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Native American and Targui WomenSimilar Aspects of Life

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Abstract: *Renown scholars have previously pointed to the commoness existing between tribal people in different parts of the world. At first glance, visible affinities attract the attention of the viewers either when travelling, reading books or, watching documentary films. Some writers have mentioned the common traits between the native Americans and the Saharans of north Africa. The two regions seem too hard to live in still, they are populated and their peoples have managed to enter history and the cultural world heritage with their petro glyphs and distinctive cultural traits. To what extent do Native Americans and the Saharans of North Africa share cultural traits and why? This visible commonness is attributed to women more than men, for the reader would see no resemblance between a veiled Targui and a Native American with a feather's headdress. Three hypotheses are stated to enhance some parallels. The findings which are listed concern the spiritual and cultural characteristics of both populations in general besides some specificities such as jewels' motifs, vivid colors and, the hairstyle of women.*
Keywords: *Affinities, Native Americans, Tuareg, women.*
Résumé : *Des érudits de renom ont déjà souligné les points communs existant entre les peuples tribaux dans différentes parties du monde. À première vue, les affinités visibles attirent l'attention des spectateurs, que ce soit en voyageant, en lisant des livres ou en regardant des films documentaires. Certains auteurs ont mentionné les traits communs entre les Amérindiens et les Sahariens d'Afrique du Nord. Les deux régions semblent trop difficiles à vivre, pourtant elles sont peuplées et leurs peuples ont réussi à entrer dans l'histoire et le patrimoine culturel mondial avec leurs pétroglyphes et leurs traits culturels distinctifs. Dans quelle mesure les Amérindiens et les Sahariens d'Afrique du Nord partagent-ils des traits culturels et pourquoi ? Cette ressemnlance visible est attribuée aux femmes plus qu'aux hommes, car le lecteur ne verrait aucune ressemblance entre un Targui voilé et un Amérindien coiffé d'une plume. Trois hypothèses sont énoncées pour renforcer certains parallèles. Les découvertes qui sont répertoriées concernent les caractéristiques spirituelles et culturelles des deux populations en général outre certaines spécificités telles que les motifs des bijoux, les couleurs vives et la coiffure des femmes.*
Mots clés : *Affinités, Americains natifs, femmes, Touareg.*

1. Introduction

According to Greek mythology, it was a woman, Pandora, who opened the forbidden box and brought unhappiness to mankind. In Europe, according to Christian theology, a woman is the gate of devil. In Roman mythology, a woman is inferior to man and described as a child; whereas, in unknown civilizations, like the Native Americans and the Targui ones, the woman is highly viewed and her position is of an utmost importance in her tribe. They value the woman as a human being with full rights and look at her with respect. Whether in ancient America or in the Algerian Sahara, women are envied for the high position they enjoy. The point in this research is not only focusing on this position but to discover the hidden reason that is behind the resemblance in the beliefs of tribal people living in ancient America and those living in the Sahara of Algeria. Though they live far from each other, Native

American women and Targui ones share surprisingly many aspects of life: Their position in their tribes, rights in property, types of clothes, typical designed jewels and decision making. Does life under tipis and tents set on vast lands allow people to see further and to value all that is valuable? One can hardly believe that in ancient times, Touareg and Native Americans travelled through continents, visited each other, exchanged ideas and shared some cultural traits.

Travelling far back in the history could clear out these ideas. We need to choose academic and argumentative literature review to come out with some findings. To answer our research question and to propose acceptable results we are going to state the following hypotheses: Our ancestors experienced social globalization centuries ago. They shared linguistic terms and traditions. They might have travelled across the Atlantic for trade. Their commonness is so surprising and inspiring that one wishes not to cut the flow of one's ideas with short words that make headings, titles and subtitles. This theme could be much better appreciated if it were performed by both Native Americans and Targuis, accompanied by their breath-taking traditional music. Stretching arms to historical documents could tell us about their historical backgound.

Renown scholars' writings are taken as a theoretical framework to support this study. Some of whom and not are: Radcliffe-Brown in his article The Comparative Method in Social Anthropology, Tafton Mason in his article Similarities in Culture, D. Wallis in Similarities in Culture, Franz Boas in his article entitled The Interrelation of CulturesThe Diffusion of Cultural Traits and the last one Early Man in America written by B. Howard. These academic articles were contributive in enriching this paper with some findings.

2. Their Historical Background

2.1. The Historical background of Native Americans

Some historians say that Muslims had travelled from Spain and West Africa to America seven centuries before Christopher Columbus stepped there. This probably explains why he needed to be accompanied by the Muslim and Arab explorer Ahmed Ibn Majid to explore 'the new world'. When Muslims arrived in the "strange land" behind the sea of darkness and fog, they intermarried and exchanged names, habits of life and copied from each other customs and traditions. Were the Touareg among those explorers? It's hard to answer such a question. If we step back further in the history, we find out that the Native Americans used to travel abroad and receive merchants from throughout the world. Their land was linguistically ad culturally rich and diverse. Under this head the writer of the article "What came to be called America" contends:

> In strikingly diverse habitats and climates they developed possibly the most varied and productive agriculture in the world. Their lifestyles and belief systems differed widely and they spoke hundreds of distinct languages. Throughout the hemisphere, states and renters of high

> civilizations had risen and fallen. The dynamic Mexica (Aztec) and Inca empires were still expanding at this time and internal migration and warfare were common. The peoples didn't see themselves as part of an entity. Only later would this area be given a unifying name America- and the people labeled "Indians" by Europe.[1]

Something should be mentioned here is that in the Aztec civilization, the statutes are African like figures. On the other hand, some writers do emphasize on the idea that people in ancient times travelled to other continents. It is mentioned in some historical works that the Pharaohs thousands of years before Jesus Christ had sailed to America.

> Over the next 11 dynasties Pharaohs rose and fell like the ebbing tide of the ocean. The close of the Old Period of Empire was signaled by the invasion of Saltis, whose subsequent defeat ushered in the new Golden Age. The time of glory witnesses the building of the Karmak Temple complex, the Abu Simbel temple in Nubia (Kush) and sea voyages of almost mythical grandeur and endeavor to the lands that would one day be called the Americas![2]

The Pharaohs of Egypt and Sudan used to live in the Sahara of North Africa and with whom the Tuareg had ties of kinship and commerce. History reveals that there was a contact between Americans and Africans thousands of years ago. The reader may wonder what could be the relation between the topic of our research and the Pharaohs of Egypt and Sudan. No need to say that the Pharaohs used to travel to the outside world where they intermarried, took captives and even settled if the area was rich in resources, mainly gold. When mentioning the Pharoas and even the Native Americans the idea which led to the construction of pyramids makes us question if Native Americans came to Africa thousands of years ago. Did the Pharaohs inspire the Mexicans to construct the pyramids or were the Mexicans the teachers of the Pharaohs? The answer needs a deep investigation and further readings about Saharans of North Africa, mainly the Tuareg who constitute the statement of our research topic.

2.2 The Historical background of the Tuareg

Tuareg are a Berber nomadic people who are the principal inhabitants of the Saharan interior of North Africa. They call themselves Kel Tamasheq, they speak Tamesheq or Imasghen language. They call themselves Imohagh which means the free people. They also call themselves Kel Tagelmust, that's to say the ones who wear the veil. We notice here that the name Tuareg is not their original name but it was given to them by whites who explorered the deserts during the colonial era. Tuareg are active people who move from one area to another.

[1] *What came to be called America*
[2] *Kingdoms of* Africa *Cradle of Civilizations* and *Humanity* by Khaleed Mohamed

Touareg are mostly nomads. For over two millennia, the Tuareg operated the trans Saharan caravan trade connecting the great cities on the southern edge of the Sahara via five desert trade routes to the northern (Mediterranean) coast of Africa. The Tuareg adopted camel nomadism, along with its distinctive form of social organization, from camel-herding Arabs about two thousand years ago, when the camel was introduced to the Sahara from Arabia. The Tuareg once took captives, either for trade and sale, or for domestic labor purposes. Those who weren't sold became assimilated into the Tuareg community. Captive servants and herdsmen formed a component of the division of labor in camel nomadism.

The fortunes of Tuareg depended on trans-Saharan routes; they brought camals from Saudi Arabia, silk from India, spices and gold from the neighboring African countries and science and technology from China. They were not primitive people waiting for the others to bring them aspects of civilization. In an article[3] about the lost Atlantis, the writer says that hopes are on the theory that the Hoggar Plateau is the remnant of the submerged continent. The writer continues saying that it is possible that it was in the Hoggar where man first emerged from barbarism, and that colonists who went out from there eventually formed the ancient Egyptian civilization.

Tuareg's territory is not limited to the soil of Algeria only but stretches from Libya until Burkina Faso. It is said that there was a fierce competition for gold among the Tuareg tribes, a precious metal from which great civilizations made ornaments and offered gifts to kingdoms showing prestige, power and superiority. Trade exchanges allowed people to reache even the furthest parts of the world creating a web of information sent via and received from other nations.

North Africans moved to the far land behind the Atlantic Ocean which is called now America. No human's mind can perceive and accept as absolute truth that people in ancient times were stagnant creatures, leading an animal life like and waiting for things to improve and change. Ancient people made great civilizations which fascinate us and make us, we people of modern life, feel so astonished and so incapable in front of their grandeur. The latter makes us think that they were not manmade but supernatural made civilizations. For proof, the enormous ancient and perfect drawings in Machu Pichu which were performed by Native Americans make historians think that they could only be drawn from above with people flying in the air and probably on helicopters!

3. Aspects of Life

Though they are considered as pre history and primitive people, the grandeur of their civilizational outcomes has made us ask many questions like: What was their life like? What were the factors that contributed to the making of successful and eternal grand civilizations? In what way were they different from us? Their spiritual and cultural characteristics should be viewed in a larger context to rethink the history

[3] *Digging through the Ages for the Lost Atlantis,* Edgar C. Wheeler, August 1925

of the world. We are trying to depict where the Native Americans and the Tuareg meet to argue the common ancestry of peoples.

3.1. The Native American Tribe

The Native Americans saw nature as sacred, and as something to be valued rather than to be changed. The life of the Native Americans was communal in that material goods and individual talents belonged to the group. The Whites, on the other hand, viewed time and land as commodities to be bought, sold, and measured as part of the individual pursuit of success. Because they viewed land as their mother, the Native Americans could not comprehend how pieces of land could be sold, bought and owned by individuals (Chitwood, 1962: 7). Native Americans were pantheists who believed the human being was not more important than any other part of the world, whereas the Europeans viewed the human being as the highest creature on Earth.

Some fossil evidence indicates that the Native Americans used the horses for their hunting and crossing the plains. According to some books, these animals were brought in by the Spaniards in the late fifteenth century to the Americas. The Native Americans used heavy timbers to construct strong and tight houses before the arrival of the Europeans. They also developed techniques to make boards and fashioned wooden boats capable of carrying many people. They could not rely on dogs only to realize advanced works.

Contrary to the Native Americans, the Whites thought men ranked higher than women. These differences in visions led to contrasting attitudes towards nature, the individual, and the society. Though Native Indian women had power, prestige and authority over their lives, certain tasks could only be fulfilled by men. Every man and woman had to fulfill their duties to guarantee the tribe's survival and they both had equal prestige and power. Men were assumed to wander through the plains and hunt animals; moreover, they were supposed to keep their equipment in good condition for hunting. They were responsible for the safety of their families and to defend them in case they were in danger.

> Nevertheless, labor was mostly distributed according to gender. Female members of a nation generally had to take care of their home, manage the household and the children, but mostly also took part in tribal councils and not seldom had the right to elect the leader of the tribe. Males were concerned with hunting, warfare and getting in touch with outsiders. "Family" in this context is not defined as "female domain of work", but as "heart of society".[4]

Women occupied respectful positions in their communities since they were considered as Mothers of people. In their doctrine it is the mother who nourishes life

[4] *The Role of Women in Native American Societies, 2000 by Kristina Mawl*

which begins with birth. Ensuring a shelter for the family, feeding, raising children and clothing were the responsibilities of the women. Besides; they were skilled artisans, medicine women and supporters of hunters and warriors. They used to have different tasks that promoted tribal welfare. The social and cultural characteristics of the Native Americans sound to be in harmony with the ones of the Tuareg.

3.2 The Targui Tribe

Manifold foreigners seem familiar with The Tuareg. For proof they evoke the veil that the Targui males wear once a discussion is started; they all want to know why the Tuareg veil their faces. They also evoke their traditional clothes; silver jewels; their beautiful melodies, and their distinctive music. The Tuaregs' Tindi music seems well appreciated though presently they tend to play it using modern musical instruments instead of their traditional Imzad

The Targui man's tasks were limited to hunting and defending their families from any threat that might surrender them. Tuareg are known as courageous warriors and honorable fighters in spite of the hostile desert in which they live. In the Targui tribe, the work of the two genders often differs but they don't value one over the other. They believe that one cannot function well without the other. They have an ideal view of women. *Friends of different sexes, say the Touareg, are for the eye and heart, and not for the bed only, as among the Arabs.*[5]

Women are much respected and have powerful influence in family affairs and social life. The Tuareg have had queens as rulers like Tin Hinan whom they still regard as their mother. The high position of the Targui woman affords her strength, power and wealth.

The Tuareg, are also known as Tawarek. The word means Arabic plural of tarek; the one who knocks on the door. This name might imply that these people try out the desert in search for better places. The Tuaregs[6] refer to themselves people of the veil or Kel Tagelmust. The males have the habit of wearing a veil after a certain age, while the women go unveiled (Daphn 1992: 77). Their women are generally known with the high position they enjoy in their society.

Bravery and courage are characteristics which are attributed to the personality of both the Targui and the Native American. They are both referred to as haughty, belligerent, aggressive, indifferent to hardship, and merciless to enemies. The Tuareg are called the blue men of the desert. They are famous for their flowing robes and

[5] *The position of Women in Primitive Society, 1914 by Catherine Gasquoine Hartley*

[6] Richard L. Smith, *What Happened to the Ancient Libyans? Chasing Sources across the Sahara from Herodotus to Ibn Khaldoun*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (University of Hawai Press, 2003), « Four portals appear over the past four thousand years, each a look at the peoples of North Africa from the outside. The first comes from the Egyptians of the third and second millennium B.C.E., who made artistic representations …… the Libu and the Meshwesh……A second portal opened at the time of the Greeks and the Romans, beginning with Herodotus…Herodotus Lybians have been replaced by Sanhaja and Znata by Ibn Khaldoun in the fourteenth century. A final portal opens in the second half of the millennium with the work of Leo Africanus…. The Sanhaja and their kin have become Tuaregs.", p. 460.

turban-veils; and always on the move at will across the desert with their herds of goats and camels.

They are divided into two different classes, the noble and the slave. The members of the latter serve the noble class who do little work. Women, for instance, make cheese and butter, sort dates, herd goats; do some leatherwork, and other crafts. Men, on the other hand do needlework, make jewelry, and sew clothes. Further to an interview with an inhabitant from Janet about the social structure of the Tuareg, explanation was given regarding a hierarchical structure in form of a pyramid. At the top stands a woman as chief. This is, in itself, evidence for the Tuareg matrilineal society. Their society consists of clans which are made up of many family groups. Each clan is led by a chief who is called the amghar.[7] The Tuareg relate their self-identification to their specific Kel, which means "those of", like the Kel Dinnig, and the Kel Ataram.[8]

The Tuareg have a rich architecture; culture, and various dwellings which accompany them in their everyday life all of which make of them a well-known people. The Tuareg's architecture is quite typical and specific to their nomadic life style. It is a simple architecture consisting of tents which are covered with animal skin, and others with mats. Like in Native America, it is the Targui woman who owns the tent; the sedentary dwellings belong to the male.

The peculiarity of the Tuareg's cultural traits is not limited only to the veil of men but expands to their art and handicrafts. Much of the Tuareg's art consists of an impressive world of traditional and beautiful objects of leather, wood, clay and finely crafted swords. They diffuse all their knowledge and skills on the craft they make, leaving the mark of their individuality upon their finished work. This finished work is enriched and embellished in its form and texture with a delicate attention to the details. This finely well-done craft attracts people because it gives an unceasing pleasure and even tells much about historical insights about them. The beauty of the handmade jewels or any other crafts makes us think of the inspiring endless area on which the Tuareg live.

In this region of the Algerian Sahara, the female ancestress Tin Hinen is said to have founded the traditions of the Tuareg. Tuareg's myths and tales are loaded with female heroine and ancestress. They also attribute the existence of twins to be the ones who ensure the continuity of the future generations. This cultural trait is not specific to the Tuaregs only but is witnessed among many other autochthonous people in the world, where women enjoy a high position within their tribe.

Targui women serve as mirrors which reflect the social and cultural life of their society. Tuaregs' culture focuses much on female ancestry. Women's opinions are always taken into consideration when big decisions have to be made. Since ancient times, Targui women have had the right to choose their partners, to express

[7] Amghar, a local chief who officiates as the president of the council of his community, called "djm'aat

[8] e-book, Tuareg People, www.gutenberg.us/article/.../Tuareg%20people, WHEBN0000103054, World Heritage Encyclopedia, *(retrieved on May 2015).*

themselves freely, and to have access to property. Besides, they have been sheltered from any physical abuse. A conduct code called *Asshak* was established and imposed on men.[9] This conduct code consists of guiding principles. They forbid men to mistreat women and oblige to ensure good behavior. The rules of conduct and good behavior among the Tuareg guarantee the women's rights; those who break them are no longer noble and are deprived of their rights.

4. Findings

Based on the overview of the aspects of life prevailing in each of the two societies and, according to the data that have been hardly collected from various readings and investigations, we have come out with interesting findings which could pave the way to further researches about the topic.

Similar to the Tuareg, in Native America, the wood carving, making and repairing hunting tools were men's responsibility. Women, on the other had used to weave baskets, make blankets and gather wild plants. They used symbols. Flowers, plants and other living entities were used to represent life, and animals to represent position or wealth. Common animals that were seen in tribal symbols were horses, goats and snakes. Religion also played a part in tribal symbols, and included amulets and talismans. They thought that when drawing these figures, they would ward away evil spirits and entities. The most common colors used in tribal symbols were black, red, and yellow. They were known for jewelry, pottery, painting, sculpture and basketry.

In the folklore of both nations, animals are cited as tricksters, like the jackal, coyote, and the rabbit. Coyote lives in North America and the jackal lives in Africa. The former is about twice the size of the latter. According to the myths of the Dogon - a tribe that lives in Mali and that is in constant contact with the Tuareg - the Jackal is the trickster who brings disorder to the world. In Navajo tales, Coyote unleashes trouble in the world since it steals the children of Water Monster, thereby it causes flood (Stookey 2004: 11). The stories of Hare, or the rabbit, the trickster are popular in both Native America and Africa.

In ancient times, when a Targui baby was born, it was given the name of an animal passing by or, of the distinct natural circumstance of that day. The names which the legendary ancestress of the Tuareg 'Tin Hinen', gave to her daughters are listed as examples. Tin Hinen had three daughters of her marriage. The first one was called Tinghat meaning elk, and was the ancestor of Enafyeen tribe. The second one was named Taknantut meaning gazelle. She was the ancestor of Tinghana tribe. The third daughter was named Tamarwata, meaning rabbit; she used to be the ancestress of Iboglat tribe (Hawad 1993: 126). Likewise, Native Americans used to name the new born child after an animal passing or a natural event which marked that birth.

[9] Édouard Conte and Saskia Walentowitz, Kinship Matters, Tribals, Cousins, and Citizens in Southwest Asia and Beyond, Études rurales, No. 184, La tribu à l'heure de la globalisation (juillet-décembre 2009), pp. 217-247.

When watching both the Native American and Targui dances, we notice that both people share some cultural traits. Their dancing around fire, their leaping when dancing for victory, their gentle step on earth as if not willing to hurt it- from which man was created, where he returns and from where he leaves to join the second world- all make us notice that these peoples meet at many points. While performing the music, the Native Americans accompany the dancers with the drum and the flute. Concerning the Tuaregs, the drum and the imzad feature their celebration of ceremonies. Clapping the hands, turning around fire and jumping are common practices which are witnessed in both dances. *Tinde* in Native American language means 'two.' Accordingly, the *tinde* is held to celebrate the union of a couple (two people) in a Targui wedding ceremony. The Lipan Apache Band of Texas call themselves 'Tindi', which means people of the mountains.

The Arapaho are a Native American tribe who live on the plains of Colorado and Wyoming. The Dakota people used to call them *Mahpiyato;* 'Blue Cloud Men.' Their Lakota allies call them *Mahpiya tho* which means 'Blue Sky People. The Tuareg are also called the 'Blue people' for they dye their skin with indigo that gives off a blue clour. They use this dye to ward off the sun rays and snakes and scorpios' bites.

The indigo dye could serve as evidence for interdependent relations between people since antiquity. The indigo, which plantation occurs in South America, is widely used in Egypt and in the Algerian Sahara. Why do people living in the east use what people in the far west cultivate? Since the Pharaohs used the indigo in their religious ceremonies and for textile use, could not the Egyptians cultivate indigo instead of importing it? Several articles have proved that Native Americans never used the indigo dye for their clothes though America is the indigo's country of origin and the Tuareg widely use it.

When contemplating rugs made in Native America and the ones made in the Sahara of Algeria, we are impressed by the common features which they share without being able to find a hint which states that both share a common origin. They use natural dye materials that produce durable and strong colors which do not require the addition of other substances to obtain the desired outcome. Native Americans used the sumac stems too to dye the fibers, from which a variety of dye colors can be obtained. The patterning and designs of textiles are also of much interest besides the techniques of dyeing. The patterning of fish on either rugs or other fabrics might lead us to think of a shared belief between the ancient Africans and Americans. It might imply that designing the fish refers to ancient beliefs. These beliefs could be: the Deluge and Noah's Ark or the belief in the Prophet Yunus, the Companion of the Fish. It is quite strange to witness such drawings in the arts done by some people living in the Sahara where no seas exist.

Similar to the Tuaregs, the Native Americans valued women but they were not entirely ruled by them. They were more male-dominated, yet they honored and had respect for their females. Women in both societies maintain high status, and are often central to their tribes' cultures. Native American women enjoyed economic, social,

and political status. They often had the final say when the warriors' council disagreed. They could stop the tribe from going to war by refusing to provide rations, and even made decisions about captives.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, tribal people do hold in their minds, practice and beliefs the value and sacredness of a woman as a human being. The first Man on Earth Adam gave birth to five colors of people: the red, the white, the black, the yellow and the blue ones. Those people did hold universal values and led their lives according to natural and human convictions which they spread wherever they moved on Earth. Then, came time when invaders and explorers arrived from Greece, Rome and other nations with their beliefs of superiority of man over woman, settled for hundreds of years in the others' land, realized great civilizations and rooted their beliefs in the world. That's to say they transformed the world for their own end, smothered them with new environments and imposed their own kind of order on the world around them.

The tribal women in both America and Africa inherit the family name and the family property; they are the guardians of household stores and distributors of food. Besides, they are the owners and the controllers of children. There is much similarity in the maternal family, much correspondence in the marriage forms and social habits that the points of difference between Native American women and Targui women are little in comparison with those they have in common. To strengthen the topic, it is better to stop here in the hope of reading much more and developing it into a doctoral thesis. Digitilazing pure nature and ideas about interesting topics could make the new generations surpass the tyranny of superficial imagination and allow them to think and rethink inspiring ideas for a better management of their future duties.

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