The Culture and Arts of Morocco and the Berbers
Morocco

Location: Northwest Africa, on Atlantic ocean
   Part of the Maghreb - the name for the alliance of
   North African countries - Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania

Population: 33 million. Area: Slightly larger than California

Language: Official written language, (not spoken): Classical Arabic
   Used for official government documents & business: French
   Common spoken language: Moroccan Arabic (not written)
   Common spoken & written: Berber (called Tamazight)

Political System: Constitutional Monarchy with a Legislative & Judicial branch. King Mohammad VI is the head of state and spiritual leader and appoints the prime minister. Morocco gained independence from France in 1956.

Controversy: The southern region of Morocco, aka Western Sahara has been a disputed territory since 1991. Western Saharan people (Sahrawis) would like to establish their own country. Currently 200,000 are refugees in Algeria. The U.N. proposed that W.S. be a domestic autonomous region like Tibet. No resolution.

Economics: Newsweek magazine, August 2010, listed Morocco 6th in the world amongst smaller population countries in economic development for such sectors as: services such as tourism, telecom and textiles, mining (world's third-largest producer of phosphorus), fishing, salt, construction, manufacturing. Still dependent too much on agriculture which employs about 45% of the population. The King has been instrumental in developing the economy and owns many businesses. When the King proposed building more dams Moroccans engaged in farming went from 70% to 45%. Alfalfa, tomatoes, wheat are large crops.
The king of Morocco, Muhammad VI, is unique among all rulers in the Islamic world as he bears the title ‘Commander of the Faithful.’

Below, the King at Throne Day on July 31st, the anniversary of his coronation, a national holiday.
Religion: 99% Muslim (mostly Sunni moderates, Sufis, and some Shi’ah). A large Jewish community lived in Morocco before the creation of Israel, numbering approximately 265,000 in 1948. Between 7,000 and live there now.

Ethnic makeup: 99.1% Berber & ethnic Arabs, .7% Other (Christian), .2% Jewish

Climate: Mediterranean which means rain in the winter and dry in the summer. Morocco is an Arid environment on the edge of the Sahara desert (which is mostly rock with only some sand dunes). There are extensive rivers on the Western Plains where they get 15”-20” rain a year. On the eastern side of the country they receive 2”-3” rainfall (a drought and salt in the water in the south are problems). In the extremely dry areas farming takes place in the oases areas called Palmeraie’s (linear oases) often with ancient systems of irrigation (see photo to right).

Their architecture is considered Africanate because of it’s thick-walled adobe clay buildings similar to those found in much of Africa.

Moroccan women: They have more rights than many other Arab countries due to the Kings’ support – many now are judges, scholars, and teach/support other women to grow. Not all women cover up with the traditional Hijab headscarf – Morocco is considered to be a moderate Islamic country.
Morocco’s Regions

1. Mediterranean Coast & Rif
2. Fes, Meknes and Middle Atlas
3. Eastern Morocco
4. North Atlantic Coast
5. South Atlantic Coast
6. Marrakech and High Atlas
7. River Valleys and dunes
8. Anti Atlas
9. Southern Morocco
Education

- **Education is a high priority no in the country.** Since 1999 a new program was instituted by the government called “Decade of Excellence” – to teach the importance of changing Morocco through education and to reform the education system to include preschool education. The government is also trying to introduce the American system of education.

- **Preschool** - children go to koranic schools where they learn Arabic.

- **Primary school** – 6 – 12 years (Muslim children read Koran, Jewish read the Torah). Many children leave school at 12 years old to help their parents farm.

- **Secondary school** – 13 – 15 years – called “Idadiya”

- **High school** (16-18) called “Taniwiya”

  History & Geography taught in Arabic
  Math & Social Sciences taught in French

- **University** – taught only in French (so you must read, write and speak French!)
The Berbers

• **The name Berber** is a variation of the Latin original word “Barbarian”, earlier in history applied by the Romans specifically to their northern hostile neighbors from Germania. The Barbary coast, on the coast of northwest Africa was named after the Berbers because they and Arabs pirated ships going to the Mediterranean Sea. **The Berbers call themselves "Imazighen", meaning the free.** Berbers are non-Arabic tribes that are often referred to as Arab-Islamic. Over the last several hundred years many Berber peoples have converted to Islam.

• **History:** The Berbers are known to have been in North Africa at least in 3000 B.C. They are thought to have come across northern Africa. Many early Roman, Greek, and Phoenician colonial accounts mention a group of people collectively known as Berbers living in northern Africa. Other waves of Berber immigration came in the 3rd and 11th centuries. Some Berbers trace their lineage to Yemen.

• **Population:** Morocco has the majority of Berbers, 10.4 million (40% of the population). These can be divided into three main groups with different dialects: the Riffians, the Chleuh and the Central Moroccan Amazigh. They are also in neighboring Saharan countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, with mainly Tuareg Berbers living in Mauretania, Niger, Mali, and Burkina-Faso. Two-thirds of Berbers live in rural and mountainous areas, most being farmers. Prior to independence in 1956, half of Morocco were Berbers. After this Arabic became the main language and an Arabization period began (government-initiated agenda to counter French colonial values).

• **Housing** is clay, adobe, stone and/or brick, and for nomadic Berbers, tents made out of wool and goat hair. Often the extended family will have a few dwellings on a property with a wall around them (also called a compound) so that they have an area to garden, keep goats, etc. But more families live in separate housing more than ever before.
Many people dress in Berber style blue robes. These are carpet sellers in Ourzazate, in the heart of Morocco & Berber territory. Morocco’s mixture of races and culture includes Berbers intermarrying with Arabs and other Africa tribal people.
An artist who also runs a Jewish artifact “museum” in Ourzazate.
A Berber encampment from high on a sand dune.
A Berber Toy Tent
Berbers are often portrayed as nomadic people crossing the desert on camels, but most are farmers in the mountains and valleys throughout northern Africa. Some do trade throughout the region. Historically Berber merchants were responsible for transporting goods by camel caravans. There were basically five Trans-Saharan trade routes which extended across the Sahara from the northern Mediterranean coast of Africa to the great cities, which are situated on the southern edge of the Sahara, such as Timbouctou in Mali. From there the goods were distributed throughout the world.

Traditionally, Berbers raise sheep, cattle and goats. Some Berbers work in flourmills, do woodcarving, quarry millstones, and make pottery or jewelry. Women generally do the cooking and caring for the home and children, weaving, and pottery. Today, many Berbers work in Spain or France as migrant workers and send money home to their family.
Most Berbers were originally Nomadic (moving their home and not staying in one place to graze their sheep and goats and take advantage of better weather, living in tents as here).
These Berber families move to summer and winter climates that benefit their families and goats & sheep.
A Berber woman on a windy day in her summer home. We snapped this from the road with a long lens.
Political Systems

Berber society is made up of families who are members of a tribe which is a member of a clan of tribes. Each tribe has a chieftain. The French had the tribes organized into confederations to control them. After independence the King created 16 regions of Morocco based around geographic areas.

Most Berbers were farmers. At one time, tilling the land was considered the work of the lower classes, while the upper classes were merchants. Usually, groups of sedentary Berbers paid allegiance to a locally appointed headman, who in turn reported to the noble who considered the village his domain. As time has passed, however, these sedentary farmers have been able to accumulate wealth while the trans-Saharan trade routes diminished in importance. They were also given political status by colonial and postcolonial administrations.

The Zawiya & the Saints
Berber communities have clans/families claiming descent from the Prophet (Sharifs), who are regarded as holy men having supernatural powers. They act as mediators for the village and people can come to stay in the Zawiya if they have problems and be protected.
Most Berbers are at least nominal followers of Islam, and many strictly observe Islamic traditions. Most of the feasts are observed and celebrated, but the fasting that is required during Ramadan is often excused for those who travel. Most Berbers are Sunni Muslims of the Maliki school.

Like most followers of Islam in northern Africa, many Berbers believe in the continuous presence of various spirits (djinns).

Shia:

Sunni:

Sufis:
Social Organization / Customs & Traditions

Tribal Life: It’s all about the tribe. *Fard* is a word which means that “the individual is nothing without the tribe”. The nuclear and extended family comes first and is most important. Family members can live together, or at least most members stay close, and the women and children of an extended family work together in the home. To be alone is thought to be a sad condition. Children are cared for by older children in the extended family. Patriarchy is strong. Men work outside the home as farmers, merchants in their shops, educators etc. Women and children also work in the fields, carrying crops home etc. They also make artisanal crafts with palms and reeds and other natural materials. Children have to help their families by doing chores. Some family members move away to cities in Morocco and to Europe (to be migrant workers) and America and send money back to the extended family. Their value system is “I’m going to work for my family and make it possible for everyone to live better”.

(Right) Guests are held in high esteem and treated very well. Hospitality is taken very seriously.
The Spiritual Dimension in Berber Design

- James Jereb, in his book *The Arts and Crafts of Morocco*, describes Berber designs as "a testimony not only to the meditative and aesthetic power that decoration holds for them, but a faith in supernatural power. Many pieces are valued not because of appearance alone--perhaps because of their form or the way in which they are decorated--but because they may contain a power known as *baraka*, a concept deeply embedded in Moroccan religious beliefs and crucial to the understanding of all artistic traditions in Morocco.

- **Baraka** has many meanings in Morocco, but it is principally the positive power of the saints. It is a source of inspiration among most Moroccan artisans...*Baraka* permeates all things to varying degrees; not only can it exist in jewelry, talismans and other manufactured objects, such as ceramics and textiles, it is also thought to suffuse plants, such as henna and oleander, and incenses, such as sandalwood and myrrh. This power is transferred to objects and textiles by the use of a particular artistic vocabulary of symbols, designs, motifs, colors and techniques that protect the object, creator and consumer." (*The Arts and Crafts of Morocco* p. 13)

- **Baraka** is sought and used to deal with the darker forces of life, curing illnesses and protecting oneself against the evil *jnoun* (spirits--the source of the English word "genie") and the evil eye.

- **Berber symbols** are included in the design of everyday objects to protect the object as well as the person who uses or wears it. These motifs appear in all aspects of the Berber artisanal tradition, including pottery, leatherwork and textiles, not to mention all types of personal adornment. Berbers found many ways to adorn themselves with jewelry, tattoos and henna. It is mostly Berber women who are tattooed. Because tattoos are forbidden by Islam, many women have found other outlets for placing their protective motifs by including them in textiles they weave and in jewelry and henna. Thus, the designs that are drawn in henna on the hands and feet of a bride on the eve of her marriage are these same protective and nurturing symbols that have evolved throughout centuries of use.
The Arts: *God loves beauty, God is beauty.* – Islamic ideal

Women are the carriers of the cultural & ethnic identity through their art forms – jewelry, carpet & fabric weaving, fashion, and embroidery.
The Marriage Ritual

Necklaces, headdresses and bracelets using silver, coral, amber, beads

Colors & Designs have meaning
Makeup for a wedding or special ritual is very distinctive. Black charcoal is put on the eyebrows and as eyeliner, with rouge on the cheeks. Notice the tattoo on her chin and nose.
Although tattooing is no longer practiced by most Amazigh women, in the recent past, when a girl reached puberty, sometime between the ages of eleven and fourteen (a time that generally coincided with her first menstrual cycle), her mother, aunts, or family friends would tattoo her face and wrists. Tattooing was a rite of passage, marking a girl's transition into womanhood. Usually small groups of girls were tattooed at the same time, making it a very social activity, shared and passed on among women.

* Today tattooing is a violation of Islamic law so no one under 30 has tattoos.
Bert Flint who started the Tiskiwin Museum in Marrakech to preserve the arts of Saharan people.
Necklace pouches for carrying things.
Jewelry

• Silver – earrings, pendants, necklaces, beads
• Amber, coral
• Cabachon-cut gems (convex, unfaceted)
• Enameling with color (not shown here)
• Leather work
Distinctive Berber symbols on silver necklace.
Silversmith demonstration of making a southern Moroccan cross in Amezrou, Zagora.

The silversmiths and the blacksmiths, trained by the old Jewish population, are still using the models left by them to make fibula (pins to hold garments together) and medallions.
Amulets or Talisman

An Amulet is a piece of jewelry usually hung about the neck and thought to be a magical protection against evil or disease.

A Talisman is similar but the definition says it’s marked with magic signs or believed to give its’ bearer supernatural powers or protection.

The Hamsa (Khamsa)

- One of the most popular amulets used throughout the Middle East & North Africa is the open hand which is used as a defense against the ‘evil eye’. It is a protective amulet that represents blessings, power, and strength. The symbolism of the hand raised, palm outwards is to repel some threatened evil.

- The 5 fingers represent the five pillars of Islam and are said by some to represent the most sacred people in Islam – Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Husain.

- It is believed to have originated with the ancient practices of the Phoenicians.

- An eye is often designed into the center of the hand.

- The renewed interest in Kabbalah and mystical Judaism is a factoring in bringing the hamsa pendant back into vogue.
The Mulhafa: A new elegant style for women, originated by Sahrawi women (people of the Sahara) of southern Morocco. Tie-dyeing is common as well as bright colors.
Embroidered veils & head coverings called Tahruyt

• With the decline of tattooing as a means of conveying expressive and social functions, its artistic forms and symbolism have been transferred to the embroidered "veils" (13) or head coverings, called tahruyt, worn by Amazigh women in some areas of southern Morocco. In the early and middle twentieth century, these long, sparsely decorated, indigo-dyed cotton cloth head coverings were worn simply as modesty garments. Indigo is today primarily imported into the region, but it was cultivated in southern Morocco from as early as the sixteenth century until as late as the 1960s (Balfour-Paul 1997:205). The use of indigo head coverings distinguishes Amazigh women in southern Morocco from many other Amazigh groups in the Middle Atlas and High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, who once commonly wore wool shawls rather than any type of "veil" or head covering (Fig. 13). South of the Atlas Mountains the climate becomes drastically hotter and drier, making it practical for women to wear some type of covering to protect them against harsh sun and sandstorms. Indigo-dyed cotton coverings are ubiquitous throughout the Saharan regions of Africa, as the use of indigo was thought to have cosmetic and medicinal benefits, conditioning women’s skin and improving their complexions. The Kel Tamacheq women, popularly referred to as Tuareg, an Amazigh group living in the desert regions of Niger, Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali, commonly wear indigo-dyed head coverings and clothing (Fig. 14). Hassaniya Arab women living throughout Mauritania and northern Senegal also cover themselves with indigo head coverings (Du Puigaudeau 1970:13).

• In the 1970s, coinciding with the disappearance of tattoos, Amazigh women began to embroider elaborate vegetal motifs on their tahruyt, demonstrating the living and dynamic nature of their arts (Fig. 15). Women begin by embroidering a central band, called a tanammast, which forms a ground line for the other embroidered motifs that appear to rise up or grow out of it. The tanammast divides the cloth of the tahruyt into two equal halves and women align their patterns symmetrically so that the motifs are always balanced bilaterally, the designs on both the top and bottom of the tanammast serving as mirror images of each other (Cover).

• As with those used in weaving, these embroidered motifs associate women with the natural world. The women I spoke with consistently described the motifs adorning their head coverings as "flowers," "bird tracks," "shafts of wheat," "trees," or other natural objects associated with fertility, plenty, and prosperity. For instance, the neon green zig-zag designs embroidered on the border hanging over the woman’s left shoulder in the Cover picture was said to resemble pigeon prints. In southern Morocco, oral poetry and songs often compare women to pigeons. (14)

• From Amazigh textiles and dress in Morocco: metaphors of motherhood article by Cynthia Becker, Phd.
Design Symbols & Their Meaning:

The head covering on the cover on this book, from which most of the research on women shaping Berber identity shows the most common motif found on embroidered head coverings, a small triangle that is called takhbasht, which means "claws" and which women told me looks like the marks animal claws make on the ground—another example of a tikselt or "metaphor." The triangle motif is also omnipresent, as in other Amazigh textiles, jewelry, and tattoo designs. Flower motifs, clear references to fertility, are also embroidered with curvilinear stitches (Fig. 15). In sum, the embroidered motifs on the tahruyt often appear to create a large, fertile landscape covered with vegetation.

Colors used in the decoration of the tahruyt also suggest a connection between the fertility of the land and the fertility of women. Women purchase previously dyed wool yarn in the market for use in their embroidery and colors are categorized into light and dark hues. Although purple, bright blue, pink, neon green, and other colors are embroidered on the dark cloth, these colors fall within the basic color palette of red, green, yellow, and black. In the Cover picture, circular motifs in pink and red, colors categorized as light, resembling the sunlight, are embroidered above the other motifs. They hover like the sun above the other designs, creating a composition that resembles the natural world and its plenifulness, connecting women to fertility.

- Cynthia Becker, Phd.
The Art of Body Adornment with Henna
(also a cash crop for southern Morocco)
Some reasons for Women Using Henna & tattooing

Throughout Morocco, substances containing *baraka*, such as saffron or henna, are believed to infuse the body with positive healing energy and are applied during rite-of-passage ceremonies that typically include blood flow, such as male circumcision or the loss of female virginity during a wedding ceremony, as on the saffron-painted bride. Pollution categories in Islam are based on the idea that the inner and outer bodies are separated into discrete, mutually exclusive elements that must be kept apart. However, certain substances can cross from the outer physical body to the inner spiritual body and purify the inner body, especially those substances containing *baraka* (Marcus 1992:74).

I believe it is not coincidental that Moroccan women chose to tattoo their bodies with substances containing baraka to symbolically enhance their bodies after first menstruation, a crucial moment in the life cycle. Tattoos can be seen as a means of both augmenting women’s bodies and of publicly marking their transition from childhood to womanhood, as a physical and ever-present symbol of their prestige as useful members of the society, who ensure the survival of the group through their ability to give birth.

Particular tattoo motifs, including a variety of geometric designs, generally varied from group to group in Morocco; however, tattoo designs also reflected personal style preferences.
Tattoos for women in the Middle East

- In Iran, it was common for upper class women to have patterns tattooed on their chins. The designs were sometimes very elaborate, and resembled that of a bearded. Alongside the chin tattoos, it was common for women to tattoo their lips blue, as it was considered to embody beauty. Beliefs attached to tattoos in the Middle East often corresponded with thinking the wearer was imbued with magical power, these tattoos often times were dots or small crosses. They usually adorned the hands, and feet, they believed that they either provided strength or protection.

- Tattooing is nevertheless common among the Berbers of North Africa, where small designs with symbolic meaning are used (mainly by women). Egyptian Christians often have a cross tattooed on their hand or wrist. These designs are very simple – often crudely done – and we are not aware of any Arab equivalent to the elaborate tattoos used, for example by the Maoris and Pacific islanders.

- However, in this day and age, the demand for tattoos among Iranian, and other Middle Eastern women has exploded. Iranian who are tattooed, however must keep them under wraps due to the authorities.

- The art of tattoo in the Middle East is forbidden by religious scriptures. In despite of this restriction there are those who have a need or desire to get tattooed. Some see it as a way to allow themselves to get closer to God while others use it as a way to remember some great event in their life. Tattooing was also used as a rite of passage.

- For a non-permanent skin decoration in the Arab world is practiced mostly by women and takes the form of designs on hands and feet using henna, which fades away after a few weeks. The complex patterns seen throughout the Middle East are normally achieved using stencils which can be bought cheaply in the souks (markets).
Rug Styles and Symbols

• Traditional Berber carpets contain distinctive patterns and colors and are woven from sheep wool or camel hair (you can also find them made from nylon and olefin material). The materials are hand-washed and naturally dyed from saffron yellow, to wild mint green, and from pomegranate and henna. These carpets are known for their strong geometric designs, and have been dated them as far back as the Marinid era (Berber dynasty). Carpets in the Middle Atlas generally have a traditional diamond grid.

• Amazigh textiles, because of the tribes' relative isolation in rural areas, have preserved ancient weaving techniques and mystic symbolism. In this society even the wool itself has special protective powers.

• The Berber tribes developed a variety of weaves to be adaptable to different climates. The rugs in the mountains have larger loops, are more loosely knotted to provide protection against the cold. In warmer climates the rugs are made with a finer weave.

• Berber weaving is highly dependent on the female culture, and is passed down traditionally within the home. The young apprentice is expected to learn the different looping techniques, patterns, color ranges and motifs. Historically women wove carpets for their families, and men traditionally produced carpets that were more specialized as professional masterweavers.
The bold colors, in depth patterns and weaving techniques of different regions have their own distinct style. Each tribe has a signature pattern and commonly unfold a story, revealing acts of ceremony, or designs that often relate to fertility and protection. Like any other type of abstract art, interpretations can be better understood with additional knowledge of the culture, songs and legends.

Women Artisans Associations all over Morocco are empowering women by allowing them to make extra money. A Berber rug with the diamond pattern and symbols below, made by women in a small village and sold at the association.
Berber Women’s Textile & Carpet Designs
(from Lucien Viola’s Vintage collection and book)
Regions & Confederations of Berber Tribes of Morocco

live in the High Atlas Mountains Region in the north, Mid-Atlas Mountains Region in the middle, and Anti-Atlas Mountains Region in the south.
Ceramic Art of Berber women

The domain of Berber pottery extends west to east from Morocco (Middle Atlas and Rif) to Tunisia and covers northern Algeria, from the Oran region to the Aurès Mountains and Small Kabylia. The cradle of the most refined Berber production is Kabylia in Northern Algeria.

The Berber women use neither wheel nor kiln to make their pottery. The pieces are shaped by hand and cooked in the open air. In this way, they more closely resemble objects discovered in archaeological digs at megalithic burial sites in Northern Africa than they do ancient Mediterranean pottery shaped on a wheel and cooked in a kiln. The fragility and daily use of these objects explains why there are no examples pre-dating the 19th century. It is the archaic style used to create the pottery that gives it its antiquity. The geometric patterns decorating the pieces – which are also found on the women’s textiles and tattoos – carry symbolic meaning, whose origin traces back to the Neolithic era and was present on all continents.
Tuareg Berbers

Tuaregs are known for wearing indigo blue colored robes and turbans and leading caravans across the Trans-Saharan trade routes as well as their music now.
The Tuaregs

- **Who are they:** Tuareg prefer to call themselves Imouhar(en), Imashagen or Kel tamasheq. Tuaregs are a mixture of Whites (Berbers) and Blacks (sub-saharan people). They speak Tamarshak, a dialect of the old Berber language, and have preserved an ancient script (Tifinagh) similar to that used by the ancient Libyans.

- **Where do they live:** They are a nomadic Berber people numbering some 1.5 million people and living mainly in the Sahel states of Niger, Mali, Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina-Faso, and in the Saharan districts of the Maghreb – Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania and Egypt. There are even some tribes in Sudan, and Bénin. They migrate over a huge area of the Sahara and the Sahel crisscrossing existing national borders. Their territory is essentially the Sahara desert, but the aridity of this part of the world forces them to camp in the various mountains emerging from the desert, of Mali Niger, and southern

- **Political Life:** Their political organizations extend across national boundaries and as a result they live in constant strife with the central authorities. They live in tribal confederations that include the tribes of the Ahaggar and Aijer mountains in the north, and the Asben, Ifora, Itesen, Aulliminden and Kel-Tademaket in the south. Their virtual country has its spiritual and historic capital in Taddamakat in Mali. Another important city is Tagedda in Niger.

- **Economy:** In the past they were great raiders of caravans and of other tribes, provided guides for trans-Saharan caravans, exacted tribute from them and engaged in the salt trade. When there was no more trade and desertification took over many moved to the Middle Atlas to settle. The terrible droughts of the 70’s and 80’s hit them hard, killing most of their livestock and forcing many of them to look for jobs in farming, trade and industry. Southe6rners breed cattle and camels, and northerners mainly goats.

- **Social organization & customs:** Their society was feudal and hierarchical, and included noble, religious, vassal, craftsmen and slave classes which are now being gradually eroded. When on the move they live in tents of red dyed skin. Adult males wear a distinctive blue veil over the lower part of the face which it is a shame for them to remove.

- **Religion:** They share with Arabs their culture and their Islamic religion. Maybe Christianity had a certain influence on them - Tuareg blacksmiths sculpt beautiful crosses. Even if religion plays an important role in their life, they are not considered very devout. The main points of the religion are respected - prayer, abstinence from pork, observance of holidays.  

*From: [www.tuaregs.free.fr](http://www.tuaregs.free.fr)  [www.saharafragile.org](http://www.saharafragile.org)*
Tuaregs are known for their music (like world/trance music) and now play with electric guitars. The Tuareg Festival is held each year in Nigeria.

Moussa Ag Keyna of Toumast, Tuareg “nomad rocker”
Etran Finatawa, a music group combining Niger and Tuareg musicians
Tuareg Silver jewelry

All Tuareg photos from TUAREG JEWELRY by Helene Hagan
Leather design, often used as saddles on camels.
Leather designs on camel saddle bags.
You can see the camel saddle bags below. Petroglyphs and paintings such as the example on the right have been found in southern Morocco and dated to be 6000 years old.
Berber Symbols can be found in weaving, tattoos, jewelry & henna designs

1. **OLIVE TREE**: Strength because of its Berber name azemmur, diverted from the term tazmat (strength).

2. **WHEAT**: is associated with Life (because of it sheath) and Death (because of the seeds being in the ground).

3. **TREE**: is related to an easy life, happiness and fertility. It symbolises the centre of the world surrounded by Beings, objects and spirits. It also means Life (because of the roots) and knowledge (because of the leaves).

4. **SEEDS**: Male seeds and it is a symbol for Life and Fertility.

5. **HAMMER**: Power, natural forces and creative power. It is a very important instrument for the blacksmith because it enables him to change the iron into various shapes.

6. **ANCHOR**: Solidity, continuity, faithfulness, balance and lucidity.

7. **AXE**: A sharp instrument which represents anger and destruction, but as it does attack evil forces, it is a positive symbol. It is also associated with the lightning and rain therefore fertility.

8. **ARROW**: Cosmic projection. Associated with lightning and represents male energy and fertility.

9. **SUN**: Life, power. It is a source of Life, heat and light but could also be an evil force because it does drain the waters and can destroy the crops.
10. **MOON**: Associated with femininity and represents change, fertility and the perpetual cycle.

11. **WEAVING COMB**: It represents the movement of the world, balance, cohesion and tidiness.

12. **SHIP**: Associated with water and means strength, blessing, wisdom.

13. **CRESCENT**: Change, revival, Openness, birth, death and resurrection of the full moon.

14. **CROSS**: Movement, space with different directions: up/down - North and South, left/right - East/West.

15. **SWASTIKA**: Symbol for a bird therefore the creative taking off of Life.

16. **CROSS WITH SIX BRANCHES**: Movement and space but also solidity, anchoring and grounding.

17. **DIAMOND**: Feminity womanhood and fertility. It is associated with the snake and represents the union of opposites.

AMEL TAFSOUT (01.10.2003) from website: www.ameltafsout.com
The Berber language has not been written - until fairly recently - except as short inscriptions on monuments. The Berber alphabet that was used for this task in antiquity is called **Tifinagh** which means "our finding" and consists of a number of geometric-looking phonetic symbols. It is probably derived from the Phoenician alphabet and has only symbols for consonants. Some Berber activists have tried to augment the consonant symbols with vowel symbols. This modern form of Tifinagh is sometimes heroically used to write Berber, most often only by the Berber activists. Most people who are literate in Berber use the Latin letter system for writing Tamazight.
Vocabulary & Definitions

Maghreb:
Monarchy:
Arabization:
Berber:
Imazighen:
Tribe:
Clan:
Fard:
Zawiya:
Sahrawis:
Tuaregs:
Nomadic people:
Sedentary people:
Islam:
Muslim:
Qur'an: Islamic holy book believed to have been dictated by God to the prophets including Muhammad. It means “recitation”. Refers to the scripture as recited in Arabic.
Shia:
Sunni:
Sufi:
Baraka:
Tahruyt
Hijab:
Chador:
Niqab:
Jellaba:
Melhafa:
Africanate:
Medina:
Souk:
Desertification:
Oasis:
Palmeriae:
Trans Saharan trade routes:
Timbouctou:
Zed symbol:
Motif: