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**Technology and Sustainable Development in Europe today**

**Sustainable Development, a chance for women and for the  
Nigerian Tuareg culture.**

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## **Sustainable Development, a chance for women and for the Nigerian Tuareg culture.**

The evolution of human societies in adapting to their time has always been a subject of concern to mankind for it implied so much survival challenges. Women being the central and delicate element of the human society is quite often the core of this problem. And this becomes even more harrowing when dealing with a matriarchal society as that of the Touaregs.

*Sustainable development is a given chance for women and the of Nigerian Tuareg culture.* The Tuareg woman is confronted almost every day with the harrowing problems inferred by globalization, by the insecure conditions of life and by the sociocultural transformations laid down by both. The objective being to well place its role in the sustainable development chain, especially in the fields of schooling and girls education, environmental protection, hygiene and purification, health and food, literacy teaching, and awareness raising on STDs and the HIV AIDS.

- **The cultural assets of Tuareg women and the occurred changes**
- **Tuareg women versus the urban life new challenges**
- **Tuareg women and sustainable development**

## **WOMEN ARE THE HISTORICAL MATRIX OF THE TUAREG CULTURE**

The status of women has been for some time now a subject of concern to the world up to the point where an international day was dedicated to it. The latter is justified by the place it occupies within society and especially by the role it plays within the framework of the domestic cell and society development. This status creates important socio-cultural specificities bound to the communities ways of life and to their natural life environments and to certain exogenous contingencies. The starting point of its evolution is always a historic inheritance appropriate to every community.

As we said it briefly in the introduction, the structure of the Tuareg society is based upon women. It is the matrix of our culture. The aristocratic powers are passed on by maternal descent. She plays the central role all the way from marriage, till children's education passing by the home management. Tuareg women are entitled to property. Everything that materializes the family unit belongs to her, starting by the tent and its content. In case of separation, the man is only entitled to his pomp, and that is in the strict sense of the term. It is he who goes away from home leaving it intact. Without any exaggeration, the Tuareg man is perceived here as a simple parent and a supplier of subsistence material means. He faces danger by virtue of his physical shape and natural tendency. All the achievements gained through his wild fight against nature are entrusted to the subtle intelligence women in order to manage them and preserve them from loss.

The highlight of the Tuareg African history was made by queens such as KAHINNA and TIN HINANE princesses AMAZIGH who imposed themselves several centuries before the Islam of the Mediterranean banks upon the south borders of the Sahara. With them, the matriarchy which gives them right to all the power and to any decision-taking imposed itself more upon the Tuareg society. This matriarchal predominance along with this subtly feminine commitment resulted in dedicating once and for all the right of the son of the sister of AMENOKAAL to take over the aristocratic power.

In that sense, we are sure to protect the matrix genetic inheritance. Tuareg women are also the frame upon which rests the economic life and the community future. They propose alternatives, manage and supervise camps in the absence of men and participate in all decisions taking even in their presence.

## **2. THE CULTURAL ASSETS OF TUAREG WOMEN AND THE OCCURRED CHANGES**

As we thus see, Tuareg women have enjoyed a certain fame ever since the dawn of time. Indeed, they were able to go as far as to practice supreme power more than anywhere else. The cases of Kahina and Tin - Hinan prove it well. For centuries, the Tuareg society was matriarchal. The uterine nephew of the previous Leader was the only to come to power. This remains valid in all Tuareg confederacies with certain exceptions. Women's opinion has always been sought and taken into account in the big decisions which gave sense and substance to our society life.

Long time before Beijing conference, Tuareg women had access to property, freedom of being, freedom of expression, freedom of choosing their partner and of being sheltered from physical abuse. In order to protect this cultural foundation of our society, a conduct code named "Asshak" was established and imposed on men. In this moral ethical step men have to manage their physical advantages not to abuse on women and the society weak.

This rule guarantees all of women's rights and makes of it the ennobling factor of men. Men who break this rule are no longer noble and are deprived of their rights. They are banished. Women are the ones declaring this exclusion. Which Tuareg man would risk not being sung any longer by these beautiful voices, or not being in the favours of which one should always be even if it is necessary to surpass oneself? Today still, the biggest sacrilege in the Tuareg society is to lay a finger on a woman and the insults towards her are condemned. No infringement on her physical, moral and spiritual integrity is bearable. For that reason as well as for a matter of chastity,

and certainly much more for women's respect, the question of the bride's virginity at the time of marriage consummation is covered by an explicitly approved silence.

Women's judgment is dreaded. They regulate behaviour within society. To do so, men would be well advised to look courageous, generous and infallible to women's eyes. In addition to this, the young man Tuareg will never think of his behaviour consequences on himself when facing a difficult situation whether on the battlefield or in the daily life, but rather on what young girls will say at camp.

Before joining her husband, the Tuareg wife always had at her disposal a tent as well as furniture and animals of draft according to her parents. She joins her husband with a capital that he has to protect and to yield in agreement with her. It is convenient to clarify that in the marriage the system of assets separation prevails. No husband can have his wife material assets at his disposal without her consent.

The Tuareg woman chooses her husband or then the family chooses him with her agreement. Her preference is predominant even if she has to obey as well to criteria preserving the dignity and honour of the family, the tribe or the federation. Her dowry is always equivalent to that given to her mother, and whatever the wedding number she is entitled to the same dowry. Contrary to other Nigerian women, her dowry is never depreciated.

Agent of tradition, Tuareg women have among other responsibilities to pass on the Tuareg language and "Tifinagh" writing to the coming generations. Tuareg women thus takes charge of the children's education, the girls in particular, and of the house work and the animals surveillance.

Although Moslem for a long time, Tuareg women couldn't despise polygamy more. They take advantage of the status which society confers them to impose monogamy. For them, if Islam tolerates up to four wives it doesn't forces on the other hand any husband to be polygamous.

On the other hand, Tuareg women are so adulated that the poetry is essentially dedicated to them. They are decreed as loving, angelic, mysterious and enigmatic beings to conquer.

Aware of their importance and the myth which surrounds them, they knew how to exploit the socio-cultural and historic realities of their environment at their favour. They are thus in a forceful position to demand and obtain whatever they want. It is all the easier because they enjoy a certain autonomy on the economic level conferred to them by the property right .

This women domination is often a conflicts source in the couples where it is badly managed. It explains the high curve of divorces at the Tuaregs. Indeed and as we can easily understand it, women set a wild resistance to defend millennium achievements when facing the predatory spirit of men. This hard battle is not won beforehand and our sisters lose ground not before men but before the wheel of history. The result is translated by alterations intervened in our social environment where Tuareg women are loing their "**power**".

Indeed, their role in society have begun through several endogenous and exogenous factors. On the educational level, the school and the street take henceforth charge of the children's education. The " Tifinagh " writing was supplanted by others which were imposed by colonisations waves . Opposite behaviour to the code and to

"Asshak" ethics become daily and polygamy begins to go into customs because of Islam and urbanization.

On the economic level, the tendency to the settlement which is more and more outlined every day, "removes" them the privilege of the housing property. The successive dryness destroyed the herds which constitute their economic capital.

But the "dark" situation which Tuareg women are starting to live must not make them forget their place in society. They have to adapt to the new socio-economic context and keep on being the tradition guardian. Therefore, they have to become aware of their new role which they could play better by schooling more while keeping their cultural personality which make of them a symbol, a reference. Their enormous cultural inheritance can indeed adapt to any adaptation. Thus they participate in the society development better than in the past with modern and innovative methods, through associations and O.N.G. It would also allow them to get better involved in the political fight. The latter being already inlaid in their culture and behaviour.

### **3./ TUAREG WOMEN FACING THE URBAN LIFE NEW CHALLENGES**

The urban life and sustainable development new challenges which imply on the Tuareg society are of two orders: the evolution of the nomad way of life towards a sedentary way of life and the modernism influence on traditional culture.

#### **The nomadism evolution : urbanisation**

The natural turns such as dryness and the consequences they entail, had a devastating effect on the Tuaregs ways of life. It implies naturally rehabilitations which modified the social order and roles assigned to each. To these natural phenomena were added others to the human scale such as the colonial or cultural conquests. The combined effect of these phenomena profoundly modified the social, economic and political skeleton of the Touaregs.

The traditional courses were modified. The regulation operating modes of society have changed within as well as the Tuaregs connections with their physical environment.

A society at bay loses its marks. Men overcome by natural and human adversity cannot protect any longer whole pieces of our culture. Nothing puts Tuareg women at shelter from voluntary or involuntary alterations. Only their intrinsic force is going to protect them.

The impoverished, destabilized and disrupted Tuareg turn to urban areas while keeping ties with their lands. Here begins a quartered life which reins will slip out of their hands. These are the forced migrations towards the cities. During these migrations we were obliged to trample our pride out of necessity. The women are certainly those who are going to pay the strongest levy.

The migrations of dryness are migrations of famine and misery. They can entail the departure of the whole group in search of a more friendly environment. The decimated or dead herds are resold dirt-cheap (20.000 F the cow against 150.000 F

in regular times). Women and men face together the distress, the forced idleness, the despair to reconstitute one day the crowd and resuming the former life.

The more ancient even more traditional working migrations, which only push men towards cities for supply, were modified in their cycle by the desertification.

These migrations represent a drastic bleeding for society with heavy incidences on the socio-economic balance.

### **The influence of modernism on the traditional culture: a forced debauchery**

If the fate of the "exodants" is hardly enviable, that of women who stayed alone in the village or camp is even lesser. In the worst of cases, women can be all by themselves alone and in charge of the family maintenance in camps emptied by men who left for an uncertain quest. The absence of husbands is an increase of the moral and financial dependence as well as the responsibilities. Women feel abandoned, facing alone misery, despair, disease or death, sadness, uncertainty, fear, so on and forth.

Survival by means of dietary help, begging, prostitution, are Touareg women's daily lot since they are deprived of any economic and cultural support. Here is the black picture of the forced urbanization which we underwent and the first contact which we had with modernity. The massive exodus towards cities had disastrous consequences on the individual and collective fates. It resulted in profound social disturbances which will leave indelible tracks to women. These deep alterations which touched all the traditional companies societies will oblige difficult and painful restructurings. These alterations affect the social fabric. The dryness generations of 1968 and 1988 are perfect examples of sacrificed generations. They are no longer holders of our culture essential attributes.

This forced march towards modernity, if it is not mastered will entail the disappearance of a universal civilization. The only way of stopping this descent into hell is to confer the Tuaregs a minimum of political power and a certain freedom of initiative of the local populations. This political power will allow them to decide their life orientation in a national frame. Women will certainly their marks there because the new system we set up will take root in our cultural foundation, the local autonomy. Hope thus lies in the process of decentralization in the course of application, notably in communalization, regionalization and in decentralized cooperation.

### **Some consequences of forced urbanization and the way of life change**

Because of men exodus the man / woman ratio was disrupted. In wilderness there are more women than men. A grave disturbance of the codes and the guiding principles results from it. The consequences of these destabilizations differ profoundly from an environment or from an ethnic group to an other. This variety

translates the confusion into which these unprecedented situations plunged a society trying to cope time after time. The rules of marriage changed.

The loss of crowds, the invalid(useless) or insufficient harvests, the rarefaction of the products of crops, the massive exodus pulled(entailed) the misery of the populations nomads and destroyed(annulled) the traditional circuits of the business and the exchange.

The forced settlement leads(drives) the touarègue woman to settle down in an environment(middle) where it is often deprived of any means of autonomous subsistence favoring its impoverishment. If the domestic possessions were sold to assure(insure) the survival of the group, the woman was so bare of her personal properties: cattle and jewels.

The loss of flocks comes along with the loss of income along with material security in case of divorce and no more savings in case of need nor meat for the holidays or social obligations nor milk for children or for sale.

Pushed by necessity women had to submit to some works she would have never participated in previously. The socio-cultural role of women was consequently too impoverished. Their educator, counselor, formative function was burdened by the fulfillment of the daily tasks. The transmission of knowledge to their children and to their daughters in particular, cannot be made as before.

Once confronting these consequences, the society developed new approach methods of its development by its survival instinct. Until this process is taken into account in a formal frame Tuareg women are trying to make it once having become aware of the cultural and social decrease consecutive to the above detailed phenomena. A new wave of hope is born and once again, women are carrying it . As in the past they will draw the necessary energy from their courage to save the endangered society.

#### **4. TUAREG WOMEN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT:**

Tuareg women having adapted to the new context register henceforth their acts and behavior in permanence. Aware not only globalization's stakes but also of the uncertainty of life conditions in nomad environment they opt for sustainable development actions in all the domains of the life domains.

The sustainability of development supposes the respect of local culture, the protection and the promotion at the service of autochthonous populations and their natural resources and cultural patrimony, the local autonomy in the field of health, schools, food and finally equity between all.

The role of former female educator is strengthened today in the incitement of young people to schooling. The thematic around which she plays a central role are: girl schooling, hygiene and purification, food, illiteracy elimination, natural resources protection and sensitization on the MST and AIDS in particular. These educational and formative activities take place in structured and organized frames such as NGO, development or even human rights associations .

In the economic field, Tuareg women have invested, besides their little reconstituted cattle capital, in activities valuing local resources and cultural arts generating incomes and new links. It is the case of the formerly object of leisure craft, today exercised full-time. This craft has reached such a development that it is very appreciated at the moment by the national and international community and it acts as Niger "visiting card". Tuareg craftswomen are specialized in all leather and other materials professions. They are well known for the preparation of objects furnishing the tent and of camel drivers sumptuous fineries .

Tuareg women are also gifted with traditional medicine and are holders of knowledge and know-how in the fields of prescription or traditional medicines preparation. At the moment, this shape of traditional medicine is the first level of resort in our camps and arouse interest and hope among scientists for certain recipes which have turned out to be effective.

Without further ado on the implication of Tuareg women in social, cultural and economic domains, we shall underline an encouraging aspect in the status of the Tuareg women; that of their political fight. Thanks to the wind of democracy which blew on our countries in the nineties, Tuareg women worried of protecting their secular role in the management of the camp business, put themselves a lot into the political fight. Today, they participate actively in the animation and coordination of political activities within political parties or civil society organizations. These predispositions and their degree of commitment within the various structures prepare them quite naturally to compete for elective mandates posts.

Tuareg women deserve specially honoring and honor for maintaining in breath all the Tuareg movements in western Africa in particular in Niger and Mali during their armed struggle against repression and governments injustice. They are the symbol of the Tuareg pride and in spite of their status within society being affected today by such endogenous as exogenous factors. To look at it close by, Tuareg women have skillfully adapted themselves to the society in which they live.

## CONCLUSION

La femme touarègue pourrait être le fer de lance de ce combat de longue haleine dans tous les domaines si on prenait en compte la spécificité de la dynamique féminine : **elle est lucide, présente, résolue, engagée et combattante.**

The consideration of these variables upon Tuareg women begins to arouse positive and constructive reactions. Tuareg women have a potential that one should learn how to exploit for the benefit of society and of Berber community divided among several countries. They know what takes place, and they want to know what is to be to face a world in full transformation. They still assert themselves as full partners and actresses of development.

Tuareg women could be the lance iron of this fight of long breath in all the domains if we took into account the specificity of the feminine dynamics: **they are lucid, present, resolved, engaged and fighting.**