathered a "picturesque" collection from the M'zab region (Figure 2), and Général Nieger, Colonel Bernard, and other officers from the southern territories had loaned objects from the oases of southern Algeria; all were placed prominently in the exhibit. The objects were accompanied by a large number of photographs taken by these collectors and colonial officers.<sup>17</sup>

After lingering among the populations of the French Sahara, the visitor would ascend a staircase to the second floor of the exhibition, housing the section on "France in the Sahara." The main part of this gallery was devoted to tracing the history of French exploration and colonization of the Sahara. The central figures of this history, names that would have been familiar to the museum-going public, were evoked through documents and objects related to their stories. These included the travel journal of early French explorer René Caillé (1799–1838), "one of the most moving documents of the French penetration of the great desert"; letters, maps, and a compass belonging to the explorer Henri Duveyrier (1840–1892); and objects collected after the massacre of the Flatters expedition in 1881. The two central figures of this section, General Laperrine (1860–1920) and Père de Foucauld (1858–1916), two "illustrious Sahariens" who had died in the course of their work in the region, were featured in separate cases containing objects from their time in the Sahara.

The historical section occupied the first half of the gallery; the remainder was devoted to the current work of France as a colonial power in the Sahara. In one corner were three cases displaying the work of the Pères Blancs and Soeurs Blanches (White Fathers and White Sisters, also known as the Missionaries of Africa), members of Catholic orders founded in Algeria in 1868 who had been working among the Saharan populations since the 1870s. These cases included weavings made in a workshop run by the Soeurs Blanches in Ghardaïa; similar items could be purchased on the first floor of the museum. The rest of the gallery had been organized by the administrations of the southern territories of Algeria and Tunisia, and by various branches of the army and the Ministry of Colonies. Alongside information on the organization and activities of colonial troops were a set of mannequins dressed in their uniforms: a Saharan camel corps member (*méhariste*), a Chaamba footsoldier (*goumier*), and a Senegalese soldier (*spahi*). Other sections gave information on the administration of the Saharan territories and plans for the creation of a trans-Saharan railway.

The section on France in the Sahara was the final stop in the visitors' exhaustive trip through the Sahara from prehistoric times to the present day. If they still had questions that remained unanswered, they were invited to avail themselves of the museum library's collections pertaining to the region. They could also purchase various publications, photographs, and some handicrafts through a sales service located in the ethnographic galleries.

## COLONIAL COLLECTORS AND THE THREAT OF THE IMPURE OBJECT

From this overview of the exhibit the centrality of the three dimensions—colonial, scientific, and popular—discussed above in relation to the renovation of the MET becomes clear. The exhibit was certainly colonial: every room contained vivid reminders of the French presence in the Sahara, and without the collaboration of colonial officers the exhibition halls would have remained empty. The organizers placed the “young science” of ethnography (MET 1931b) at the heart of the exhibit, giving it just as much legitimacy as the other sciences of humankind, such as prehistory or archaeology, and highlighting the recent discoveries in these realms. In placing ethnography so centrally in the exhibit, the organizers were carving out a space for ethnographic research within the wider context of French research in the colonies in a range of disciplines (Bennett et al. 2017; Conklin 2013; Tilley 2011). The exhibit organizers also tried to appeal to a large public with their emphasis on the “mysterious” Tuareg warriors and their repeated references to the fictional figure Antinéa, from the novel and films *L’Atlantide*.

A closer examination of the collecting practices that developed for this exhibit shows how the idea of the MET as simultaneously colonial, scientific, and popular shaped interactions between museum personnel and officers on the ground. It also reveals the shifts that took place in the institutionalization of collection practices in the context of a specific exhibit that placed great value on using colonial officers as collectors and amateur ethnographers. These shifts took place as collecting guidelines developed for the Dakar-Djibouti expedition were adapted to fit the context of the *Exposition du Sahara*, as can be seen in a comparison between the instructions provided to collectors for the *Exposition du Sahara* and those developed in the context of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition.

As part of the preparation for the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, museum directors developed a booklet, the *Instructions sommaires pour les collecteurs d’objets ethnographiques* (MET 1931a), to be distributed during the expedition and to colonial posts and interested individuals around the world.<sup>18</sup> Through this booklet museum directors attempted to standardize collection and documentation practices so the objects collected conformed as closely as possible to the scientific standards they were developing for their ethnographic museum (see Clifford 1988; Conklin 2002; Herbert 1994; Jamin 1982). These standards, including a focus on everyday objects that would be able to represent the society and on the importance of documentary information, are discussed in further detail below. The contrast between these *Instructions* and those sent out to collectors for the *Exposition du Sahara* is striking, as becomes clear in a comparison of the two documents.

The *Instructions sommaires* lay out several criteria for scientific collecting of ethnographic objects, the first of which is a focus on the everyday, on the most common objects used in daily life. From the outset, the *Instructions* distinguish between the “*collecteur*,” the collector of ethnographic objects, and the “*collectionneur*,” the connoisseur or art collector guided primarily by aesthetic choices. The *Instructions* are clearly addressed to the former and not the latter, who “looks only for a ‘curiosity’” (MET 1931a, 9). A collection of ethnographic objects is not a collection of curiosities, or of artistic works; it is, rather, a “witness” (*témoin*) for a society (MET 1931a, 8). An ethnographic object must not be judged on aesthetic criteria, therefore, but in relation to the information it provides: “By excavating a pile of refuse, one can reconstitute the entire life of a society; much better, usually, than by focusing on rare or luxurious objects” (MET 1931a, 9).



Along with avoiding the *collectionneur*'s bias for the rare and precious object, the *collecteur* must also be wary of the *collectionneur*'s ideas of "purity of style." The authors write: The first thing to be said about "purity of style" is that it does not exist. Everything is mixed (*mélange*), a product of disparate influences, a result of multiple factors. . . . One must not, therefore, under any circumstances, reject an object on the pretext that it is "impure" (MET 1931a, 8).

Even objects that show evidence of European influence (e.g., carvings representing people of European origin) or incorporate European materials (e.g., imported objects worn as part of necklaces), the authors go on to say, are of interest to the ethnographer and should be collected (MET 1931a, 8). This passage on the "prejudice of the purity of style" stands in clear contrast to most writing on colonial-era collecting practices, wherein ideas of "authenticity" and "purity" drove collectors to seek out objects that were considered untouched by outside influences (Clifford 1988; Phillips and Steiner 1999). In fact, as discussed further below, the idea of the "pure" object reemerges clearly in collection practices for the *Exposition du Sahara*.

Along with this focus on objects of everyday life, the *Instructions Sommaires* emphasize the importance of the documentation surrounding the objects collected. Although the collector of ethnographic objects has a much broader scope than the *collectionneur*, he or she should take care to avoid becoming a simple "*ramasseur*," or gatherer, of objects as well. The *Instructions* emphasize that depth is more important than breadth—the collector must study every facet of each object in order to provide the information that gives an ethnographic collection its true scientific value. Whenever possible the collector should provide examples of an object in different stages of manufacture, from primary material to finished product. He or she should also gather different styles of decoration or provide duplicates of the same object that could be used in different contexts in the museum. The object's study should include information on how it was made and by whom, where it was used and by whom. It should extend to the object's immaterial aspects as well—to the ideas, myths, practices, stories, or customs related to it. The *Instructions* emphasize that a collection of ethnographic objects should be above all a collection of "living things" that can tell us about another society. The only way to make them "live" outside of their original context is to surround them with the information gathered by the collector, in order to "preserve for the object that which gives it life and to minimize the drawbacks of transplantation as much as possible" (MET 1931a, 10).

The *Instructions Sommaires* developed in conjunction with the Dakar-Djibouti expedition served as a model for a more detailed set of *Instructions* distributed as part of the planning for the *Exposition du Sahara*. These will be discussed in more detail below, but it is worth pausing on the idea of "purity of style" so clearly rejected in the *Instructions Sommaires*, but ultimately central to the collection of objects for the *Exposition du Sahara*. In the document prepared specifically for the *Exposition du Sahara*, entitled *Exposition du Sahara: Instructions détaillées pour le rassemblement des documents et objets ethnographiques* (Sahara Exhibit: Detailed Instructions for the Collection of Documents and Ethnographic Objects) (MET 1933), and in correspondence between collectors and the exhibit organizers, the importance of complete documentation to the scientific value of an object was emphasized, but in many ways the idea of a "scientific" approach became much more closely tied to an idea of "purity" or "pure indigenous manufacture." For example, the first page of these *Instructions* states clearly: "It is superfluous to underline that the Musée d'Ethnographie collects objects of pure indigenous

character (*de caractère purement indigène*) and not those for which the technique, use, decoration and destination are European or of European influence” (MET 1933, 1).<sup>19</sup>

In these *Instructions* and in interactions with collectors on the ground, it is clear that the organizers of the *Exposition du Sahara* were well aware of the paradoxical nature of colonial collecting—they were in search of “pure” objects but were using colonial agents, some of them involved in developing or “renovating” artisanal production, as their collectors. The organizers implicitly acknowledged this contradiction at the heart of colonial ethnography, while still insisting that it was not too late to organize a truly scientific exhibit on the Sahara:

A new era has begun in the Sahara: the era of the car and the airplane, barely fifteen years old, but it has completely disrupted the conditions of desert life.

The Ahaggar ten days from Paris, petrol stations in Tanezrouft, the Tuareg *amenokal* [chief] travelling by airplane: the desert has adapted to the tastes of the day.

This was one more reason to do the *Exposition du Sahara*. It was necessary before these profound disruptions should alter Saharan life too much (Eydoux 1934c, n.p.).

For the organizers of the *Exposition du Sahara*, the participation of colonial officers as collectors and amateur ethnographers was an essential part of their project to renovate the MET and develop the discipline of ethnography in France. The exhibit guidebook is full of the names of current and former officers serving in the Sahara who sent collections for the museum. But they were also careful to separate the colonial-themed portions of the exhibit from the scientific portions. The celebration of French expansion into the Sahara found in the historical gallery was toned down in the sections devoted to ethnography and the natural sciences. There the voice was the voice of science, facilitated by the French colonial presence to be sure, but in no way influenced by it in its scientific findings. The objects on display, from plant specimens to Tuareg weaponry, were “purely” Saharan; any objects that showed evidence of European influence were excluded or were placed in a colonial-themed section, where objects produced as part of French efforts to renovate artisanal production were exhibited and sold. This clear definition of what was and was not Saharan was perhaps easier to uphold in the galleries devoted to the natural sciences or the prehistory of the Sahara. However, the idea of ethnographic collections and scientific findings uncontaminated by colonialism was not as easily maintained in the ethnographic gallery. Here we see clearly the ways in which objects were defined and categorized as “ethnographic (scientific)” or “colonial” through the interactions and negotiations that took place between museum personnel and collectors on the ground.

The case of the weavings from the Soeurs Blanches in Ghardaïa is an excellent example of the anxieties produced for museum personnel by the “impure” object (Clifford 1988) collected by colonial officers on the ground. At the beginning of the organizational stages for the *Exposition du Sahara*, Henri-Paul Eydoux wrote to the Father Superior of the Pères Blancs in France asking for their collaboration in providing collections for different sections of the exhibit. Eydoux mentions that they would be interested in highlighting the order’s work in “perpetuating and renewing local artisanal traditions” and would like to exhibit a collection of “carpets and weavings, old or of modern make, on the condition that they are of authentic Saharan manufacture, reproducing traditional models and designs” (Eydoux 1933b). At this early stage, Eydoux listed these objects in the context of the ethnographic part of the exhibit, putting them alongside other collections that could be made in various regions where the Pères and Soeurs were working.

The process of obtaining these weavings went forward, and a selection of proposed objects was ultimately sent to Lieutenant d'Armagnac in Ghardaïa, who was overseeing the contributions of his region to the exhibit. D'Armagnac had already written a monograph on *Le Mزاب et les pays Chaamba* (d'Armagnac 1934a) and was therefore considered to be in a good position to judge the authenticity of the proposed pieces. In a letter to Eydoux, d'Armagnac wrote that only four of the weavings produced in the workshop of the Soeurs Blanches were "truly indigenous"; the others were "mere adaptations." He went on to note, however, that these workshops produce almost as many weavings as the "indigenous milieux," so perhaps it would be interesting to include more of them in the exhibit (d'Armagnac 1934b). The organizers of the exhibit were not so sure: a note from Georges Henri Rivière in the margins of this letter directs Eydoux to be "very calm" about these weavings from the Soeurs Blanches. In the end, Eydoux left the choice up to d'Armagnac, directing him to only accept objects that were "of pure indigenous manufacture" in order to correspond to "the scientific limits of the exhibit" (Eydoux 1934b). However, despite d'Armagnac's assurances that the objects he had chosen are "truly indigenous," in the exhibit these weavings were ultimately placed in the colonial section, as examples of the work produced in the workshops of the Soeurs Blanches in Algeria. The organizers' insistence on the "purity" and "authenticity" of objects in the ethnographic portion of the exhibit meant that these weavings could not be used to represent Saharan life. As discussed in further detail below, this focus on "pure" objects emerged from the concern to present a scientific representation of the Sahara, but it was also related to the construction of an image that coincided with the popular image of Saharan life, with its romantic desert populations.

#### THE *INSTRUCTIONS DÉTAILLÉES*: COLLECTING "PURE" SAHARAN CULTURE

The criteria for separating colonial objects from ethnographic ones were not whether they were made or used by Saharans, but whether they met the organizers' standards for "pure indigenous manufacture." This fact is emphasized by the presence in the ethnographic section of a Tuareg saddle owned by French explorer Henri Duveyrier, an object considered to be an example of classic Tuareg craftsmanship and exhibited both at the *Exposition du Sahara* and later as such (Musée de l'Homme 1960, 19). Here again we can see the shifts that took place as collecting practices developed for the Dakar-Djibouti expedition were adapted, revealing how processes of collection and exhibition developed as part of the renovation of the MET were shaped by a specific colonial situation and the pressures of a specific exhibit context. As the organizers of the *Exposition du Sahara* embarked on their project to "finally unveil the face of the Grand Desert" (MET 1934a, n.p.), they drew on images produced by both scientific literature and popular discourses on the Sahara. These preexisting ideas directly influenced collection and exhibition practices.

The *Instructions Détaillées* were prepared in August of 1933 for distribution to French officers serving as colonial administrators in the Sahara. Having already secured the collaboration of Jules Carde, the governor general of Algeria, the exhibit organizers contacted various officers stationed in southern Algeria who had been directed to assist the Musée d'Ethnographie in collecting and documenting objects for the exhibit. Both the *Instructions Sommaires* and the *Instructions Détaillées* were sent out to explain the scientific standards and practices of ethnographic collecting, and to enumerate the objects officers should attempt to collect. For the purposes of the *Exposition du Sahara*, instead of relying on collectors to survey the region and collect examples of the most representative objects, the organizers provided them with a very specific list of objects. Although in an introductory note to the *Instructions Détaillées*

Rivet and Rivière insist that the *Instructions* “do not represent a maximum or a minimum of objects and documents to gather” (Rivet and Rivière 1933, 1), they often seem like a detailed wish list for the museum’s Saharan collections.

Rivet and Rivière are listed as the authors of the introduction to the *Instructions Détaillées*, but it is not clear who prepared the detailed inventory of objects to be collected since this part of the document is not signed, and no reference to an author was found in the archives. It is likely that it was put together by Conrad Kilian, who served as the director of the organizing committee for the exhibit, perhaps in collaboration with Théodore Monod and Henri Lhote, who were also on the organizing committee. All three had carried out research and explorations in the Sahara before 1933. Although Lhote may not have collaborated in writing the *Instructions Détaillées*, he did become involved later in the planning process, pointing out gaps in the collection that the exhibit organizers had yet to fill.

The authors of the *Instructions Détaillées* based their document on the categories and subcategories set out in the *Instructions Sommaires*. Such booklets and typological listings followed the model used by the natural sciences in describing typologies of specimens to be collected; the influence of the development of field anthropology out of the natural sciences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is clearly seen (Bennett et al. 2017, 29; Bondaz 2011; Bondaz et al. 2016). In the *Instructions Sommaires*, these categories were broad (Technology: Fire, Basketry, Arms, Acquisition, etc.), and the examples given of objects to collect, though detailed, were quite general. For example, the entry for Basketry, the sixth subcategory under Technology, reads:

- Samples of primary materials (hair, animal hair, rushes, vines, fibers, etc.). Basketry at the beginning and the end of the work. Instruments of manufacture (rare for basketry as usually only the fingers are used). Dressings. Painting. Coverings.
- Winnowing baskets, mats, racks, trays, baskets (simple, double, impermeable, etc.)
- Baskets for pottery (molds), sword scabbards, carrying devices, bands for the head, vine bridges, etc.
- Rolled basketry (coiled baskets).
- Sculptures in basketry. (MET 1931a, 13)

The *Instructions Détaillées* prepared for the *Exposition du Sahara* follow the same outline of categories and subcategories, but they are very specific about the objects to be collected, noting specific types, locations, and design features. The entry for Basketry demonstrates the contrast between the two sets of instructions:

- Photos showing the manufacture of the *asber* (woven wall of the Tuareg home [tent]) from different regions. Examples of the *asber* from different regions and with different types of ornamentation (at minimum, if possible, *asber* typical of the nomads of Ahaggar, of Ajjer, of the Sudan and of Aïr). Photos showing the *asber* in place. Photos of the details of ornamentation of the *asber*.
- Mat from Aïr. Mats of different fibers.
- Samples of colored basketry, finished (and some in course of manufacture), either dyed or embroidered. Basketry from Ouargla, Touat, Djanet and Ghat (if possible?). (MET 1933, 4)

Rather than acting as general guidance for a collector who surveys an area, determines which objects are of ethnographic interest, and gathers them up to be sent to the Musée d’Ethnographie, these *Instructions* provide a detailed list for the collectors to seek out.



The means of acquiring objects for the *Exposition du Sahara* were also different than those described in the *Instructions Sommaires* for the Dakar-Djibouti expedition. The colonial officers who collaborated on the *Exposition du Sahara* purchased most of the objects collected, and in some cases donated or loaned objects from their private collections that had been acquired several years previously. In the *Instructions Sommaires* developed for the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, purchasing objects is never mentioned; instead the collector's actions are described using the word “*recueillir*” (“to gather or collect”) or even with the more agricultural term “*récolter*” (“to harvest” in its primary definition). In fact, as Herbert (1994, 29) discusses, agricultural terminology was used extensively in describing collecting practices in writings from the Dakar-Djibouti expedition. This use of specific terminology paints a picture of a collector gathering in objects that are simply waiting to be packed into crates destined for the Musée d’Ethnographie. As other authors have shown, collecting practices during the Dakar-Djibouti expedition were never quite so straightforward, and several instances of controversial acquisitions have later been revealed (Bondaz 2011; Jamin 1982).

In contrast, the *Instructions Détaillées* developed for the *Exposition du Sahara* mention not only “gathering” (*recueillir*) objects but also the possibility that collectors might have to “place orders with artisans” (Rivet and Rivière 1933, 1). This is one of the few places where the contribution of local populations or artisans is alluded to throughout the documentation around the *Exposition du Sahara*; correspondence between museum officials and officers on the ground tends to focus on lists of objects desired or provided, with no detail about individual people or communities that made or were willing to part with their objects. It is not clear what proportion of objects were made to order for the exhibit, but whether they were new or used, the officers generally paid for their acquisitions. Their purchases were funded by the Government General of Algeria, and shipments sent to the museum included detailed lists of expenditures that were to be reimbursed. In a letter to Henri Lhote after the exhibit had opened, Georges Henri Rivière alludes to the economic pressures facing the Saharan populations in the colonial context that may have led them to part with the objects acquired for the museum:

the officers of the southern territories have acquired, with the funds that the Government of Algeria had given us for this purpose, a collection of objects that together constitutes a documentation of the Sahara unequalled until now. Governor General Cardé was especially satisfied that the subsidy provided by his services could contribute to relieving the great misery of certain categories of the indigenous population (Rivière 1934).

The list of objects to be acquired in the *Instructions Détaillées* was based on research that had already been carried out in the Sahara and included only those objects that the organizers considered to be purely or typically Saharan. Throughout the *Instructions Détaillées* the authors stress that objects showing any type of European influence should be avoided: “Specimens of cloth of purely indigenous work, without intervention of European technique or direction. . . . Arm dagger, as authentic as possible (be sure that the object is anterior to French occupation)” (MET 1933, 5). Rather than leaving the collector to gather the objects most important or most used in a given society, the *Instructions Détaillées* draw on previous studies that have determined what objects are representative of different populations of the Sahara, and what objects can be considered “purely indigenous.” This repeated emphasis on purity and a lack of European influence becomes necessary because of the tensions at the heart of an effort to use colonial agents to collect ethnographic objects.

It is not, in fact, the society of the Sahara in 1933 that the colonial officers were charged with representing. Instead it was an idea of Saharan society as it existed before the French occupation—before the establishment of the Soeurs Blanches workshops for textile production, before the *amenokal* (chief) of the Kel Ahaggar could travel by airplane to Paris. This idea of pure Saharan society had been promulgated in accounts by explorers and scientists working in the Sahara in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Sahara the exhibit organizers were trying to represent was based on research by people such as Conrad Kilian and E. F. Gautier, the well-known prehistorian, or the accounts of explorers such as Henri Duveyrier or the missionary Père Charles de Foucauld (Duveyrier 1864; Foucauld 1951; Gautier 1923; Kilian 1925).

The *Instructions Détaillées* often include objects that are difficult for the officers to find or have to be made to order because they are not otherwise readily available. The *asber* listed in the section on basketry is one example. Captain Duprez, stationed in Djanet, donated an example of this type of mat used as the wall of the Tuareg tent.<sup>20</sup> He had acquired the object more than ten years earlier, and he writes to the exhibit organizers that “it seems to me that it would be difficult to find one on such short notice. This object, which is, besides, very much sought-after by the Tuareg themselves, is not made, if I can speak this way of it, except ‘to order’ and the Kel Amguid, *imrad* [vassal tribe] in Ahaggar are about the only experts in its manufacture” (Duprez 1933). This object is listed in the *Instructions Détaillées* as a common piece of basketry, but Duprez’s letter and the responses he received from museum personnel (Eydoux 1933a) indicate that it was actually quite rare and difficult to find at that point in time. This does not mean that this piece was not “authentic,” but it is an example of the type of object used to represent an idea of Saharan society based not on daily life in the 1930s, but on earlier accounts that had constructed an image of “pure,” precolonial Saharan culture.

#### THE *GUERRIER TARGUI* AT THE *EXPOSITION DU SAHARA*

Previous scholarly work on the Sahara shaped the writing of the *Instructions Détaillées* and dictated the type of objects requested by the exhibit organizers. The process of collection was also influenced by more popular ideas of the Sahara and the romanticized image of the Tuareg warriors who inhabited it. As part of their emphasis on “pure” cultures, the authors of the *Instructions Détaillées* focused on objects to be collected from the Tuareg populations of Algeria because they were considered a “purely Saharan” population in the heart of the desert (Rivet and Rivière 1933, 1). In fact, many of the objects that were considered to represent “pure” or “traditional” Tuareg culture had fallen into disuse many years before the *Exposition du Sahara*. As Jeremy Keenan has demonstrated in his work on the Kel Ahaggar Tuareg in southern Algeria (Keenan 2002, 2004), even before the colonial era, Tuareg society, traditionally based on a strict hierarchy between noble and vassal classes, was undergoing significant change. Older taboos on vassal classes owning weapons or camels began to break down in the nineteenth century, leading to important transformations in the noble-vassal relationship. Expanding French control of the region, beginning with the Tuareg defeat at the battle of Tit in 1902, led to bans on raiding that removed the nobles’ traditional source of economic and political power. The bans on raiding, coupled with the overwhelming superiority of French firearms, relegated most of the elaborate Tuareg weaponry owned by the noble classes to ceremonial status. By the time of the *Exposition du Sahara*, this weaponry was used primarily in mock battles at festivals or other staged events. Although these objects retained importance to the Tuareg themselves as items bearing local meanings and as part of their cultural heritage, by the early twentieth century they had also

become an important source of income as changing social and economic circumstances led many Tuareg to sell their finely crafted objects to anthropologists and other collectors. Major museum collections from Tuareg regions show evidence of what could be called a “canon” of Tuareg artistic production established by early twentieth century collectors and their Tuareg intermediaries as local populations were led to sell objects once typically owned by the Tuareg nobility (saddles, swords, shields, intricate leather bags, metal locks and keys, or silver jewellery) (Bernasek 2008, 49–53). These types of objects, especially the visually impressive weaponry, were an important element in the French imagination of the Tuareg, and they figured prominently in the *Exposition du Sahara*. Several cases in the ethnographic section contained weaponry: shields, lances, swords, stone bracelets (thought to be a defensive weapon), and arm daggers were all prominently displayed. A mannequin dressed in Tuareg costume was positioned with a large skin shield and lance, perfectly portraying the image of the *guerrier targui* (Tuareg warrior) that many visitors came to see.

The *guerrier targui* was part of the popular imagery of the Tuareg promulgated in books, novels, films, and other media, including live exhibitions of Tuareg men and women in Paris in 1863 (accompanied by explorer Henri Duveyrier) and 1909. Boëtsch, Claudot-Hawad, and Ferrié (2002) describe the contradictory image of the Tuareg that developed in France from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Imagery and legends associating the Tuareg with European populations, including one that traced Tuareg ancestry to a group of French crusaders lost in the desert, were prominent in the nineteenth century. Explorers such as Duveyrier saw Tuareg customs, especially in relation to the treatment of women, as compatible with European ones, and physical anthropologists classified them as a race of Indo-European descent. This argument that the Tuareg were closer to Europeans (culturally as well as physically), and therefore more capable of being assimilated or more likely to be sympathetic to European colonialism, was propagated for other Berber-speaking populations as well (Lorcin 1999). After the fierce resistance to colonial power launched by the Tuareg populations at the end of the nineteenth century, however, the common image of the Tuareg changed to a portrayal of a warlike and mysterious population. In their description of the composite image of the Tuareg popular in the early twentieth century, the authors seem almost to be describing an exhibit case from the *Exposition du Sahara*:

the “true” “unmixed” Tuareg . . . could hardly exist without a lance, a sword, and a shield decorated with a cross, without a mount, preferably a camel, without talismans around his neck, and finally without a veil under which he supposedly conceals a “European” physiognomy (Boëtsch et al. 2002, 146).

The organizers’ desire to create an exhibit that would appeal to a broad public also shaped the collection practices that emerged in negotiations between museum personnel and collectors on the ground. During the preparation for the exhibit there was a clear shift away from the more common, everyday objects that are emphasized in the *Instructions Sommaires* in order to focus on visually impressive objects that would correspond more closely to the popular imagery of the Sahara. The *Instructions Détaillées* do list many objects that are arguably of more “scientific” than “popular” interest: a large portion of one page lists different types of trees for which collectors are instructed to supply photos, wood samples, and objects made of that wood. However, as the exhibit grew closer, the organizers began to send letters and telegrams with more specific object requests. In these there was an emphasis on objects that were visually impressive—costumes, jewelry, camel trappings, a complete Tuareg tent—and that could supply

the public with a striking image of the Sahara and its peoples.

In some cases, this meant acquiring rare and expensive objects rather than the “most common” ones emphasized in the *Instructions Sommaires*. In one example, a colonial officer named Captain Gay, stationed in Djanet, was asked to purchase a costume worn for the Sebiba, an annual festival of the Kel Ajjer Tuareg. In January of 1934, Gay sent a letter informing Henri-Paul Eydoux that these costumes would cost 1200 francs for a woman’s costume and 1500 for a man’s—Eydoux quickly responded that he should purchase both costumes, with all their accessories. He also sent Gay a long list of additional items he would like him to acquire, if possible, including some very specific requests: “Camel saddle blanket: (a) in dark blue and white checks, embroidered (b) in large blue and white stripes, embroidered (c) other style of blanket used by the tribes and made by the women of the tribes for their warriors” (Eydoux 1934a). Gay is not able to obtain most of what Eydoux asks for, but he does send a woman’s costume for the Sebiba,<sup>21</sup> which was featured prominently in the exhibit and frequently pictured or mentioned in articles in the press:

We admire the splendid costume for the Sebiba, a large annual festival that takes place in Djanet and consists of warlike dances. This traditional festival gathers all the able-bodied men and women of the oasis. Surrounded by choirs of young girls, the women move forward in lines, while the men rise up imitating through their gestures and costumes the traditional Tuareg warriors (Crouquet 1934).

Like many reviewers of the exhibit, this one focuses on imagery of the “traditional” Tuareg, who were described in the press as “warlike” (*guerrier*), “noble,” “mysterious,” “wild” (*farouche*), “enigmatic,” and “fantastic.” Although the exhibit organizers insisted on the scientific nature of their collections and the *Exposition du Sahara*, they were also not averse to emphasizing the more romantic and mythical aspects of the Sahara and its populations in promoting the exhibit. Thus Henri-Paul Eydoux, in an article published in *La Renaissance*, calls the Tuareg “warlike and amorous knights” (Eydoux 1934c, n.p.), and a press release sent out by the Musée d’Ethnographie also describes the Tuareg as “strange warriors, who have always retained the prestige of mystery” (MET 1934c). The *guerrier targui* and other popular imagery of the Sahara influenced every aspect of the exhibit, from collecting objects to choosing exhibition themes, and almost overwhelmed the scientific or colonial aspects of the exhibit in the press reviews.

## CONCLUSION

The *Exposition du Sahara* was the incarnation of Paul Rivet and Georges Henri Rivière’s ideas for the renovation of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro and the creation of the Musée de l’Homme. It brought together the latest discoveries in the natural and human sciences; it celebrated the glorious past and promising future of France in the Sahara; and it appealed to a broad public thirsty for imagery of the romantic desert populations. An analysis of collection and exhibition practices for the exhibit reveals the ways in which these three broad goals—to be scientific, colonial, and popular—influenced interactions between museum personnel and colonial agents on the ground, shaping the idealized form of collecting set out by Rivet and Rivière for their new museum. In the processes of collection and exhibition behind the *Exposition du Sahara* we see the networks of relations that led to objects being identified, collected, and categorized on their way to the exhibit.

The collections gathered for the *Exposition du Sahara* formed one small part of the MET and Musée de l’Homme’s important collections from North Africa, which exceeded 20,000 objects before their transfer to the Musée du Quai Branly (Fortier 2000). At the Musée du Quai



Branly, both the colonial provenance and the “scientific” aspects of these objects have given way to an interpretation that focuses primarily on the aesthetic and a generalized sense of “otherness” (Bernasek 2010; Debary and Roustan 2017; Price 2007). A close examination of collection practices for this exhibit reveals how these collections were shaped by specific conditions and contexts. The *Exposition du Sahara* is, therefore, an important, if overlooked, moment in the history of the development of the ethnographic museum in France. Although the collections from North Africa are not often emphasized in accounts of the Musée du Quai Branly’s holdings (with the focus instead on works from sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, and Oceania), these collections have an important story to tell in the history of the French ethnographic museum, and the colonial context that brought many of these objects to France.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research for this article was funded by dissertation research fellowships from the German Marshall Fund and the Krupp Foundation, travel grants from the Centers for Middle Eastern and European Studies at Harvard University, and a P.E.O. Scholar Award.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I have used the French names for the key museums throughout (Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro and Musée de l’Homme) rather than their English translations (Ethnographic Museum at Trocadero and Museum of Mankind) for consistency and because these names are commonly used in French in the literature.

<sup>2</sup> The role of collections from the MET and later Musée de l’Homme as inspiration for artists in the early twentieth century has been discussed by Clifford (1988) among others. Objects from North Africa have not generally been subsumed into the category of “primitive art” associated with the “artistic” realm delineated by Rivet and Rivière (see Bernasek 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the French are the author’s.

<sup>4</sup> Spellings of place names follow the conventions of the US Board on Geographic Names (<https://geonames.usgs.gov/>).

<sup>5</sup> Henri Duveyrier (1840–1892), one of the first French explorers of the Sahara, spent seven months among the Kel Ajjer Tuareg in Ghadamis in 1860–1861. His book on the Tuareg portrayed them in a favorable light (Duveyrier 1864), an image that was shattered by the massacre of an expedition in the Algerian Sahara led by Colonel Paul-Xavier Flatters (1832–1881) in 1881. This event shocked the French public and halted Saharan exploration until the French victory over the Tuareg at Tit in 1902. Père Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916) was a Catholic monk who lived in Tamanrasset and worked with the Tuareg from 1905 until his death in 1916. He undertook an extensive study of the Kel Ahaggar Tuareg variety of Berber (Tamashek), and his dictionary remains an important reference work (Foucauld 1951). Foucauld was killed by Tuareg men in the context of resistance to French domination of the region. General François-Henry Laperrine (1860–1920) signed a treaty with the Kel Ahaggar *amenokal* (chief) Moussa Ag Amastane in 1904. In 1920, he was on board a flight across the Sahara that had to make an emergency landing; Laperrine died in the desert of exhaustion. These figures would have been known to the Parisian public from their publications and extensive press coverage of the events related to them.

<sup>6</sup> *L’Atlantide* tells the story of a powerful seductress named Antinéa, queen of the Ahaggar Tuareg and the last descendant of the ancient population of Atlantis. She lives in a palace in the

Ahaggar, where she lures European explorers and colonial officers who are driven to their demise by their love for her. By the time of the *Exposition du Sahara*, two film versions of Benoit's novel had been made—the first was a silent picture directed by Jacques Feyder in 1921 (Feyder 1921), the second was made simultaneously in French, German, and English in 1932 (Pabst 1932). That film, directed by Georg Wilhelm Pabst, starred Brigitte Helm as the mythical seductress Antinéa. Both were filmed on location in the Algerian Sahara, providing the public with a concrete image of the dramatic landscapes and mysterious populations of the region.

<sup>7</sup> French West Africa was a federation of colonial territories made up of the following present-day states: Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, French Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger.

<sup>8</sup> French Equatorial Africa was a federation of colonial territories made up of the following present-day states: Chad, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, and Gabon.

<sup>9</sup> Kilian was trained as a geologist and had done pioneering geological research in the Sahara in the 1920s. The results of a 1922 research expedition were published as *Au Hoggar* (Kilian 1925), and at the time of the exhibit he was considered to be “the most knowledgeable person on the ethnography of the Tuareg” (Gautier in MET 1934a, n.p.).

<sup>10</sup> The section on prehistory was also important for the formation of the MET/Musée de l'Homme's collections. This section included lithic materials loaned by various collaborators, such as Maurice Reygasse, director of the Bardo Museum of Ethnography and Prehistory in Algiers, and the results of a recent expedition led by Maurice Reygasse and the prehistorian E. F. Gautier in the Kel Ajjer Tuareg region, from which Reygasse and Gautier had brought back reproductions of rock paintings depicting horse-drawn chariots and other scenes that Gautier argued were made by the “Garamantes,” the ancient forebears of the Tuareg peoples mentioned by Herodotus (Reygasse and Gautier 1934). Also in this section was a display case containing “prehistoric stone idols of extraordinary manufacture, still revered by the Tuareg in 1912 and collected in Tazrouk by General Niéger” (MET 1934a). These “idols” were more recently exhibited in *Algérie en Héritage* (Institut du Monde Arabe 2003), an exhibit held at the Institut du Monde Arabe in 2003 as part of the Year of Algeria activities, and have also been on display in the prehistory section of the Musée du Quai Branly's North Africa galleries. The case also contained objects said to belong to the legendary ancestress of the Tuareg from the 1925 excavation of “the tomb of Tin Hinan” in southern Algeria.

<sup>11</sup> Théodore Monod (1902–2000) was a naturalist working at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle who had carried out research in the western part of the Algerian Sahara in 1927. Henri Lhote (1903–1991), a young explorer who had also been sent by the Natural History Museum to do research in the Sahara in 1929–1932, had recently returned with an impressive collection of Tuareg material culture. Kilian, Monod, and Lhote all continued their research in the Sahara after the *Exposition*.

<sup>12</sup> The exhibit catalog contains a long list of donors for the ethnographic section: “Preexisting collections of the museum: Duveyrier, Foureau-Lamy, Zeltner, Cochain, Gilard, Lenormand, etc. Numerous loans: Gouverneur Général Honoraire Bordes, Général Gouraud, l'Honorable Francis Rodd, Général Nieger, Conrad Kilian [71.1934.69], Capitaine Demoulin [71.1934.197], Lieutenants de Beaumont et Toubreau de Maisonneuve, MM. Th. Monod, Henri Lhote et Petit-Lagrange, Mme. Carré, Commandant Cauvet [71.1934.54], the Musée du Bardo [71.1934.196], Gouverneur Bonamy, Capitaine Urvoy, Lieutenant Saillard, Colonel de Vesigne, Gilbert Boris”

(MET 1934a, n.p.). Numbers in brackets indicate accession numbers (following the Musée du Quai Branly inventory system) that are associated with these names in museum records.

<sup>13</sup> Collections from the following officers have been documented in museum records: Captain Duprez [71.1933.101], Captain Gay [71.1934.77], Captain Luchetti [71.1934.78]. Further collections from colonial officers are most likely to be found in Musée du Quai Branly accession numbers 71.1934.49–52.

<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quoted phrases or passages are taken from the exhibit guide (MET 1934a).

<sup>15</sup> The objects are found in Musée du Quai Branly accession number 71.1934.77. The photographs are found under inventory numbers PP0068213.1-2 and PP0068309.1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Musée du Quai Branly accession number 71.1934.76.

<sup>17</sup> The list of donors or loaners of photographs included is: “MM. Bougault, Petit-Lagrange, René Pottier, Capitaine Demoulin, Toubreau de Maisonneuve, P. Ichac, Colonel Husson, Colonel Gillier, Commandant Cauvet, Général Nieger, Lieutenant d’Armagnac, Dr Foley, Lieutenant Moullet, Lebaudy, de la Chevasnerie, Sergent-chef Chambert” (MET 1934a, n.p.).

<sup>18</sup> The 30-page pamphlet does not cite an author but says that the instructions were prepared “based on courses taught at the Institut d’Ethnologie” (MET 1931a, 4). Marcel Mauss was the main instructor at the Institut d’Ethnologie at the time, and both the structure of the document and certain passages are drawn from his lectures and writings on ethnographic practice (Mohen 2004, 51–52). James Clifford attributes the *Instructions* to Marcel Mauss “with” Marcel Griaule and Michel Leiris, two of his students and participants in the Dakar-Djibouti expedition (Clifford 1988, 363); Jean Jamin writes that they were “conceived by Marcel Griaule and written by Michel Leiris” (Jamin 1982, 71).

<sup>19</sup> The term *indigène*, used here and throughout the *Instructions* and correspondence in the archives, was widely used in French colonial administration as a category to describe the “native subjects” in the colonies and does not contain the same connotations associated with the broader idea of “indigenous peoples” in English. In French the word retains the negative connotations of inferior status associated with the colonial period and has not been taken up as part of wider French museum practice (Gagné and Roustan 2019; Roustan 2016). I have retained its usage in translations from the original sources.

<sup>20</sup> Musée du Quai Branly inventory number 71.1933.101.1.

<sup>21</sup> Musée du Quai Branly inventory number 71.1934.77.43-50.

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Figure 1. View of the exhibit hall featuring painting, literature, and cinema, including stills from the film “L’Atlantide” (1932). (Image from Quai Branly online collections PP0001209)

Figure 2. Exhibit case on the M’zab featuring objects collected by Lieutenant d’Armagnac in southern Algeria in preparation for the exhibit. (Image from Quai Branly online collections PP0001359)

Figure 3. Tuareg display case featuring leather bags, shields, swords, lances, and other weaponry. (Image from Quai Branly online collections PP0001188)