

West African Vendors at the Tuileries

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Abstract

An impression of the West African vendors at the Tuileries.

It's a sunny winter afternoon in Paris. As usual, about 20 vendors have set down their blankets between the gardens of the Tuileries and Napoléon's Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel. Every one of them sells the same collection of goods: winter hats, Eiffel Tower miniatures, and selfie sticks.

I asked one of them if they were a team. No, he said, and laughed. "Then why do you all sell the same thing?" I said. "Because that's what the tourists buy," said he.

The first time I saw them I was reminded of a town we would pass through between Dakar, Senegal, and the popular beach town, Popenguine, during the years we lived there. The dusty "route national" was lined on both sides with identical wooden stalls where women sold identical produce—limes, grapefruit, watermelon.

I always wondered how one should decide from whom to buy...but we never stopped.



Fig. 1. *Winter Sales, the Tuileries. Paris, France, January 2016.* Photo credit: Sharon Stallworth Nossiter.

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