

**The Break-up of the Ksar:  
Settlement Change and Common Property Institutions on the Saharan  
Frontier**

**Draft Paper Not For Citation**

**By**

Hsain Ilahiane  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Anthropology  
322A Curtiss Hall  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa 50011  
Phone: 515 294-6145  
Fax: 515 294-1708  
hsain@iastate.edu

**For**

**The IASCP Conference**  
Bloomington, IN  
May 31-June 4, 2000

**ABSTRACT**

In spite of the French colonial intrusion, up to 1950s, resource management in Saharan villages constituted what some have called the syndrome of collectivity. The syndrome of collectivity was the product of three interrelated factors: the ksar or a nucleated settlement pattern, ethnicity, and village-drawn constitutions. Since Independence, however, the Ksar's compact and nucleated settlement began to break-up. I argue that the break-up of the ksar and the emergence of a dispersed settlement pattern have led to significant erosion in village institutions governing the commons. In addition to the appropriate emphasis on common property rules in the literature, I also contend that reflection upon settlement change and dynamic ethnic relations is critical to crafting sustainable commons in the new millennium.

## Introduction

The rise and preservation of common property regimes in small-scale societies has been widely discussed in the social sciences literature, particularly by economic and ecological anthropologists (Bromley et al. 1992; McCay and Acheson 1987; Moran 1982; Netting 1981; Oakerson 1992; Ostrom 1987; Ostrom et al. 1999; Park 1992; Sheridan 1988). Although ethnographic work has successfully pointed out the misconceptions underlying Hardin's (1968) notion of the "tragedy of the commons," anthropologists have not paid enough attention to the effects of the morphology of the built environment and its articulation with changing ethnic modes of subsistence production, which is addressed here and uses the corporate communities of the Ziz oasis area to illustrate the rise and erosion of village common property systems in Southern Morocco. The historical and ethnic contexts that gave rise to corporate arrangements and the assessment of recent changes in village common property institutions are also examined.

Wolf's (1967) influential theoretical framework for the analysis of peasant closed- (and open) corporate communities expanded on awareness of the structural relationships between various types of peasant communities and the wider society in which peasants, as Kroeber (1948:284) said, "constitute part-societies with part-cultures." Wolf (1967:237) argued that the rise of corporate communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java are products of Spanish and Dutch colonialism, while that of the Russian *mir* and the Chinese peasantry are "not an offspring of conquest as such, but rather of the dualization of society into a dominant sector and a dominated sector of native peasants." Wolf points out that peasant communities crafted corporate institutions and rules exemplified in the forms of common property and distribution of wealth among the natives, and denied access to outsiders as a corporate response to external forces and aggression, which also reduced the impact of conflict within the community's walls.

This strategy, he argued, allowed peasant corporate communities to survive the effects of outside economic exploitation (Wolf 1967).

While Wolf emphasizes the economic aspect of peasant corporate communities, Skinner (1971) believes that corporate communities open and close in a direct but delayed response to economic cycles. Economic cycles determine the types of responses peasant communities adopt, which range from normative to economic and finally coercive responses. By normative, Skinner means the revival of local particularism or peasant conservatism and resistance to outside intrusion. The economic response takes the form of slowing economic activity, withdrawal from the market and shifting from cash crops to subsistence foods, and the establishment of a “shared poverty economy.” The coercive stage intensifies elements of the normative and economic phases, but it is one in which absence of law and order prevail in the wider society, and in this context communities reinforce their bonds and organize militarily to defend themselves against outsiders (Skinner 1971:278-280). Hence, over the duration of an entire economic cycle, peasant communities move from open communities to closed and back again in delayed reaction to the state economy.

Wolf’s and Skinner’s models advanced anthropological theorizing on peasantry by viewing peasant societies not as isolated simple economies but as involved in complex exchanges with the wider world that affected the peasant’s social and economic field of action. Nonetheless, both models suffer shortcomings that relate to the tenets of corporateness. Their focus is primarily on the economic relations between peasants, the state bureaucracy, and elites, while they assign the transformative influences of demography and ecology a residual space in their analysis. While Wolf and Skinner draw attention to the externalities affecting peasant communities, Netting (1976, 1981), relying on his work among the agropastoralists of the Swiss

Alps, observes that peasant corporateness is not the outcome of external influences or domination but rather a direct result of local environmental conditions and subsistence demands. Netting believes that corporateness is a response to land use systems dictated by altitude zonation and changes in population growth. Likewise, Park (1992) advances the thesis that the emergence of corporateness in recession agriculture along the Senegal River Valley is the outcome of pastoral adaptation to the chaotic climate of the Sahel. Because agricultural production varies directly with the duration of rain, flood levels, and soil types, repartition of claims to property is performed on an annual basis. Instead of economic cycles and demographic pressure, the cyclical and chaotic climate of the Sahel produces a corporate community in which stratification is the operative element in the repartition of property, and in which people are added or sloughed off in concordance with wet and dry years.

More recently, Ostrom et al. (1999) have advanced an institutional approach, providing an ideal list of attributes “some” of which must apply to resources designated communal. Ostrom’s (1987) emphasis on the way rules function to create an institutional environment which stakeholders use to order their perception of common pool resources in a way which maximizes cooperation in the maintenance of communal institutions. By acting out an ideal or postulated relationship based on universal principles of governing the commons, stakeholders or participants perceive conflict resolution in a way that makes performance of communal systems and institutions seem very possible and sustainable; human crafted domains of law and order, therefore, appear reasonable and justified.

In these five theoretical approaches, Wolf (1967) and Skinner (1971) emphasize economic ties between local communities and the larger society, whereas Netting (1976, 1981), Park (1992), and Ostrom et al. (1999) place importance on local ecological and institutional

conditions. While these approaches are useful and explain some aspects of corporateness, the variables cannot be examined strictly as structural, ecological or institutional causes and must be understood as historically specific developments. A major criticism of these approaches is that they don't include other elements which allow the analyst to distinguish between the spatial organization of the built environment and its relationship with the social aspects of crafting common property regimes. The factor which seems to be missing from this theoretical discussion itself- one which would allow for the inclusion of the role of settlement patterns in concert with changing ethnic relations- is a development of the process of formulating a better understanding of order in managing the commons. It needs to be made clear that the development and erosion of corporateness in the Ziz oasis villages is the result of a constellation of historical events and circumstances including inter-ethnic transformations and changes in the built environment. An investigation of the historical organization and collective status of the Ksar's settlement pattern and institutions identifies the constraints and opportunities facing village communal institutions, and suggests that the erosion in traditional communal systems is rooted in the historical confluence of ethnic social mobility, the abandonment of the old built environment brought about by French colonial and postcolonial policies of development.

In other words, I make the claim that despite the French colonial intrusion, up to 1950s, resource management in Saharan villages constituted what some have called the syndrome of collectivity. The syndrome of collectivity was the product of three interrelated factors: the ksar or a nucleated settlement pattern, ethnicity, and village-drawn constitutions. Since Independence, however, the Ksar's compact and nucleated settlement began to break-up. I argue that the break-up of the ksar and the emergence of a dispersed settlement pattern have led to significant erosion in village institutions governing the commons. In addition to the appropriate

emphasis on common property rules in the literature (Netting 1993; Ostrom et al. 1999), I also contend that reflection upon settlement change and dynamic ethnic relations is critical to crafting sustainable commons in the new millennium.

In the first section of this article, I examine the built environment and spatial organization of the ksar, and the Ksar's pre-colonial and post-colonial traditional social organization. In the second section, firstly, I describe recent changes in social and ethnic mobility in association with the reconfiguration of settlement patterns and how these transformations have allowed for the slow erosion of common property institutions. Secondly, I contextualize this discussion with ethnographic evidence and accounts collected during my dissertation fieldwork.

### **The ksar and its Spatial Organization**

The etymology of the word "ksar" is derived from the Arabic word "qasr" meaning a royal palace or garrison. During the Islamic invasions of North Africa and Spain, the ksar meant a military garrison from which planning strategies of warfare in the name of spreading the Islamic faith were devised. In the Sahara and on the southern slopes of the Atlas Mountains, however, the term ksar refers to fortified and walled villages. They are called *ighrman* (sing. *ighram*) in Berber.

Along the valley, the ksar is the oldest form of rural housing. In response to concerns of dissidence and a traditional level of technology, the ksar was conceived as a defensive strategy to protect its residents and secure subsistence from agriculture based on communal management of property and labor mobilization. Local history and tradition report numerous stories of pillaging and attacks between various ksars. Some ksars defended themselves while others opted for nomadic protection. The defense and protection of the ksar meant also the protection of the fields and the irrigation network.

Built out of local materials and technology, the ksar illustrates how indigenous ways had adapted to a resource scarce base, as well as a defense against outside pillaging and attacks. The ksar is the result work of households and families who came together to establish secure and self-sufficient corporate communities. As a corporate unit of residence the ksar cannot be separated from the palm grove, the threshing floors, and livestock pens that comprise its outside spatial organization. The palm grove is the ensemble of fields and trees owned and managed by each ksar. These fields, under the valley's date palms and olive trees are intensively farmed, the palm grove being fragmented into myriad manicured parcels crisscrossed by a meticulous network of irrigation canals and ditches. Wheat, alfalfa, and vegetables grow under olive and date palm trees, fruit trees and vineyards.

Each ksar has its palm grove and its specific boundaries. Land tenure is threefold: *mulk* or private, *habous* or endowed property, and *al-`asi* or infertile. The size of the palm grove is determined by its ecological constraints. Land use within each palm grove follows an onion-ring like set of belts of agricultural activities. In the Middle Ziz Valley area, for instance, the ksars are surrounded by a succession of rings of agricultural zones. The first ring is the walled gardens located in front of the main gate and around the ramparts of the village. Used to grow vegetables and fruit trees, this belt is called *urtan* in Berber and *jnanat* in Moroccan Arabic. The second ring is dedicated to the cultivation of alfalfa and is characterized by the dominance of olive trees. The third ring is dominated by cereals, date palms, and other trees. The fourth ring is comprised of communal fields that irrigation rarely reaches; these fields are called *al-bur* lands, devoid almost of any trees, although barley is sown in rainy years. The fifth ring is also communal land used for grazing, *amardul*, and found outside the palm grove in the nearby hills and along the surrounding mountains and plateaus.

The second element in the spatial organization of the ksar is the threshing floors or *inrarn* (sing. *anrar*), which dot a large part of every ksar. The threshing grounds have a guard called *anmutar* in Berber and *al-hadday* in Arabic. He pitches his tent, made out of palm fronds, and guards the produce on the threshing floors night and day from April to December, following the harvest calendar of cereals and dates. The guard is paid in kind and the amount he gets is liberally defined by each threshing floor owner. After the end of the harvest, the hay residual, called *taqqayt*, blown by the wind during threshing and winnowing and trapped in the little arroyos shouldering the threshing floors is assessed by the Ksar's assembly and sold to interested parties. The swept hay is used for feeding livestock and fortifying manure (including human waste). The threshing floors are not only limited to agricultural related activities but are also used for social functions such as marriages and communal rain prayers.

The final spatial element is reserved to areas where livestock, particularly bovines, are penned to get sun. The defensive needs of the ksar led to the creation of communal spaces within and outside the ksar for agricultural and livestock uses. The household-penned livestock needs sun, especially in winter. For the small livestock, it is usually taken to the roof of houses. For the larger livestock, however, households have access to collective areas outside the ramparts called *horm*. The *horm* area is reserved for collective use and private construction of housing is prohibited. Households have built small mud units for livestock they bring in the morning and return home in the afternoon. These units are not covered; in each unit there is a built eatery and iron sticks planted in the ground, along with ropes to tie the animals. While this section describes the spatial organization of the ksar the next section discusses its traditional social organization.

## The Traditional Socio-political Organization of the Ksar

The ksar is not only a communal arrangement writ large in its spatial elements and defensive architecture but it also makes what we could label as a closed corporate community whose management and viability was based on locally crafted communal institutions of governance. The management of the ksar and its resources were governed by an ethno-political and economic organization.

As corporate communities, the ksars started with the settlement of different tribal lineages, ethnic groups, and religious brotherhoods. For these reasons, we encounter along the valley Arab ksars, Berber ksars, Haratine ksars, and Zawiyas. Some ksars, however, were planned and built by the government or Makhzen to represent its interests and collect taxes and store grains. The ksar of Abbar in the Tafilalt Plain, near Rissani, is one example among many that were constructed by the Makhzen. I will be discussing the social organization of the Middle Ziz Valley ksars that came under the control of the Ait Atta Berber sub-tribes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in general and the ksar of Zaouit Amelkis in particular, one of my field sites (Ilahiane 1998).

For the sake of simplicity, once the Ait Atta established their control of the ksars, these ksars were subjected to the *ahkams* or rules of governance of the Ait Atta confederation. These rules were either transmitted orally, as in the body of customary laws of *azerf*, or often written in camel skin *shrut n-khams khmas*, rules of the five-fifth composing the segmentary lineage organization of the Ait Atta nomadic tribe. The oral and flexible characteristics of customary law are largely responsible for minor changes and adaptation of the *azerf* throughout the Ait Atta land or *timizar*. These documents were also known in other parts of Ait Atta land. For example,

in the *asif n-rtbat* or the Middle Ziz Valley, as *ti`qqidin* (sing. *ta`qqit*) or *al-qa`ida n-Ait Atta*, a term derived from the Arabic *qa`ida* or way, or as *ait al-Haq*, people of the truth.

The political life and administration of the internal affairs of some ksars are documented in local legal treatises and customary laws called *azerf* and *ta`qqit* in Berber and *shurut* or conditions in Arabic. While *shurut* implies the conditions set on the conquering groups by the sedentary population, the *ta`qqit* is the result of the conqueror's determination to subject the conquered. Historically, the Ksar's livelihood depended on subsistence agriculture and exchange with nomads. Throughout this section, my ethnographic work is informed by the interpretation of the Ait Atta's *azerf* by Hart (1981) and the *ta`qqit* of ksar al-Gara, in the middle Ziz Valley, discussed by Mezzine (1987).

The *ta`qqit* document dates to the late nineteenth century and reports ksar al-Gara's constitution and rules administering the ethno-political life of the village, management of the palm grove and irrigation, and sharecropping. Ksar al-Gara came under Ait Atta's dominance in the late eighteenth century and still reflects the power relationships within the community as well as it illustrates the mechanisms at work in a stratified society with the Berbers and the holy Arabs on top and the Haratine at the bottom, an essential characteristic of most ksars controlled by the Ait Atta along the valley.

The internal and political affairs of the ksar were administered by the local agnatic lineage based council called *taqbilt* or *ajmu`*. Each lineage or ethnic group occupied a certain part or street of the village. The *ajmu`* was composed of *id-bab n-imuran* or lineage representatives headed by *amghar n-tmazirt*, the country or land chief. The *amghar* was elected every year from a different lineage. The *id-bab n-imuren*, meaning the people who own land and

shares of protection of the non-Ait Atta groups, were nominated to the council by the amghar but not appointed by the members of their own lineages.

For instance, in Zaouit Amelkis, the Ait Khabbash sub-tribe was divided into six lineages or *swadis*: Ait `Amar, Ait Burk, Ait Taghla, Ilhiane, Irjaldn, and Izulayn. These six lineages made the *taqbilt* or *ajmu`* of the ksar. Each year, after the wheat harvest, they gathered to elect the annual *amghar* or chief of the community. The office of the chief rotated among the lineages. Once all the lineage representatives, as well as the *fqih* of the mosque to bless the gathering with benediction, were assembled in the *ajmu`*'s *ahanu* or room, the elections started. The candidates from the incoming lineage sat on a red carpet and waited while the electors from the other lineages went outside to discuss their choice of the individual to be elected. Once the electors made their decisions, they came back, walked in a circle around the candidates, reported their decision to the *fqih*, and finally the *fqih* put his finger on the head of the person who was about to assume leadership.

The newly elected chief sat down, and usually cried and prayed to God to help him do justice, to do no harm or to not falsely accuse any member of the community. His predecessor then walked forward to him and put a branch of alfalfa in his turban to confirm his chieftainship and to symbolize the hope for a bountiful harvest during his tenure. The *fqih* gave the new chief some milk and dates for his inauguration but, while the chief is drinking his milk, the *fqih* would jerk the bowl of milk so that is spilled on the chief's *a`ban* or robe. This act meant the new chief's imperfection in office, the fragility of his power, and stressed the fact that he was no better than any one else in the community.

The annual elections of the *amghar n-usguas* by the lineage constituency is what Gellner (1969) labels "rotation and complementarity." This process safeguarded the political system in

two critical ways: the electors could never elect themselves and its annual rotation acted as a check against any abuse of power and corruption. Neither candidates for the office of the chief nor the members of their lineage had the right to vote. Thus, through this process of complementarity, the political system remained immune to any temptations of hegemony of one group over another. A dominant concern of the Ait Atta was never to let one head rise above the others as De Monts de Savasse (1951) observed and what Hart calls the “*jma`a* syndrome, the syndrome of collectivity” (Hart 1981).

The duties and decisions of the *amghar* were those of administering internal and external relations with neighboring communities and other clans. He was the person responsible for the defense of tribal territory and communal interests. It was he who organized *harkas* or armed expeditions in times of war and he supervised and guided the settlement of disputes between lineages and neighboring tribes. For his prestige and services to the community, the *amghar* got a portion of the fines levied for unlawful infractions such as murder and theft of produce in the palm grove or livestock.

The main deliberations of the *ajmu`*'s representatives of the agnatic lineage groups of the sub-tribe centered on the communal management of the village's cultural and economic life. The *ajmu`*'s concerns centered on the following themes critical to the welfare of the ksar community and palm grove: 1. to elect the *amghar* or chief of the year, 2. to settle divisions of water and land, 3. to organize *harkas* or war parties, 4. to administer any issue dealing with the *habous*' lands and trees, establish the distribution of the *`ushur* or religious tithe, and the share of the *fqih* of the mosque, 5. to enforce order, fines and banishments, and 6. to establish rules for sharing the costs of the Ksar's guests.

Despite the *démocracie-témoin* aspects of the Ait Atta's political system and the inherent dislike of political hegemony, the management of the Ksar's affairs was based on policies that excluded the Haratine and the Arabs from participation in the running of the community. These exclusionist policies were seen as critical to the preservation of the Attawi political life. Keeping the Haratine out of the *ajamu`* and viewing them as unqualified for representation stems from the fact that the Haratine would disturb the system and spoil the interests of the conquerors. Naturalizing the Haratine's institutionalized dependency reinforced the feeling of solidarity and sense of egalitarianism among the Berbers, therefore conferring upon themselves the status of nobility and prestige. Blocking the Haratine from participation meant also a disequilibrium between population and resources in an environment marked by political violence well illustrated in the dominance of one ethnic group over the others (see Ilahiane 1996 and 1999).

### **The Economic Organization or The Syndrome of Collectivity of the Ksar**

The economic organization of the ksar revolved around the meticulous organization of the palm grove and its irrigation, preventing the Haratine from owning land, and the relentless quest for food security and economic equilibrium at the village level and the prohibition of economic speculation.

The palm grove is the heart of the ksar and its main source of subsistence. Concerns about the management of the palm grove are still talked about in a nostalgic manner among today's Berbers and Arabs. The palm grove in the past could only be safeguarded by the corporate community of the ksar. As a defensive strategy the ksar and its *ajmu`* crafted a bundle of rules to govern the use of the palm grove by the Ksar's residents as well as the nomads. The stipulations of customary law reported in written documents, as in the *ta`qqit* of ksar al-Gara and oral history, testify to the determination of the Ait Atta to leave nothing to pure chance.

The palm grove had its chief, *amghar n'tamazirt*, to see to it that fields and produce were not subject to theft. The irrigation canals and network also had its chief or manager, *amghar n-waman* or *n-tiruggin*, who supervised the cleaning and maintenance of the canals and the dam, *ugguy*. The two *amghars* were always Berber and were appointed by the *ajmu`* based on their age, honesty, and religiosity, as these attributes are essential to the just management of the palm grove. Communal institutions governed the agricultural calendar and land use and fixed the opening and closing of the palm grove. In fact, oral tradition depicts a conservative clan corporate agrarian community very jealous of its autonomy and autarky; a closed community, at least economically, where irrigated farming and livestock were the backbone of the local economy, prompting a strict and meticulous governance of the assets of agricultural production.

The legal organization of farming severely sanctioned acts such as weeding on the borders of irrigation canals and the river, unauthorized gleaning of dates, olives and other fruit, aimless circulation in the palm grove and around the gardens, bringing weeds or alfalfa into the village after sunset, and collecting of green wood. The palm grove guard fixed the opening and closing times and days for picking green dates or *abluh* as well as the green olives period of *bulmam* or gathering olives that fell to the ground. For the gathering of green dates, *abluh*, the *ajmu`* made a public announcement from the top of the mosque designating the days of the week and timing of gathering. For *abluh*, children and women would gather early in the morning behind the door of the ksar and the doorman would not open it until the palm grove guard was present to oversee the operation. On their way back, the palm grove guard stood in front of the gate and checked everyone's basket to make sure that other produce from palm dates was not milked.

For fuel wood or *isgharn*, Saturdays were open for gathering dead palm fronds throughout the palm grove and anyone caught with a frond outside this time limit was liable to *izmaz* or fines. Tamaris like trees, *afarsig*, growing on the river's banks and used also for fuel and livestock feed, were also regulated, and their unauthorized cutting resulted in severe fines. During the olive and date harvests, the village's assembly convened to organize a timetable for both harvests in the palm grove. The assembly's decisions were then relayed to the public crier to announce from the top of the mosque. These decisions were enforced so that theft and anarchy were avoided. If, for instance, an individual was guilty of stealing or violating the rules of the farming code, he or she was usually summoned by the palm grove guard to the *ajmu`* after the Friday prayer.

The *ajmu`* settled such matters in front of the mosque in an open yard space. There, the guilty party was called upon and cited for his or her violations. Usually the offenders were the landless group of the Haratine. After a short deliberation among the *ajmu`* and the palm grove guard about the nature and magnitude of the offense, the guilty person was imposed a fine or *izmaz* of a *mud* or a decaliter of grains or the choice of feeding the *ajmu`* and the *fqih* of the mosque. Either punishment was very harsh for most of the Haratine since they could not even feed themselves and were very dependent on their patrons.

If, however, the offender fails to show up for the deliberation or contest the verdict of the *ajmu`*, the *amghar* would pick up a small stone, spit on it, and would then hold it up against the sun to dry. The offender must accept the decision of the assembly before the stone dries. Then, if the offender refused to go with the council's verdict before the stone dried, he was fined *muddayn* or two decaliters of wheat, corn or barley. The stone spitting was repeated and if the offender had not accepted, his fine was redoubled to four *mdud* or decaliters. The process keeps

doubling until either the offender accepted or was saved by the intervention of the lineage chief whom the offender sacrificed on. Stories are still being repeated about families or households that were forced to leave the village forever through this sort of on-the spot destitution, which especially affected the landless Haratine and made them more dependent on their lineages. It was more damaging for the Haratine in the sense that they had no grain inventory to use as *izmaz* or fines and their solution was to turn to the patron for help which led to the accumulation of social and capital debts.

Livestock herding was communally organized in what is called *tiwili* or *dawla*, obeying the limits and the places fixed for its grazing by the *ajmu`*. Each village had a communal shepherd, and he was paid by a fixed rate per head. The village also had a communal bull that was fed by the community. Each household or individual coming into the ksar with alfalfa or weeds must throw a bundle to the bull, *talqurt*. The bull or *a`jliy n-taqbilt*, as it was called, was also the communal genitor for the village's cows. The doorman or *abuwwab* kept an eye on the bull and made sure that he was fed and drank its water. The bull was slaughtered after 2 or 3 years or "when it starts getting out of control." Its meat was distributed to each household while the heart, liver, fat, and guts, the essential ingredients of *bulfaf* brochettes or what is called *qayd al-wad* or the mayor of the river, are sold to generate funds for purchasing and raising another bull.

The community has also a gravedigger who has the right of use of the *habous* field assigned to him by the *ajmu`* for his services of digging graves and maintaining the cemetery. The assembly owns *al-nna`sh* or mortuary equipment where the dead are washed and carried to the cemetery. The *nna`sh* is kept in the mosque. The council also owns the communal ladder as

well as the *lluh* boards used in the construction of walls, and permission was required for their use.

At the same time, the *ajmu`* made it obligatory that all households of the ksar crushed their olives in the communal olive oil press, *al-m`ssart n-taqbilt*, and prohibited the building of private presses. Olive mounds waiting to be pressed were organized spatially in accordance with the lineages or *ighsan* (sing. *ighs*) composition of the ksar. Each lineage has a long stretch of space and knew its limits. The decision as to who crushes his olives first was a matter of contention among the villagers. The potential yield of the first press of the harvest is believed to be affected by the dry crushing pit and may lower the oil productivity of each batch or *tahna* of olives. A *tahna* of olives equals 50 *muds* or 375 kilograms and fluctuates in its yield between 75 and 110 liters of oil. This concern is solved by drawing lots or *grat ilan* among the lineages, who in turn, draw lots among their members. Others, although they favor the *ilan* way, villagers still believe that one gets his *larziq*, an amount or provision guaranteed by God, no matter how dry or wet the crushing pit is. You get what God wants you to get; that is your *larziq*. The overriding obsession with defending the common interests of the ksar demonstrates a solid communal organization and underlines the power of social cohesion inside the ksar.

## **Land Tenure Organization and The Ksar's Quest for Economic Egalitarianism**

The second main characteristic of the economic organization of the ksar deals with the management of the land tenure system. The land tenure code of the Ait Atta, as reported in their tradition and written documents, prohibited the fragmentation of land and denied access to non-Ait Atta except for the holy lineages of Arab Shurfa and Murabitin.

For the Ait Atta Berbers, land tenure was the founding pillar of law and tradition, *azerf*. Land and tree tenure was virtually the decisive vehicle through which the Ait Atta's social organization expressed itself. Exclusion of outsiders was the chief operational element of the Ait Atta's construction of property, and the perpetuation of *tamazirt* or the patrimony of the community was jealously guarded by the keepers of customary law and tradition. Someone other than a member of the Ait Atta and the holy Arab lineages could never acquire land in the Ait Atta land, particularly the Haratine. In ksar al-Gara, in the nineteenth century, for example, it was prohibited to sell or transfer land to the Haratine, and such acts, if they happened, would result in severe financial fines for both the buyer, the seller and his lineage, and the *amghar* under whom the land transfer took place.

The final characteristics of the Ksar's corporate community are its relentless quest for food security, economic equilibrium, and the hostile attitude towards the market and economic speculation. The *ajmu`* sanctioned a wide array of speculative economic activities that would create wealth. Oral tradition is replete with stories of how, in the past, a series of economic activities were prohibited and could not be practiced in the ksar. Occupations such as the butcher and the baker were not allowed to exist. These occupations were considered profit making and undermined the interests of the community. The occupation of the butcher damaged the practice of *l-uzi`t* or the institution of collective slaughtering. This communal institution

provided those who joined to slaughter a goat with equal shares of meat without incurring the whole price of a sheep or suffering from the market price charged by the butcher. The same rules applied to the baker. These prohibitions acted to strip the value added profit or wealth created from the transformation of primary products into goods, goods that were essential to the survival of the community. These activities were deemed as ways to generate wealth and constituted, in themselves, serious threats to land which was the crucial factor of production. Therefore they could undo the egalitarian foundation of the Ait Atta which was based on the equal partition of land.

Hoarding salt and wheat were severely sanctioned as well, because these items were the staples of the community, and if left to be traded and exchanged, the safety net of the community would be in jeopardy and dependency on others for food will follow. Interestingly, the sale of green olives or the exchange of boiled fava beans for dates during and after the date harvest were forbidden. The *ajmu`* fixed the prices of crafts made by the Haratine and prohibited the inhabitants from selling local crafts to strangers or other villages. The Haratine were also the blacksmiths and made the necessary farming tools and household utensils. The villagers could not sell manure, hay, and *dokkar* or date palms' pollen to outsiders, and violations of these stipulations were severely dealt with. The wandering Jewish merchants or *i`ttarn* were not allowed to sell or barter their proto-industrial products on the threshing floors during the harvest of dates and olives.

In these examples, the *ajmu`* prohibited selling any product that is part of the community's agricultural production. Manure was essential to the productivity of farming and ensured high yields. Hay was the main feed of livestock and livestock provided meat to the

community as well as farm labor. As for dates, they were the sacred cornerstone of the Ksar's diet as well as its medium of bartering with the surrounding Berber nomads.

All these examples indicate a strong local jurisdiction to protect the Ksar's economic self-sufficiency and economic equilibrium. They also embody the folk wisdom that things which belong to the community should remain within the reach of every member. Even poor households could acquire the necessities for their consumption needs and farming purposes without having to resort to buying them and being victimized by the market forces. Above all, the control of economic speculation—of the *haram* activities—and the customary mechanisms employed to block the entrance of the market forces into the social organization of the village aimed at isolating the middleman occupations which were the only options that could be mobilized by the landless Haratine to economically compete with the Berber land owners and undermine their hegemony. The laws of the ksar, as devised by the Berbers, assured the importance of land in production and blocked the non-Ait Atta from appropriating land or even having access to it.

While these legal arrangements protected the interests of the Berbers and perpetuated the exploitation of Haratine labor and craftsmanship essential to economic production, they also secured egalitarianism and cohesiveness among the Berber and Arab lineages of the ksar. The Ksar communities were organized to protect their corporate entities and, as such, had specialized controls over the use of accumulation of resources and mechanisms to insure a democracy of poverty—at least for the Berbers and the Arabs. The leveling mechanisms operated to prohibit economic speculation and accumulation, and to keep the Berber lineages fairly equal in wealth. They also militated against the rise of the Haratine based on distinctions of wealth and economic power. These leveling mechanisms rested on low level of technology, limited land, and social

stratification, so that wealth accumulation was absent in virtue of poor resources in relation to population and a traditional technology which was labor intensive and not highly productive. The morphology of the ksar seems to conform to the Geertzian (1963) concepts of shared poverty and agricultural involution, but not shared exploitation. It nears Wolf's analysis of peasantry types when stating that "close corporate communities result from conquest and the attempt by an occupying power to seize resources, concentrate population, and make village units responsible for tribute and corvée labor."(1967:236).

### **The Ethnographic Present of the Ziz Oasis Ksars**

Having examined the history of village social organization and the indigenous model of traditional resource management strategies, I turn now to the discussion of the break-up of the ksar and the emergence of a dispersed settlement pattern which have led to significant erosion in village institutions governing the commons. Recent social transformation prompted by Haratine migration revenue streams as well as the political reforms undertaken by the Moroccan administration to eliminate tribal structures of governance have come to produce new management practices, new ways of public office elections, leading to new modes of talking as well as contesting these social and political changes. In this section, firstly, I briefly map out the environmental setting of the ksars; secondly, I discuss the social context of ethnic stratification and recent changes associated with migration remittances; thirdly, I provide ethnographic accounts or reactions to the ongoing changes in ethnic relations and their ramifications upon village settlement patterns and institutions.

### **The Ziz Oasis: A Changing Society of Rank**

The Ziz Valley is situated in Southeast Morocco, on the edge of the Sahara Desert. Irrigated farming of cereals, olives and dates, and livestock raising has dominated the lives of its

inhabitants for more than a millennia, with pastoralism of camels, goats, and sheep in the surrounding dry hills and plateaux. The valley's livelihood is sustained by two converging rivers of the Atlas Mountains, the Ziz and the Ghris. Despite the harshness of the climate (aridity and low pressure sand storms), a microclimate prevails in the oasis, managed irrigated subsistence farming and shade provided by olive and date palm trees render the environment at the ground level less arid.

The peoples of the Ziz Valley comprise an ethnically stratified society. The Murabitin and Shurfa Arabs are alleged descendants of the Prophet Mohamed, or, of revered saints. These families are entitled to certain privileges and immunities. Berber high status derives from their historical military dominance and persistent political power, factors prompting Berber self-perception as a dominant social class. The Haratine are allocated inferior status and are typically responsible for farming labor. Since they did not own land in the past, they worked as sharecroppers for Arabs and Berbers and provided much of the labor for repairing the irrigation infrastructure.

Historically, in the valley's chain of ethnic stratification, the Arabs and the Berbers classify the racial and social status of the Haratine along at least five attributes: 1) a skin color attribute, *ahardan*, implying black and not worthy of respect; 2) a landless attribute, people of no *al-asl*, denoting lack of ancestry and shamelessness; 3) an obtuseness attribute, *ighyal*, meaning short of intelligence "like donkeys" and infantile; 4) a patronage attribute, *ait-tmurt* or "our people" indicating the Haratine client status; and 5) a labor attribute, *akhmmas*, sharecropper, naming any Hartani (plu. Haratine) working on the lands of the people of *al-asl* in exchange for one fifth of the harvest. In *siba* or dissidence times, they were also deemed to be "like women" and not permitted to wear white turbans, the symbol of Ait Atta and holy Arab manhood. They were

prohibited from participation in village councils of the Ait Atta, denied arms, and sometimes used as shooting targets for any Ait Atta member who wished to test his new gun (Jacques-Meunié 1958; Hart 1981).

Once the French “pacified” the badlands of the Saharan frontier and established themselves, the Haratine slowly rejected the old ties of traditional society and welcomed the opportunity to migrate. Because the Haratine were landless and were not allowed to have the means to acquire private land, a large number of them migrated in search of seasonal and annual work, first in French Algeria and the interior of Morocco, and later in Europe. The integration of the Haratine into the colonial system has had radical implications on the transformation of traditional relations between sharecroppers and landowners. The transition of the Haratine from the pre-colonial society is not the result of the internal mechanism of the local social system but the result of the policies of the colonial and post-colonial state that facilitated the means of communications and movement. This transition from pre-history or no history at all to history making was made easier by the slow replacement of old tribal systems of governance by the French colonial and post-colonial administration (Ilahiane 1998).

These reforms helped most of the Haratine to escape the old patron-client ties of sharecropping, and ignited their desire to migrate outside the walled corporate communities of the oasis in search of seasonal and annual wage labor opportunities. These reforms led to two major events in the valley: the first is that the entire region was integrated into national and international labor markets, and the second is the fact that the pull of wage labor made emigration a highly attractive option for the Haratine when compared with the exploitative labor inputs of sharecropping in the valley. For instance, an earlier study on the impact of the Hassan Addakhil Dam on the valley’s ecology by Toutain (1982:80) indicates that seasonal migration

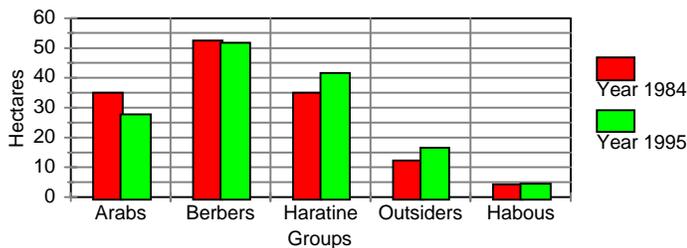
increased by 330 percent, long-term migration by 115 percent, and the number of able-bodied men joining the army reached 330 percent between 1970 and 1977. Additionally, the analysis of the surveyed sample indicates that 58.80 percent of the able-bodied male members of households practiced seasonal migration between village and city while 41.20 percent practices an annual pattern of migration, in particular to France.

In fact, it seems that the Haratine's drive to amass land and the determination "to oust the old masters" could only be understood in connection with remittances from Europe. Though a few Berbers and Arabs have migrated, they have adopted Western consumption patterns, thereby taxing their participation in land investments. What is interesting, however, is the fact that the Haratine are using their new wealth to short-circuit the traditional barriers of access to resources and appropriate what is inherently a Berber cultural concept, *al-asl*, to construct an empowered identity and produce a Hartani idiom of kinship. These factors, I argue, motivate their investment drive and strategies.

It appears that the Haratine's cultural appropriation of the Berber concept of *al-asl* provides them with a multiplicity of cultural and power bases to challenge the traditional cultural hegemony of the Berbers and the Arabs. Migration outside the oppressive conditions of the walled corporate communities of the oasis has been critical for the Haratine's transition from the pre-colonial period of "the people without history" to the people with history. When asked why they invest their remittances in land the Haratine respond that "*tubat al-walidin* or the ancestral adobe brick keeps them coming back." Access to land "breeds" empowerment, identity, roots and origin, *al-asl*. Without land one has no rights to speak of, and one is "like a walking donkey" and "your value or *qimtak* is not even zero in the eyes of the community" (see Figure 1 Land Tenure by Ethnic Group, 1984-1994).

Figure 1 shows the evolution of land tenure figures among the ethnic groups of the Amazdar village over the period of eleven years. It reveals the fact that the Haratine have been accumulating land while the other groups have been slowly selling it. When compared with the other groups, the Haratine had 41.60 ha in 1995 against 35.00 ha in 1984 whereas the Arabs had 35.00 ha in 1984 and 27.70 ha in 1995 and the Berbers had 52.20 ha and 51.80 ha, respectively. The incidence of land sales appears to have a higher frequency among the Arabs, and it is

**Figure 1 Land Tenure, 1984-1995**  
The Village of Amazdar



Source: Ilahiane 1998.

relatively low among the Berbers. Outsiders have also increased their land purchases, from 12.25 ha in 1984 to 16.50 ha in 1995. The analysis of the village's record of land tenure or *kunnash taqwim al-mulk* indicates that around 65 percent of the outsiders are Haratine from neighboring villages along the valley. While the Berbers, and more particularly the Arabs, seem to be willing to sell land, the Haratine figures underscore the fact they are the buyers of land. The *habous* land, however, shows a slight increase in its accumulation of land and this is perhaps due to the prevailing feeling that such donations might benefit the village, if given to the poor (Ilahiane 1998).

Another cultural factor or motivation is the satisfaction the Haratine obtain from notoriety and gaining status. Having access to land is associated with having and establishing origin or *al-asl*. In pre-colonial Morocco, particularly in most of the Saharan valleys, political representation

in the ethnic council or *taqbilt* rested on the landed lineages. Since the Haratine were landless and sharecroppers their political participation in the ethnic council could only be possible through land ownership. The Haratine are not born with rights; rights and full and equal membership in the community are acquired by having access to land and representation.

As a result of these investment strategies, the Haratine have moved from the stage of absolute sharecropping to a stage where they negotiate the terms of sharecropping. These terms evolved from the one-fifth share to the one-half system to a full-fledged choice of land rental and purchase, or, migration. Toutain (1982), for instance, noted that the number of sharecroppers has decreased by 36 percent between 1970 and 1977 while ORMVAT (1987) reported the increase of non-agricultural work by 20 percent between 1965 and 1980. Within the surveyed sample of the 61 households I conducted, the analysis revealed the absence of the one-fifth system, the rise of the system of land rental among the Haratine with a percentage of 15.66 percent, and only 4.60 percent of the total parcels are under the one-half system of production of which 4.28 percent is under Haratine control.

These changes have also transformed the ethno-political structure of the villages. Although they have challenged the traditional order and have become wealthy, they have never left the village. In fact, they keep coming back to buy land and assert their presence among the traditional declining Arab and Berber elites. The local ethnic or lineage-based council had to accommodate the rise of Haratine economic power. The continuous flow of remittances in combination with an increased portfolio of land have gained them political representation in the ethnic council, a council that was closed to the Haratine in pre-colonial times. Over the last two decades, they have been influential in local political decision-making. These changes, however, have not gone unnoticed by the traditional power holders, the Arabs and the Berbers. They are

dreading the social mobility of the Haratine and regret the fact of not migrating to Europe while the door of migration was open to all people in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Because of these changes, status and ethnic identity as a Haratine has developed as an idiom for cementing kinship relationships and leadership, responsible for the regulation of conflict and tensions in the community. The Haratine status, then, is rooted in the processes of social and political mobilization involving a collective act to enhance access to resources and thereby to ameliorate the standing of their community within the system of social stratification. This mobilization is performed through the ethnic solidarity of marriage alliances among the well-to-do and poor families, shared expenses for communal ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, and certain fictive lineage conventions as in referring to any Haratine as “*ben `ami* or my cousin ” versus the others— “us” and “them” discourse is becoming an everyday convention.

In fact, with the infusion of remittances leading to the rise of the Haratine’s socio-economic status and the slow decline of the old nobility of the Arabs and the Berbers, the old spatially bound and coherent villages are cut by competing discourses and ideologies on how the community was and is: each ethnic group sees itself as a collection of people that has to defend its interests in the face of the perceived threat from the others, and each ethnic group is well versed in how its sense of community was and is, and how all these changes are either a menace to the common good or a healthy step for the betterment of the lot of the other people.

These competing voices, although framed and conjugated in the third plural for the sake of not wanting to alienate and isolate the others, are highly sensitive in their accounts of the past and the present events of the valley’s villages. Because no group wishes to be overtly isolated and because all members of the community meet five times a day in the village’s mosque, and also because the agricultural bases of the village still require communal labor for the upkeep of

the irrigation system, the level of tension is kept under a more or less manageable system, at least, in the public discourse arena. However, the private or “hidden transcripts” about the negative and positive changes that the members of the community have witnessed are different. They exude with mixed opinions and feelings about the old glorious days of the Arabs and the Berbers and the better and much improved times of the Haratine.<sup>1</sup> Within the incessant intrusion of government services into the area and its central objective of eliminating, if not liquidating, the old tribal system of social organization, the administrative reforms began with the French and intensified after Independence have left a mark on the locals. Of all these reforms the locals are quick to pinpoint the flawed nature of the elections that came with the new establishment of rural communes or counties that brought a large share of the villages’ duties and responsibilities under the eye of the government and its agencies.

Put simply, this was done by electing local representatives from villages, and these elected officials formed the governing body of the Rural Commune under the leadership of the District’s Parliament Representative. The old tribal council that governed the village found itself representing the government, and its local authority was limited to the communal arrangements of irrigation and the olive oil press. The intrusion of governmental policies is so striking to the point that decisions of when to harvest dates and olives, for instance, once the internal business of the council, are now substituted by gubernatorial memos fixing the date of harvest in the entire province.

Although the mosque was under the umbrella of local governance, the government’s

---

<sup>1</sup> In my view, I define the term community: 1) as a set of complex social relations among a collection of people residing in a more or less defined geographical area; 2) as a unit of economic production and consumption of goods and services by the residents and non-residents for their own subsistence needs and the market requirements; and 3) as an integrated part of the larger society.

agency of religious affairs has taken that responsibility. The old mechanisms of conflict resolution have found their way into the provincial courts. The post-colonial administrative policies of integrating every inch of Moroccan soil into the national territorial unity has succeeded in eroding major aspects of local forms of governance. As a result, it appears that political parties, in particular the color of their voting cards, matter more than the local politics of ethnic management of religious life and the means of production. Since the late 1970s, the rural election campaigns have actually divided the valley's populace along political parties and ideologies, and even exacerbated ethnic tensions at the village level—"we are the people of this or that and we vote for so and so because he is one of us." In fact, given the Haratine's remittances, involvement in politics, and higher household size, Arabs and Berbers see the election process based on the one-man- one- vote as flawed and insist that the old system of the people of land or origin ought to be the leaders and not the losers for some Haratine because of their "rabbit like" breeding behavior.

### **The Ksar's Changing Senses of Community**

All these factors, particularly the break-up of the old Ksar's built form and the issue of elections, have conspired to take the best out of all the ethnic groups when they reconstruct their past and imagine their communal futures in the valley. Let's consider Yidir's Berber narrative. Yidir is 72 years old, a Vietnam veteran and a retired irrigation guard, and still receives a pension from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. He joined the French Army in 1951 and "got shipped" to Saigon in May 1952. He served in Vietnam for two years and witnessed the early Vietnamese revolt against the French, and returned to Morocco in 1954. He thinks that, "all the Vietnamese need is wheat and dates; they have everything and it is always

---

summer over there,” he said with the pride of a *legionnaire*. He is also credited with being the first person to bring coffee and to introduce the bicycle to the village.

When asked about all the social transformations he has lived through, he is quick to lament the erosion of the old tribal system of governance when the Berber and the Arab word carried weight and how this word was backed by force if not implemented. For him, the village has fallen to an unruly state in which the Haratine have come “to say their words on its management and this fact has even speeded the total erosion of *qanun* or law and gave way to *huriya* or freedom. Most of the people who think they are democratic or free have no idea of what freedom or democracy is.”

Yidir illustrates the demise of old good justice and law as well as the old community of the walled ksar where law and order prevailed by examples of the Haratine’s defiance of the village’s mechanisms of keeping order. “In the old days, and even under the French, when a thief is caught he paid his dues in the village and paid his fine either in kind or in jail. These days, offenders have no respect of law and have found ways of getting out of their penalties,” he said with a nostalgic manner and longing for the old French days and Berber mode of governance. He decries the fact that most of the Haratine, because of the intervention of the local representative at the Rural Commune level and because they voted for him, always get out of their duties to the village, and this is a corrupt way of holding people responsible for their actions. “You cannot trust the Haratine, they have large families and few fields or none at all, and yet they manage to have some livestock. People wonder how they feed their livestock and the answer is that theft is rampant everywhere, and even your sharecropper would steal from you. There is no respect, and no shame anymore, and all I do is expose the ugly changes of time,” he said with a strong and disciplined attitude.

When asked again about his military service, he quickly produced his *Liveret Militaire* or Military Card, although it took him some time to locate it since he is illiterate. Illiterate he is, but street and world smart, he said. He remembers his military service with fondness and appreciates its hard work and strict ethics. He is also fond of Général Charles De Gaulle. “He was a real man, a great man and he embodied discipline and a great sense of achievement unlike the people I am surrounded by here who cheat and who are corrupt.” Yidir is decisive in his judgment about the recent changes in the village and the larger society, and some villagers attribute much of his vocal attitudes towards the Haratine and the rest of society as an indication of an old man who likes to impose his world view on his household as well as his neighbors. Some think he is bitter and even crazy because the times have not been kind to him and his sons left him because of his “military interventions” in their lives. Others believe that his point of view must be seen as a generational gap—he lived under the French and the Moroccan system and he saw the rise of the Haratine as an antithesis to the tenets of the old Berber regime of *lahkam* or law and *lma`qul* or reasonable behavior. The Haratine in this sense bring upon the community disorder and irrational attitudes of corruption and shame.

Yidir is not alone in his positions. Other Berbers and Arabs share much of his analysis of the causes behind the erosion of the village’s old communal traditions. Similar attitudes rise to the surface, particularly in times of elections. Eight years ago, the village of Amelkis had only three olive oil presses: the communal press of the tribal council and two private presses owned by a Berber and an Arab. During the elections, the Berber owner of one of the presses was running for election to represent the village at the Rural Commune level, and his Haratine workers switched sides and voted for the Haratine candidate. Upon the defeat of the Berber candidate in front of the Haratine representative, the Berber fired his workers and told them “that

for next year's olive harvest they should look for work with the man that they elected [the Haratine]." When the Haratine representative heard these statements he built an olive oil press to hire those that the Berber promised unemployment for next year.

The crucial issue that seems to fluster Berbers and Arabs about the way the elections are run is the fact that voting should not be universal and real voting should be tied to the amount of land each lineage owns. For Berbers and Arabs alike, "the Ziz Valley's villages have become more Haratinized—everywhere you look there are too many of them. The Ziz Valley is becoming another Somalia." The Somalia images are tied to all the images on television that villagers saw during the Operation Restore Hope undertaken by the American military under the auspices of the United Nations in Somalia. The images they saw were images of poor black children and families and those images were used by Berber and Arab youth to refer to the Haratine while inserting a joke here and there about when their visas of stay in Morocco are over, and inquire if they had packed up their belongings and when they will be making the trek back home to Black Africa (Ilahiane 1998).

From the Arab side, Mulay is 67 years old and considered a holy Arab as well as a very well to do household head. He owns an olive oil press and has almost 3.5 ha of land. While Yidir who combines a cosmopolitan and a local look on the village and its surrounding environment, Mulay is in many ways fortunate enough for having led a local and regional way of life since his birth. Mulay, given his holy status and the respect he gets for being a descendent of the Prophet's line, wishes to distinguish himself and his oil press from the other three locals ones: the communal press, the Haratine one, and the Berber one. He conceded that there is competition among the three olive oil presses, and true enough, for people who chose not to press their olives at the communal press, they put them in the other three private ones following

more or less an ethnic or lineage motivation.

Mulay states that his press workers are serious and very experienced, and do know how to press oil out of olives. He insisted that I take note of how clean the process, and how the press workers put a plastic sheet when they transport crushed olives to the oil press. He said that unlike the other presses where they usually would pick the fallen bunches of olives mixed with dirt; his press is cleaner and gives much more oil than the other ones for every batch of olives.

As for his reflections on the recent changes that he has observed over his life span, he said that the villages of the valley are becoming black. The number of blacks surpasses that of the Arabs and Berbers combined. Their sheer number has been boosted by French remittances, hard work, and the determination to buy as much land as they can and to enter the realm of politics from a wide door. "As you can see by your own eyes and hear by your own ears, the present president of the Rural Commune is a black man, and elections have become a black affair," he said in a low voice.

In the old days of the tribal council, the village agreed on representatives from the Arab and the Berber dominant lineages, and "if you got it, you got it." Now, the number of blacks has increased and things have changed. Credible people lose because of their small number and not because of their standing, honor, and wealth in the community. The Haratine were never full members of the local council, and made their entrance to the council only as waiters during the social functions or gatherings of the council. The Berbers and the Arabs made the decisions, and the Haratine carried them out just like everybody else in the village. "They entered because of the Berber belief in democratic representation and because some of the Berbers did not want to deprive them of the right of membership in the council, and that is a big mistake according to some," Mulay said.

Things have changed and the *blad* or village is not the same. Mulay relayed the following story to illustrate his analysis of social transformations in the village. He told me that a French colonial officer was on a duty tour in the village in the late forties, accompanied by the village's *moqaddam* or village head. Upon his tour, the French officer noticed a collection of well-dressed and shaved people sitting on a bench in front of the village's gate and inquired about what they did for a living. The village head answered that those people have black sharecroppers and do not work. "Well," said the French official and they continued their inspection tour into the palm grove. While walking through the palm grove, they run into a Haratine man with a load of alfalfa on one shoulder and a pick on the other, shabbily dressed, with pants hardly reaching his knees. The French turned to the Berber village head and said to him "these sharecroppers will take over this valley one of these days, hard work pays off." This story is a popular tale among the Arabs and the Berbers. Mulay adds that the French prediction is happening nowadays.

Furthermore, while the Haratine have been buying land year after year, the Arabs and the Berbers who could not work or do not have *dra`* (muscle power) either borrowed money and put their land as collateral or started selling it piece by piece to satisfy their subsistence and market requirements. The option of going overseas was not honorable, and one went overseas only if he had nothing or did not own "a foot of land to his name." It was shameful to go overseas for work and only the Haratine could do that since they had no honor to lose. However, only a few Arabs and Berbers went to Europe. Because of these internal and external migration opportunities the Haratine have been successful in dismantling the old one-fifth sharecropping regime and replaced it by the one-half system. Given also the old age and nuclear family properties of almost all Arab and Berber households as well as losing their able-bodied adult male to

schooling, government services, and the army, Mulay said they did not have a choice but accept the one-half system of land exploitation; and “you are lucky if you get that complete one-half,” so he said in an ironic voice.

The lack of supervising the work of the Haratine and the ineffective functioning of local mechanisms of guarding the palm grove has led to an explosion of theft in private fields as well as on the communal banks of the river and the major irrigation canals. The inclusion of the Haratine into the local council and their success in influencing the elections has led to the deterioration of the management of the irrigation infrastructure. Their representative on the council, Mulay insists, has made a career of letting his Haratine offenders “get off the hook.” The execution of justice has left and it has gone blind in the village since the Haratine have entered the council body of decision-making. Letting people function outside the expectations of the rule of law and justice has led some Haratine members to defy the normal rules of sanctioning offenders who steal produce or irrigation turns from their fellow villagers.

“It is a way for the Haratine to rebel against the past, and they do it by showing no respect even to the elders and by obstructing and walking over the community’s traditional rules of maintaining law and order in the palm grove,” Mulay added. As a result, people who used to grow vegetables refrain from doing so because the Haratine would not leave them alone—it is a lawless place. In the old days, once one gets a citation from the Mayor or a scolding from the village head it made a person sweat from head to toe, an indicator of how the power of justice execution was robust and effective. “These days, there is too much freedom for people who do not deserve it. Freedom is an understanding and an education, and in no way does it compel some members of the village to turn the laws of the community upside down. Today, the sheep and the wolf are hanging out and grazing together. Rules engraved in a long tradition are

meaningless to the Haratine, and they want to do what they like regardless of the interest of the others. Although not all the Haratine have access to migration remittances, they have been educated to view the Arabs and the Berbers as their old masters that should be questioned and resisted,” he said.

While the Berber and Arab accounts of the past and the present are mired in deep nostalgia of the old past order when they ruled the village community with an iron fist, the Haratine narrative, though anchored in the event of the past, tends to paint a bright present and future played in a complex situation that they are traversing in which they wish to found their own sense of community and belonging on an equal basis with the other ethnic groups.

The Haratine narratives of the past are full of references to the hard life and suffering they underwent under the old masters of the valley and the French colonial policies. Lhaj is a seventy-five year old Haratine and a former sharecropper. He made the *haj* or pilgrimage to Mecca, and that event affected him, particularly in terms of how people should deal with each other. In Mecca, he said with a sense of religious steadfastness, “we were all in the same light dress and we were all equal in front of God.” Lhaj is one of those who made the transition from landlessness and basket making to higher status associated with land acquisition and pilgrimage. He was a sharecropper, and now he has a sharecropper, as he likes to say. This transformation has been made easier with the flow of French Francs and all sorts of hard work and crafts. As a young adult in the company of his brother, there was hardly anything they did not do or try, from work in the mines, harvesting flood recession wheat in the Rissani area in spring, to harvesting wheat in summer in the Middle Atlas Mountains. They also were the masters of adobe construction through the valley as well as in the Middle Atlas area.

In terms of social relations with the other ethnic groups, he spoke of *daght* or oppression.

The Haratine did all the irrigation and agricultural work, and they were paid one kilogram of wheat or corn to take to their children. When they worked as sharecroppers, they were exploited. For the one-fifth of production they got for their labor, the sharecropper has to work the fields with his labor power in exchange with other sharecroppers. Before tilling the fields, the sharecropper's wife obtained five or six kilograms of wheat from the owner to clean, grind, and bake a loaf for each worker in the labor party or *twiza*. The owner provided only a dish of meat and stew. The Haratine were pressured to work and were exploited, and the elders of the masters in concert with the Berber Mayor or *Caid* and other French collaborators made us work almost naked on an annual basis. "I remember with vividness, just as if it happened yesterday or earlier this morning, during one of the major floods of early fall and late winter [1965], the guard of the irrigation system made us work naked and the only thing we ate was a piece of bread tucked under or around our waists— your hands worked, your back was bent, and your forehead sweated in five meter deep irrigation canals from the rising star to the evening star," he said shaking his head, and repeating over and over that those days were days of pressure and oppression.

Lhaj adds that in the aftermath of the devastating floods of 1965, he and other Haratine had to clear and build the damaged irrigation infrastructure. While fixing the canals, they slept in the palm grove. He said that the Haratine were notified by the village's council and had to show up for work. If one failed to show up, the fines were very stiff and beyond the means of the Haratine. In those days "justice was absent, and it was all pressure, pressure, and pressure."

While the French days are somewhat cherished by Arabs and Berbers alike, the Haratine see the French as conspiring with the old nobility to keep them oppressed. Lhaj said that the Haratine were caught between the French, on one side, and the Arabs and the Berbers, on the

other. Even during the *jihad* or holy war against the earlier inroads of the French Protectorate, the Haratine were not allowed to bear arms, and their role in the *jihad* was limited to transporting ammunition and food on donkeys and mules for the Berber and Arab holy warriors. This situation was even worse during the days of dissidence when the Haratine were tied to their masters through clientele relations. At that time also, they could not move freely from the village for the fear that labor hunters might raid them. As the saying goes “not every white camel is full of fat,” meaning that white men were not kind to the Haratine in the past, and with this saying Lhaj summed up his recollection of the Haratine and Arab and Berber relations.

In spite of the progress that the Haratine have made in reshaping their new sense of community and equality vis-à-vis the old nobility of the valley’s communities, they still face resistance in some villages which deny them political participation in the management of local resources and prestige. Berber and Arab members compare and contrast villages where power has been shared with the Haratine, and for them it is a lamentable situation. In the village of Izulayn, for instance, an old Berber woman told me that her village is much better than the one I was raised in because in hers the Haratine are not allowed to govern. In her village, the council would not allow the entrance of the Haratine into the decision-making, even if they owned land. The council would not incorporate non-Berbers. The Haratine “cannot say a word about how to run the *blad*.” In order to impress the anthropologist and lecture him about the effectiveness of ethnic solidarity that the Amelkis village seems to have lost a long time ago, she related the following story (Ilahiane 1998).

In the 1980s, during the provincial parliamentary elections in which there were two candidates, one Arab and the other Haratine, the Berbers supported the Arab candidate while the Haratine voted for the Haratine. Before the vote count, the Berbers started celebrating the not-

yet-sure results of the elections. Later, however, they were surprised when the Haratine candidate actually won. As a result, the Haratine took to the village's streets to vent their joy and started singing a song in which they were telling the Berbers, "go, you flies to sleep, our man and candidate won." The next morning, the Berber men and women gathered and agreed to boycott Haratine labor. The Haratine were informed not to work the Berber fields, not to gather grass in the palm grove and on the riverbanks, and not to fetch dead wood from the fields, and not to pick up olives and dates. Essentially, the Haratine sharecroppers found themselves unemployed overnight, and their labor arrangements were eliminated. Furthermore, when the Haratine were encountered throughout the palm grove, they were questioned as to the reasons that brought them to that part of the palm grove, and they were reminded that the fields and trees that have been feeding them for generations are not the property of the Haratine candidate they supported.

Since almost all the village's Haratine depended on the Berber fields for subsistence, the Haratine were "squeezed" and sought the good offices of a holy man in the next village to mediate the conflict between them and the Berbers. On his way to the Izulayn village, the holy man fell into an irrigation ditch, and he took this mishap as a bad omen or *ukhzit*, and returned to his village, leaving the Haratine on their own. The Haratine would, in the end, sacrifice a sheep on the elders of the Berbers and ask for forgiveness to iron out the problem. In so doing, the Berbers accepted the sacrifice. "We are not like the Amelkis village, they have allowed the Haratine to represent them and ride all over them," the old Berber woman said in a forceful way. I tried to convince her that the times are no longer the same, and that democratic representation principles are like what the Koran advises, but she refused the logic of one-man-one- vote, although she agreed with the *Hadith* (Prophet's sayings) which states that there is no difference between people except in their deeds in this life and in the Day of Judgment before God. To my

arguments, she held her hand closer to my face and said in Berber, “no, go, go. There is nothing like that. You have lost, and we don’t allow the Haratine in the elders’ council. We decide, and they carry out the decisions.”

### **The Interface Between Social Change and The Break-up of The Ksar: No More Esprit de Ksar**

Under these circumstances conditioned by local and national dynamics and acted out during the break-up period of the Ksar’s physical layout, the ksar is no longer the closed corporate community it used to be in the pre-colonial times and during a certain period under the French rule. The nucleated nature of the old village has evolved into a continuous spatial organization, although it still constitutes an administrative framework in which communal functions are performed (see Bisson and Jarir 1986; Hammoudi 1970; Mennenson 1965; Naciri 1986; Pascon 1968). The old meeting place of the people and the council has given way to multiple places of gathering and decision making which seem to follow a religious pattern or agricultural cycles. The meetings of the council are held in the homes of one of the members of the council instead of the old council room found at the gate of the village. Most of the communal functions dealing with the management of the palm grove are announced in the mosque or in central places like the olive oil press or in the threshing fields depending on what crop is in season. These village decisions, as well as the sale or distribution of village land for housing, constitute the core of the village’s business.

Defense and the management of the mosque and its land and trees are now in the hands of the specialized agencies of the government. Despite the erosion of the corporate functions of the village, the decay of its built form, and the expansion of housing outside its old ramparts, the village, for the most part, has kept many aspects of the past: a social organization in which the

performance of agriculture and its irrigation infrastructure mandates a certain level of corporate cooperation. This situation is succinctly captured by the answer I got to a question on the nature of cooperation among villagers from a Berber farmer who said, “the village is ethnically heterogeneous, and all we share is the irrigation canals and the mosque’s space for prayers.”

The village is not only a corporate community with its legal, economic, and social frameworks, but also the arena for political rivalry and status differentiation among its groups and members. As the accounts above show and the reference made to the past and present issues facing different ethnic groups and their standing for and resistance to the pillars of social stratification of the past: “we will oust the old patrons, or the Haratine must leave and regain their black brothers in Black Africa.” Statements such as the Haratine are not fit to vote based on their recent accumulation of land and only the old landed groups should be involved in the process, and the Haratine must not carry the community’s word indicate that status and social mobility are not achieved in the framework of the village, at least for the Haratine.

The point I wish to emphasize here is that the village is part of a larger society, and that what happens outside the village shapes the village’s community, and eventually becomes an active and constituent ingredient for social change. The Haratine’s struggle and hard work against the old ties in which they were not allowed to have access to land were matters worked within the structural framework of the village. Only with the advent of the colonial policies that provided peace, order and labor opportunities within and outside Morocco, could the Haratine begin their resistance to the domination of the Arabs and the Berbers. The Haratine had to leave the village in search of labor opportunities and cash so as to negotiate and strengthen their status and political position within the valley’s walled communities.

In the Ziz Valley’s reality, the spatial isolation and coherence of the village community in

pre-colonial times allowed for the development of distinct cultural forms for the organization of the community's life. Spatial isolation interfaced with a particular mode of ethnic production and ritual control reinforced the notables' notions of tradition, which provided behavioral frames for the villagers. These frames were based on the Berber codes or village constitutions. These frames specified the obligations and responsibilities of the village's ethnic groups, and provided cultural references for all sorts of village activities as well as avenues for involving participation in the maintenance and operation of village traditions and resources. Members did not carry around the burden of inventing, imagining, or resisting the dominant cultural streams, because no opportunities were available towards that end. Because the agricultural base of the village required collective effort for its cost of operation and maintenance, individual or group endeavors to resist the structures of traditions were always excruciating and time consuming undertakings, particularly in the times of dissidence. Social conflict was almost absent within the village's walls because the community had a hierarchy of values and status that responded to its critical interests of communal integration—only the Arabs and Berbers could own land and also a certain level of shared wealth or poverty was kept in balance so that Berber or Arab solidarity would not give way to dissensions, and thereby threaten the cohesion of the dominant ethnic groups. This fragmented cohesion, fed by recent national administrative reforms and fortified by international migration revues, is reconfiguring the daily debates about the resilience of village institutions, although most of the stakeholders have concluded that the break-up of the Ksar has quickened the demise of the old ways of managing the commons.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bisson, J. and M. Jarir

1986 Ksour du Gourara et du Tafilelt: de l'ouverture de la société oasienne à la fermeture de la maison. *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* XXV:329-345.

Bromley, D.

1992 [G.ed.] The Commons, Property, and Common-Property Regimes. *In Making the Commons Work: Theory, Practice, and Policy*. Pp. 3-15. San Francisco, California: Institute for Contemporary Studies.

De Monts de Savasse, R.

1951 *Le régime foncier chez les Ait Atta du Sahara*. Paris: Centre des Hautes Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Moderne (CHEAM).

Geertz, C.

1963 *Agricultural Involution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gellner, E.

1969 *Saints of the Atlas*. London, England: Weindenfeld and Nicolson.

Hammoudi, A.

1970 L'évolution de l'habitat dans la vallée du Draa. *Revue de Géographie du Maroc* 18:33-45.

Hardin, G.

1968 The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science* 162 (Dec.):1343-1348.

Hart, D.

1981 *Dadda Atta and His Forty Grandsons: The Social Organization of the Ait Atta of Southern Morocco*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Ilahiane, H.

1996 Small-Scale Irrigation in a Multi-ethnic Environment: The Case of Zaouit Amelkis Village, Southeast Morocco. *Journal of Political Ecology* 3:89-106.

1998 *The Power of the Dagger, the Seeds of the Koran, and the Sweat of the Ploughman: Ethnic Stratification and Agricultural Intensification in the Ziz Valley, Southeast Morocco*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

1999 The Berber Agdal Institution: Indigenous Range Management in the Atlas Mountains. *Ethnology* 38 (1): 21-45.

Kroeber, L.

1948 *Anthropology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

- McCay, Bonnie. J., and J. Acheson  
 1987 [eds.] *Human Ecology of the Commons. In the Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*, pp. 1-34. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Mennenson, E.  
 1965 Ksour du Tafilalt. *Revue de Géographie du Maroc* 8:87-92.
- Meunié, J.  
 1958 Hiérarchie sociale au Maroc présaharien. *Hespéris* 45: 239-270
- Mezzine, L.  
 1987 *Le Tafilalt: contribution à l'histoire du Maroc aux XVII et XVIII siècles*. Rabat, Morocco: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines.
- Moran, E.  
 1982 [1979] *Human Adaptability: An Introduction to Ecological Anthropology*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Naciri, M.  
 1986 Les ksouriens sur la route: émigration et mutation spatiale de l'habitat dans l'oasis de Tinjdad. *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* Tome XXV:347-364.
- Netting, R.  
 1976 What Alpine Peasants Have in Common: Observations on Communal Tenure in a Swiss Village. *Human Ecology* 4 (2):135-146.  
 1981 *Balancing on an Alp: Ecological Change and Continuity in a Swiss Mountain Community*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.  
 1993 *Smallholders, Householders: Farm Families and the Ecology of Intensive, Sustainable Agriculture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Oakerson, R.  
 1992 Analyzing the Commons: A Framework. In *Making the Commons Work: Theory, Practice, and Policy*. Bromley, Daniel, W., General Editor. Pp. 41-59. San Francisco, California: Institute for Contemporary Studies.
- ORMVAT  
 1987 Note relative au plan national de développement du palmier dattier. Errachidia, Maroc: ORMVAT.
- Ostrom, E., J. Burge, C. Field, R. Norgaard, and D. Policansky.  
 1999 Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges. *Science* 284 (5412) (April 9): 278-82.

Ostrom, E.

1987 Institutional Arrangements for Resolving the Commons Dilemma: Some Contending Approaches. *In The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*. Bonnie J. McCay and James Acheson, eds. Pp. 250-265. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Park, T.

1992 Early Trends toward Class Stratification: Chaos, Common Property, and Flood Recession Agriculture. *American Anthropologist* 94 (1):90-117.

Pascon, P.

1968 Types d'habitat et problèmes d'aménagement du territoire au Maroc. *Revue de Géographie du Maroc* 13:85-101.

Sheridan, T.

1988 *Where the Dove Calls: The Political Ecology of a Peasant Corporate Community in Northern Mexico*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Skinner, W.

1971 Chinese Peasants and the Closed Community: An Open and Shut Case. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (3):270-281.

Toutain, G.

1982 Technologie lourde et fragilité des écosystèmes phœnicols. *Economie Rurale* 147-148:79-81.

Wolf, E.

1967 [1957] Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java. *In Peasant Society: A Reader*. Jack M. Potter, May. N. Diaz, and George. Foster, eds. Pp. 230-246. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.