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## THE DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH FOR THE PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL LEATHER- MADE CRAFTS IN WESTERN SUDAN

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### Abstract:

In an attempt to advance developmental approach for the promotion of traditional leather-made craft, this paper seeks to attain the intended goals through promoting production tools and equipment (appropriate technology) upgrading and qualifying the target group and promoting marketing systems. Technical and managerial skills can be attained, not only by the traditional on-the-job training of apprentices, but most effective and important through schooling, vocational and training centres. Promotion and modernization of production tools and equipments has to begin by eliminating factors impeding the process. Successful approaches for upgrading and qualifying the target group should start from the point where the development of this craftsmanship begins, that is, to consider technical capabilities of these artisans (i.e. to adopt development from below paradigm). In this regard three approaches are proposed for tackling the development of this sector in western Sudan. It turns out, therefore, that the process of development necessitates intervention of governments and other donor agencies (i.e. outsiders). As this sector of these craftsmen is financially and organizationally weak, the stud proposed guidelines to modernize them, in addition to the development of marketing systems.

**Key words:** Artisans, Leather-made crafts, promotion, technical skills, marketing systems.

### المستخلص:

في محاولة لتصميم منهج تنموي لتطوير صناعات الحرف التقليدية الجلدية في غرب السودان عملت هذه الورقة إلى تحقيق الأهداف المرجوة من خلال تعزيز وتحديث أدوات ومعدات الانتاج (نموذج التنمية المناسبة) وتطوير وتأهيل الفئة المستهدفة وتطوير نظم التسويق. هناك امكانيّة الحصول على المهارات التقنيّة والاداريّة، ليس عن طريق التدريب التقليدي أثناء الخدمة للمتدربين، ولكن الأكثر فعاليّة أن يكون ذلك من خلال التعليم المدرسي والتدريب المهني. ولا بد من أجل تطوير وتحديث أدوات ومعدات الانتاج أن تكون البداية بالعمل على القضاء على العوامل التي تعيق هذه العمليّة. إنّه لا بد للتصميم والمنهج المناسب لتطوير وتأهيل الفئة المستهدفة أن يبدأ من النقطة التي وصلت إليها هذه الصناعات في تطورها وذلك بالنظر الى القدرات الفنيّة لهؤلاء الحرفيين، أي بالاعتماد على نموذج التنمية من أسفل. وفي هذا الصدد اقترحت الدراسة ثلاثة أساليب لمعالجة وتطوير هذه الحرف في غرب السودان. وعلى هذا يتبين أن عمليّة التنمية والتطوير وترقية الصناعات تتطلب تدخل الحكومات وغيرها من المنظمات (أي الآخرين). وبما أنّ هذا القطاع من هؤلاء الحرفيين ضعيف في قدراته الماليّة ومن الناحية التنظيميّة فقد اقترحت الدراسة مبادئ توجيهية لتحديثه بالإضافة إلى تطوير نظم التسويق.

## 1. Introduction

Traditional crafts have been a subject of diverse attempts for promotion and revitalization in different cultures. For at least the last two decades the majority of both developing and industrialized countries have developed strategies and programs for promoting micro, small and medium enterprises.(1) They are in effect reflect cultural identity, countries' or regional heritage often called "soft power"(2). This is not to exclude that traditional crafts do not evolve spontaneously by the real efforts of the artisans avoiding their extinction, loss of their jobs and retain their revenue.

The pace and rate of that developmental process does not conform to the accelerated high change in the cultures' necessities and communities' tastes of the modern times due to the easy spread and contact of cultures, this is in addition to the slow economic recovery. Hence, a push is badly needed to crafts development to suit the needs of the customers, a fact that forces, not only artisans, but the intervention of other diversified agents for traditional crafts revitalization and promotion. In this way these actions fall squarely in the domain of community or local development.

Several attempts have been made to construct small promotional strategies to serve those purposes. In Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) a local economic development (LED) strategy was advanced to address problems of poverty alleviation, creation of labour opportunities and other socio-economic issues. The stress of the strategy has been focused on promoting regions and localities to cope with trickling decentralization adopted in those countries(3) where efforts were made tackling groups, cultures, sectors, traditional ways of life and artisans who are the traditional crafts makers.

A research was carried in Northern Thailand to explore and develop designs for promoting traditional handicrafts sector in order to seek their sustainability. The study provides the problems that encounter handicrafts sector, identified the potentials of some of them in the contemporary markets. Three types are selected as having potentiality to development. The study recommended three directions to adopt as design approaches for handicrafts promotion and sustainable development , namely: replication, adaptation and innovation(4).

In the search for the "design for domestication: The Decommmercialization of traditional crafts " a study was carried in view of exploring the contribution of traditional crafts after promoting them as amateur occupation. In this regard design strategies are discussed to revitalize and support them on commercialization bases. Twelve types of traditional crafts are set to be examples, and are analyzed with regard to two variables: "the way in which knowledge is transmitted and the degree of experimentation facilitated by the activity". The study concluded that domestication of traditional crafts is one of the approaches suitable for revitalization by amateurs, and has disclosed six domestication strategies that can be arranged into two broad categories: (5)

A- Fixed and ( documented or interactive or live.)

B- Experimental and ( documented or interactive or live).

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The Sudan, being a multi-cultural country, displays several types of traditional crafts, due to the variation in groups' life ways and environment. This can be exemplified by the different types of manufactures that can be classified according to the material utilized in the production of the artifacts,

namely but not all, pottery, leather works, fiber and metal manufactures. Because this study is based on sectoral development , only leather-made crafts will be its subject matter, and covers only Western Sudan region. By Western Sudan the study refers to only northern and western Kordofan States in addition to Northern, Southern and Eastern Darfur States.

Those states of western Sudan display a degree of homogeneity that facilitates its handling as study unit. Leather crafts there represent cultural heritage with many different forms used for different purposes. This why the artisans of that craft tend to preserve and keep their continuity in a changing society. In fact they would have not been continued with their slow pace of evolutionary change were they not found genuine efforts from the artisans and offered potential for growth in the especially in the local market. Hence, they need interventions to bring in appropriate designs and promotion in the leather crafts development to accelerate their promotional pace, a thing which this study seeks and forms the basic research problem. To this end this study raises the following questions:

- a- How can traditional crafts development design contribute to the promotion of this craftsmanship generally?
- b- What are the potential areas to which this design can make positive contributions to the traditional leather handicrafts in western Sudan?
- c- How can design for preservation and sustainability be applied specifically to traditional leather crafts sector in western Sudan?

Generating employment. This research aims at developing a framework for the promotion, improvement and revitalization of traditional leather crafts designs, products, practices for use in many different life ways and commercialization. This will contribute in the social life and economic growth by satisfying the needs of the concerned community, poverty alleviation of the artisans and inclusion of both new groups of artisans and the excluded or marginalized artisans, that is

It has been disclosed that this significance can be traced in several instances such as in South Africa where the products of Southern African Development Community Region gains worth more than 180 million dollars annually, and employed about 1.3 million people and has responded to the local and international markets(6).

Different methods are utilized to collect data including literature review, interviews in those selected states in western Sudan that have been defined before. Written material is scanty, few descriptive material exists and more than 53 artisans were interviewed in addition to some natives.

Several terms provided in this research needed to clarified, these embody the following ones:

- a-** Crafts: " Crafts is usually taken to mean an object which has a high degree of hand-made input, but which is not necessarily made or designed using traditional materials, [e.g. The use of tanned leather from modern mechanized industry to produce leather artifacts by the artisans], and they are usually produced as one-off or as part of a small patch, the design of which may or may not be culturally embedded in the country of production, [e.g. production of some women shoes designs or bags in our case study], and they are also sold for profit"(6).
- b-** Artisans are persons who make products manually, but most often by the aid of some industrialized equipment. They can often be helped by some members from their family, friends and apprentices (7). They are involved in the production of their crafts on part-time or full-time bases (8).
- c-** Sustainability " includes triple interdependent factors of environment, society and economics in association with activities. It requires better connections between nature, culture, values, power relationships and technology, and needs action from various groups: global policy makers, national and local governments, non-governmental organizations, corporations, local enterprises, communities and individuals"(9).
- d-** Design: is described " as an idea or a process of how we think about users' needs or wants that will become tangible"(10).
- e-** Local economic development: is a " process where local actors shape and share the future of their territory ...it is a participatory process that encourages and facilitates partnership between the local stakeholders, enabling the joint design and implementation of strategies, mainly based on competitive use of the local resources, with the final aim of creating decent jobs and sustainable economic activities."(11).

## 2. The Development of Material Culture

Contemplating on the “design of developmental approach for material culture” is a taboo from the folkloristic point of view at least until early 1980s. Words like “intervention”, “intrusion”, “interference” and “fakelore” are biased descriptive notions. They are “designed” against the non-designing of folk material culture approaches. But, however, since the advent of colonization in Africa, particularly in the Sudan, folk material culture has been subject to progressive intentional designing of methods and developments.

This sequence has proceeded directly and indirectly in crafts manufacturing, but without remarked social disturbance and cultural imbalance. The process worked through borrowing, diffusion and implementation.

In a sense, folk material culture is a living thing like people. Some crafts die and new generations that integrate and combine new and old traits appear. New innovations also come to life. It is just like the dogma of the earlier folklorists of the nineteenth century, when Andrew Lang and Max Muller introduced a theory based on “the decease of language” to interpret the Indian mythology of the Aryan traditions (12). It postulates that some words become obsolete after some time (die or lose their meaning), and new ones are born. Even expressions act likewise, and

so do habit, behaviour, costumes, some leather crafts and diet systems alter and change.

It is, therefore, logical to “design” a developmental approach for folk material culture that handles traditional leather-made crafts in western Sudan. Although many craftsmen in different sectors need adjustment by designing appropriate approaches for the development of their career, it would be a mistake to think they all need the same process. This argument is solidified by the variation of their “situation, external constraints, level of development and administrative bodies” (13), in addition to the fact that craftsmen in each sector are not a uniform mass, nor are their strategies identical (14). Those very reasons stand behind designing separate approaches for each sector with special consideration to the cultural conformity and similarity in traditions, which are occasionally delimited by the choice of specific research area, such as “Western Sudan”, the case study of this paper.

Different approaches are followed to attain crafts development. The choice for designing appropriate approach for the development of traditional leather-made crafts contradicts those schools which call for spontaneous evolution only. The latter presumption advocates the idea that cultural process should be left to take its own course without intervention, so that the attained consequences will either compel the artisans to modernize their craftsmanship to cope with their contemporary life, or else shift to a new occupation.

The approach adopted here also does not conform to the method of sheltering traditional manufactures against competition and the smash of factory-made products. Sheltering is made by means of protective measures such as exemption from excise duties, high rate taxes on factory manufactured goods and other incentives. Such method seems to be formulated to complete or to stop the spread of factory-made goods that appeared to be impractical. Protective measures, however, do not protect in the literal sense of the word, rather than mitigate the continuation of the protected specimens (15). Moreover, globalization and liberalization of trade do not permit successful applications of this process in the near future. It is, therefore, logical to tackle designing and implementing developmental approach for traditional leather-made crafts. It should be highly considered that the cost of the implementation of the designed approach is high due to the widely dispersed nature of leather-crafts workshops.

### 3. Qualifying the Target Group:

Social institutions have been a fundamental source for general vocational education and training (16). But the march of human civilization has been so rapid, complicated and specialized that it could hardly be feasible for those social institutions to adequately satisfy those needs or bring in sustainability to the industry without researched intervention. This has led to the rise of school systems, vocational training centres and on-the-job training methods (i.e. intervention). The latter one is a sort of training without bureaucratic regulatory and administrative burden, approvals and oversight. In this regard many institutions and organizations work in traditional crafts training programs alongside with the apprenticeship training in the workshops sites. Hence, the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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witnessed an accelerated crafts training models of development with the view of shortening training duration to a very short time span not exceeding 6 to 24 months(17). It must be emphasized that the old method of traditional vocational training among those groups have continued and are still offering more chances than the modern ones can do in Western Sudan.

The new converge for qualifying traditional artisans through schooling, vocational and training centres is not without problems and challenges beyond the ability of the social groups themselves. These are:

1. Acquiring functional illiteracy has been stumbling block against the artisans attempt to diversify their programmes and widening their scope of relevant knowledge.
2. Shortage of qualified trainers.
3. Modern education system in the Sudan, and hence its western part, has fostered a process of disparity between the students and folk contemporary traditional life. The purpose of modern education until the late 1960s has been to create middle class to serve in the public sector and the capitalistic sector of the economy. The process discourages the enrollment of people to the artisans' groups.
4. Lack of finance to sponsor, run and provide training materials and equipments for those sectors is also considered a major hindrance.
5. Although political will, recognition and support are badly needed for continuous applications of training procedures, the mere attainment of these goals has rendered the issue as no problem in the Sudan. The national Comprehensive Strategy of the Sudan (2007 – 2031) stated that it should achieve the following targets (18):
  - a- Enrollment of new artisans and youth to the occupation.
  - b- Provide vocational training, capacity building and increase production in quantity and quality taking into account cost reduction.
  - c- Reduce poverty alleviation, facilitate grants for increase and development of small craft and rural industries.

Leather-made artifacts have been among these specified crafts for development in that respect.

To begin successfully in the development of leather-made crafts, one would start from the point where the development of this craftsmanship ends with. Traditional Knowledge and experience of the artisans should be respected, in addition to any further developments introduced to build on the traditional heritage and satisfy the basic needs of the society. For instance, the Naam movement in Burkina Faso started crafts development in the same way. They made no trails to supplant the local traditional approach by foreign and unfamiliar western ones at one blow. Furthermore, there is ample time to train people especially in rural areas during the dry season, for they have little to do in their farms. This is especially true for the off-school youngsters, who have no occupation other than farming, retailing and working in some services sector and seasonal labour. Harrison cited the following:

“The long dry season, 6-9 months when there is not rain for crops, is one of the greatest problems of the semi-arid areas, yet paradoxically, one of the greatest resources, a massive reservoir of under-used labour. In the good days these months were used for festivals, in more recent years they have been used for migrant labour” (19).

Qualifying leather-crafts artisans is a prerequisite to development of the sector. They must not be left without introducing them to modern manufacturing procedures that accomplish through gradual shift by training and retraining. The processes lead to imitation and later on to innovation.

### (A) Leather-crafts artisans qualifying programme

Leather-crafts artisans display extensive and wide range distribution in Western Sudan. The tradition is carried by different ethnic groups. Indeed more than one ethnic group may be working in a single workshop. This manifestation is a step towards forming production unit, building up labour relations, administration and organization of small group(s), and paid labour and apprentice. Leather crafts have thus been developed to be a major occupation for those who are involved in it.

The Majority of Western Sudan inhabitants purchase and use leather manufactures. This has led to the popularity and increase in leather crafts artisans in all sites. It has further led to specialization in the production of a variety of leather crafts, such as bags, objects of beautification, knife sockets, purses and shoe-making which is further subdivided into men and women ones. Specialization denotes that this craftsmanship has been advanced towards perfection and modernization.

For the sake of bringing in development and modernization for leather crafts industries, the present writer advocates the establishment of training centres and vocational institutions for carrying technical training programmes. This is in addition to the contribution of formal education that provides a flow of on-going generations of skilled artisans. The fore-going notion postulates that the artisans will be gathered at a central locality for short duration training. Such procedure is not a new opened avenue for training craftsmen in the Sudan. There are six youth training centres in Western Sudan, and a few National Crafts schools. Some other countries have also adopted this approach as well for up-grading and imparting skill of the artisans. The village polytechnic in Kenya, the National Centre for Promoting Rural Artisans in Burkina Faso and the prevocational schools in Nigeria are but examples in that regard (19).

These training institutions should be increased in number and distributed to cover wide areas so as to be more effective. The reason behind such policy is to erect them within easy reach of the leather craftsmen. An artisan at Bara in Northern Kordofan expressed his readiness to join a training programme at El-Obeid which is about 40 kilometers from his home. In the meantime he has no intention to join any training course in a far away locality, e.g. Khartoum (317 kilometers), unless he is being paid at the rate of his daily income while at work. On the other hand, Nyala, Um-Ruwaba and El-Obeid youth training centres have found acceptance, and many people have enrolled in the training programmes. It is,



alas, that those centres care for training new generations of leather-crafts artisans, and to the negligence of up-grading skills of those at work and modernizing their equipments. These training institutions, with such performance, resemble only formal education institutions, namely the National Crafts schools. Hence, the target group should include those in-the-job artisans as well as new enrolled apprentices.

The training system adopted for the promotion of leather-crafts by means of training and vocational centres is a central one. Candidates are gathered from nearby localities. Because leather-artisans specialize in minor subdivisions of the crafts art, e.g. bags and shoes, the training courses should be targeted to disseminate technological knowledge, practically use modernized appropriate equipments, and produce fine pieces in each field of those subdivisions.

The system is also a central one in a sense that planning and funding programmes should come from the federal government and/or non-governmental organization(s). All training managers of the training centres interviewed stressed the success of central administration funding. They recall the past experiences of the performance of these centres. On the planning level the following approaches are recommended:

#### **(I) Integrated sectorial approach**

Development programmers are designed according to this approach so as to integrate certain rural development or community development programmes at micro-level, e.g. a district or a province, with leather crafts industries. It can be brought in by studies carried by inter-ministerial co-operation at the federal level, for instance the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources, and the Ministry of Industry. The example of the Lala group of Zambia illustrates this case in the following extract.

“The production of a cash crop brought about a general increase in the economic prosperity of the area and led to the development of the non-agricultural sector, [crafts and services], as successful farmers and returning urban workers invested their saving in the establishment of small shops and other small scale business”(20).

The analogy of the above example could be traced in the rise of purchases for leather and other crafts after successful farming season in Western Sudan. Thus any programme for raising the revenue of the farmers, who are the majority, will affect the purchasing power in all other sectors including the manufacturing one by the multiplied effect. In the end the process will lead to overall rise in demand in all sectors.

#### **(ii) Modernization approach:**

This approach is carried by modernizing the existing traditional methods of production. Hence, the introduction of sewing-machines is quite significant in that respect. The chief manager of youth training centres at El-Obeid town stressed their urgent need for specialized leather-sewing machines instead of the traditional multi-functional ones used also for sewing clothes. Other equipments for finishing leather crafts production are needed. The study also should propose the lines of

modernization and subject them to implementation through the widespread centres. This is a rigorous and continuous mission that seeks upgrading, production perfection and modernizing equipments. The trainers themselves must also be subjected to short duration refreshment courses so as to keep pace with the development of techniques and equipments.

### (iii) Problem centred approach

After an intense fieldwork or implementation of developmental programmes for leather-made industries, the observations of the researchers or trainers deduced from their visits to the workshops, and from the samples produced by the artisans may constitute a problem that may not be easily solved at the production unit. They may be problems of a general nature relating to workshop management, accounting and/or marketing. They may also be technical problems relating to production procedures. Solving those cases may be attained by adopting an approach especially designed for eliminating the problem. This approach can be effective also by designing advanced training courses for graduate artisans.

Training centres also should not confine their role in training and graduating apprentices. Their role should be extended to build up close relations with the artisans. By doing this, they could manage to dispense new information, knowledge, display new equipments and retrain artisans.

It becomes evident from the foregoing discussion about qualifying traditional leather-works artisans that the intervention of governments, other donation and training institutions and research centres is inevitable to attain development on that craftsmanship.

## 4. Promotion of Production Tools and Equipments (Appropriate Technology)

The promotion of production tools and equipments for crafts industries or any other ones depends more or less on the technological capability of the concerned nation. The national technological capability in turn is composed of two concrete bases: “The solid base” and “The soft or human base” (21).

The solid base is made up of existing production tools and equipments in a region. As to our case study, these provide at present the sewing-machine, hammers, scissors, borers, nails and wooden moulds in the leather-made crafts sector. Those production tools and equipments have usually been transferred from developed countries, and few simple ones are locally manufactured.

The soft or the human base aspect comprises both the workforce at the industrial sector including traditional craftsmen in one hand and the scientific researchers, designers and programmers tackling technology diffusion, adaptation and development of appropriate prototypes or innovations on the other. Trainers and instructors in the field of industry are also relating to soft base category.

The craftsmen find great difficulties in improving and promoting their solid base to cope with the present day accelerated rate of industrialization and development. In fact, they are neither aware of the availability of technologies that

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are not appropriate for the production of their manufacturers, nor have adequate technological information for adoption and utilization of improved technology.

The above demonstration is true for the craftsmen themselves, but at the national level there is an almost complete information gap with respect to the technological needs of different types. Filling this gap necessitates intense fieldwork on the specific sector subject for promotion, and looking forward for appropriate technology to diffuse and adopt from the worldwide technology reservoir. Fortunately technological knowledge has been now easily accessible and learnt by scientists, designers, and programmers since "it is embodied in the very design of the manufactured good and can be retrieved by reverse engineering"(22).

Once technological knowledge is obtained, the role of scientific researchers begins before diffusing machinery to the work site. In fact diffusion involves more than acquisition of machinery or product designs and technical knowledge. It embodies adaptation of those products to the local conditions, management abilities and technical skills of the craftsmen. The process may necessitate changes and/or improvements in the very designs of the product. It must be indicated that technology transfers at the international level are only interested in diffusing technologies that can be used easily by all industrial sectors: small, medium and large scale one, that is to say, marketable at a large scale. Most often those products do not suit small production crafts units. They are sometimes rejected by those enterprises, because they are complicated or expensive (23). This is not to rule out that some tools and equipments may descend directly to the craftsmen, and can be adopted especially if they are cheap, simply utilized and repaired.

The promotion of production tools and equipments for crafts manufacturing must be carried by assigned committee. This committee is an administrative body. Other technical sub-committees should be formed to carry different aspects of development programmes. As such a sub-committee for promoting appropriate tools and equipment for leather crafts manufacturing is imperative.

The Economic research Council of Sudan's National Centre for Research has advanced two projects for shoe-making and bags manufacturing. They exemplify the appropriate direction towards developing and modernizing traditional crafts through scientific handling.

The involvement of researchers in modernizing and promoting crafts industries is intensified as long as craftsmen production approaches the international technological frontier in order to manufacture the existing goods at the relevant efficiency frontier.

Traditional crafts promotion and modernization does not deny or rule out the introduction of capital machinery and modern factories. On the contrary, the two processes should stride together as long as the former has not been brought to failure, or the latter has not extinguished. As such, modern leather-works factories should be brought, encouraged and installed. The present writer advocates building up factories or production of tools and equipments for the manufacturing sector. It may be argued, as the adherents of development from above paradigm claim (linear development), that the major requirements for such industries have not yet been satisfied due to the narrowness of the local market to consume the

vast production of those items. Indeed, linear model has been applied and followed in the west in their path to industrialization, that is to say the two types of manufacturing – the modern and traditional – are in use effectively. There is now a common body of opinion that development should not necessarily follow the same track, and that investment in the production of tools and equipments of production (industry of industrialization) should stem to satisfy the growing need and fill the gap of scarcity. This is what so-called in the political economy circles “supply-induced investment” (24).

## 5. Group Organization and Marketing

Intervention and collaboration of different development agents -public, semi-public, private or non-governmental - has been a recurrent theme in the development circles of traditional crafts. Robert Chambers called those agents “outsiders” (25). This may be done by the promotion of equipments, tools, training programmes and provision of financial facilities. However, other needy support facilities are indispensable to up-grade and promote that craftsmanship. In this regard, group organization of the craftsmen and development of marketing systems and widening them to cover, not only the local markets, are of utmost importance.

The different agents, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that intervene and involve in development and poverty alleviation programmes, began their career by providing welfare and relief services, then they shifted to funding and implementing those programmes. At a later phase a change in their promotional attitude and procedures has led them to depart those lines of aid programmes. They are now working to support patterns of economic initiatives and employment, including craftsmen. The reason seems to articulate and develop the technical and organizational abilities, marketing procedures and outlets of the target groups. Moreover, they credit facilities for acquiring equipment and tools, obtaining raw materials and other inputs.

The procedures converge in the development programmes among donors and facilitators have been due to the development failures in the past. The organization and marketing systems among the leather artisans in Western Sudan are carried in the following manner:

### (A) Group organization

Among traditional leather-works artisans in Western Sudan, there are no grass-roots organizations serving their craftsmanship. The only exception is the weak and inadequate representation in the trade unions and the Federation of Industrialists and Businessmen in big towns, namely El-Obeid, Nyala, Al-Di'ain and Al-Nuhud. The phenomenon is not confined to Western Sudan; it is a common feature in Africa. Group organization tends to grow with the general level of income and education “since literacy and familiarity with laws and procedures are needed when dealing with modern state” (26), or else the organization is supervised and administered by governmental apparatus. Similar to this stance is the marketing of handicrafts in Angola Republic prior to the late 1980s. It has been controlled and administered by a department in the Ministry of Culture (27).

The long march of governmental and non-governmental efforts to establish a solid base of co-operatives as a form of group organization among different sectors has been brought to failure. Co-operatives as a notion and practice- deeply entrenched in the values and traditions of the community- are familiar among traditional groups, but the forms and structures of the newly introduced ones have not found acceptance and smooth adoption among the society in western Sudan.

In Tanzania the enthusiasm to co-operative societies in the few years after independence gave way to criticism and complaints of inefficiency in management misuse of funds and other practices (28). This is not to mask the bright feature of the successful applications of co-operative organizations in Asia, such as the Productive Village Schemes first initiated in 1980 in Thailand and Syralanka.

Those forms of co-operative societies currently prevailing in Western Sudan are not recommended by the present writer as organizational institutions for traditional leather-works development. Henceforward, the proposed adoption of the Egyptian experience that began in 1985 for the development of leather-works through co-operatives in Darfur is rejected also by the very reasons and indications notified above.

Recently Sudan government has encouraged the so called productive household enterprises and micro-finance enterprises as a form for development of crafts. Although the beneficiaries of those enterprises are only urban artisans, especially the new enrolled ones; they have indeed brought some sort of success. The scheme seeks social stabilization through economic development. Saving and Development Bank, centered in Khartoum with several branches distributed over the Sudan, together with Family Bank are targeted to credit micro-finance enterprises.

Among the traditional leather-works artisans there are some help traditions that take the shape of personal relations and co-operative conventions. A new comer to the site can work in the workshop of his fellow and use his equipments until he could manage to erect or rent one for himself. He may work with them on the basis of piece rate or lend each other raw materials and/or equipments.

## **(B) Marketing**

Marketing draws its significance for crafts manufacturing as being one of the determinants of their survival and expansion. Three types of markets could be identified as regards leather-made artifacts. They are the local, the national and the international markets.

### **(I) The local market**

Historically, the main market for traditional leather crafts is the local one. This is vindicated by the simple fact that they are cultural expression in concrete form of the concerned society. They satisfy the basic cultural needs in the first place; nonetheless they generate income and revenue for the artisans. Those above raised statements are in close conformity with the contest that the expansion of cottage industries and handicrafts are more or less a function of the expansion of the

domestic market, rather than the national or the international ones (29) since very long time.

The manifestation of the above stance is dominantly apparent in the majority of cases where the workshop is the location of both production and selling leather artifacts. At Um-Ruwaba, Al-Nuhud and Al-Di'ain towns in the Sudan among other sites the craftsmen display their leather manufactured goods on a mat in front of the workshop, or hang them. Individual customers, middlemen and merchants find their demands of those crafts. One artisan from among the group runs the bargaining procedures and accomplishes it. It is only in rare case that another artisan intervenes to modify the heated discussion by lowering the price. The technique may be agreed on to get compromise and sell their products. Furthermore, apprentices who usually intermingle with the artisans group watch the process keenly as part of training on the bargaining procedures.

The demand for goods increases and decreases according to some other determinants as well. Many of the informants expressed the effectiveness of a good rainy season as a multiplier effect raising the purchasing power of the majority who are farmers and cattle herders.

It is only in recent years that specialized shops for leather crafts marketing have been established besides those traditional continued ones, thus a new ingredient in the market system have been brought in.

Deriving from the foregoing discussion of crafts marketing, there seems to be no convincing cause for intervention to build up a new marketing system, since the on-going one is effectively functioning. The call by some scholars to form some sort of marketing co-operatives, aid organizations or companies supervised by governmental apparatus may only destroy the working system, but may not add or function as the current one.

In Botswana the government took over crafts marketing by a company called Botswana Crafts in 1975. They collected a sizable number of crafts from about 3000 families scattered in the regions. Despite the efficient system they built for collection, and reasonable lot they pay, the system has robbed the artisans a well established and versatile discipline of marketing their goods, in addition it is susceptible to failure (30). Hence, the present writer is of the opinion that weak purchasing power will be improved by raising the income of the purchasers to be able to satisfy their needs, rather than by solving the artisans' marketing procedures only.

All these arguments prove that crafts at the local setting are but cultural manifestation made for special social and cultural purposes. Investment in the sense of the word does not apply, and will doom to failure. To draw up a conclusion, therefore, traditional leather crafts local marketing should continue to be carried in the same way since they work effectively.

## (ii) The national market

The primary market for leather-made crafts is the local one. However, since many decades ago the region witnessed the rise and development of trading those items to different parts of the country, especially central Sudan. The process has been

fostered by the active movements of merchants who advent from central and northern Sudan. The migration of some groups from the west northwards, and the influence of those merchants paved way to the diffusion of culture and other traditions of the west. Moreover, there are close similarities in the utilization of some leather-manufactured crafts, especially shoes, bags, purses and knife-sockets. All those factors stand behind the flourishing of leather-made crafts trade in the national level.

The foregoing discussion points to a one-way direction of leather-made crafts trade in the national level. It could be postulated that the process is due to the development of leather-artifacts in the west more than its counterpart both in quality and variety. Moreover, it is not far fetching to draw the deduction that the process of marketing on the national level for that craftsmanship has evolved and developed to satisfy cultural needs in those areas. They are not brought there to be used as curios or for ornamentation. Hence, it is true that this trade began as purely economic activity by traders, but it would have not continued were it not found cultural response and acceptance led to the popularization of that trade and increase in demand.

Trade on the national level for leather crafts has been mainly carried by individual traders. Later on, in mid 1980s some organizations and associations invested in that trade. Al-Sudaniyya Women Association, based in Khartoum, is a civil society organization working in marketing and encouraging promoting certain selected handicrafts. Wholesalers and some craftsmen from different parts of the Sudan sell their trade to the association.

Leather crafts trade in the national level, acting as demonstrated above, should be left to continue and develop spontaneously as historically was, and no intervention is recommended to change the direction of its prevalence.

### **(iii) The international market**

The limited available evidence indicates that handicrafts do enter into international market. They represent a major component for trade in some countries, such as Iran, where carpets stand as the largest exporting item after oil (31). The Philippines exports have increased twenty times by the promotion of handicrafts trade at the international level.

The international marketing of leather-crafts is a function of trade that is to say, it is a commercial process nourished by the activities of merchants and handicrafts promotion and trade institutions. Hence, it can offer only a very small market for ethnical objects that are more or less pure expressions of third world countries (32). Their mere trade is reflected in the traditional production of leather crafts and local traditions.

In order to bring in leather crafts to the notice of consumers abroad, large number of trade promotion schemes should be inducted, such as exhibitions in museums and fairs. Several examples of this stance can be referred to. The Fund for Research and Investment for Development in Africa (FRIDA) invested in a shop selling third world handicrafts in London. The Federation for the Development of Utilitarian Handicrafts (FEDEAU) was established in the year

1977 in order to help artisans in developing countries to promote this sector. The (FEDEAU) started work in Asia and Latin America as being reputed by the success they gain in this field, particularly in Thailand, The Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore (33).

To cope with the demands of the international market, certain requirements should be fulfilled by the leather-crafts artisans, and the promotional institutions working in that trade. The artisans have to up-grade their manufacturing capabilities, improve their production, run fine touches in finishing, and bring in new appropriate technology to attain these goals. This is to be carried with the joint efforts of the relevant institutions. Updating the design and quality of leather-crafts are essential prerequisites before indulging in foreign trade. Although efforts may be dedicated for promotion of leather-crafts marketing, late intruders into the international market affairs are at a competitive disadvantage. Accordingly, there will grow what so called "customers' faithfulness to the brand".

## 6. Conclusion

The theoretical debate and resistance to the interference of "outsiders" for designing crafts development approaches began to fade away with the rising expectation and realization of grave role leather crafts should play. In fact two processes are simultaneously acting, one is the intentional intervention of institutions to promote them, and the other is the spontaneous old evolutionary process.

This study postulates that the achievement of a promotional approach for the sectors under consideration can be obtained by training and retraining in specialized institutions designed for those purposes. Intervention of government, aid organizations and donor institutions to push forward development techniques, designs, quality and provision of appropriate modernized tools and equipments is indispensable. Moreover, a central promotion committee assisted by sub-committees at central and regional levels should be formed. Co-ordination between different relevant institutions is of utmost importance. Marketing - in local, national and abroad - is crucial; however, local marketing alone is carried by craftsmen.

In all, the basic steps towards leather crafts promotion take-off is made by eliminating the obstacles of development and fulfilling the requirements needed for their promotion.



## Notes

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