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# A century of hands : work, communities, and identities among the Ayt Khebbash fossil artisans in a Moroccan Oasis

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Aim and Scope of Dissertation

This study analyses the everyday practices and the processes of multiplicious identity formation in Amazigh mineral and fossil artisan communities, focusing on the Ayt Khebbash group in Rissani and Tafraoute. It is an ethnographic attempt at documenting the ways in which the artisans transform their work-based identities in the context of the postcolonial development of the Tafilalet region of southeastern Morocco.

The Tamazight-speaking Ayt Khebbash group from the Ayt Aṭṭa tribal confederation previously lived a nomadic life herding animals, before the development of the capitalist market economy which arrived with the French conquest of the Tafilalet in 1933. During the Protectorate period, the Amazigh herdsmen started to work in the local French-run lead mines, in the process of their integration into the wage labour economy. After the Moroccan independence, the labour out-migration of the male population from the Ar-Rachidia Province to the cities was accelerated by the drought of the 1980s, when increasing numbers of Imazighen abandoned their nomadic ways of life and found their cash income, first in the local towns of Rissani and Erfoud, by engaging in fossil sculpting. This work was supplemented by their seasonal migration to Nador and other large Moroccan cities, where they worked as construction labourers. By the end of the 1990s, many of the Imazighen turned to barite[1] mining in the Ar-Rachidia Province, in the wake of the European financial crisis which resulted in the declining prices for fossil. The conditions of their works in the three domains, fossil sculpting, construction labour and barite/lead mining, are inflicted with accidents, health problems and low return for their labour. The ways in which the Amazigh artisans deal with the contradictions experienced in the three domains of work in the context of the new socio-economic environment is the focus of this research.

The chapters are designed to address the question of how the Ayt Khebbash artisans identify themselves and others through everyday work and participation in different communities, what is their relation to the space, and how they deal with the discourse power of the state and the perpetual forces of capitalism. In Morocco, not only people

1 Barite is a mineral with varied crystal forms and colours, commonly used as a weighting agent for drilling fluids in oil and gas exploration to suppress high formation pressures and prevent blowouts. Other uses are in radiation-shielding cement, glass ceramics and medical applications. The mineral is found in several localities worldwide, including Europe, China, India, the Americas and Morocco.

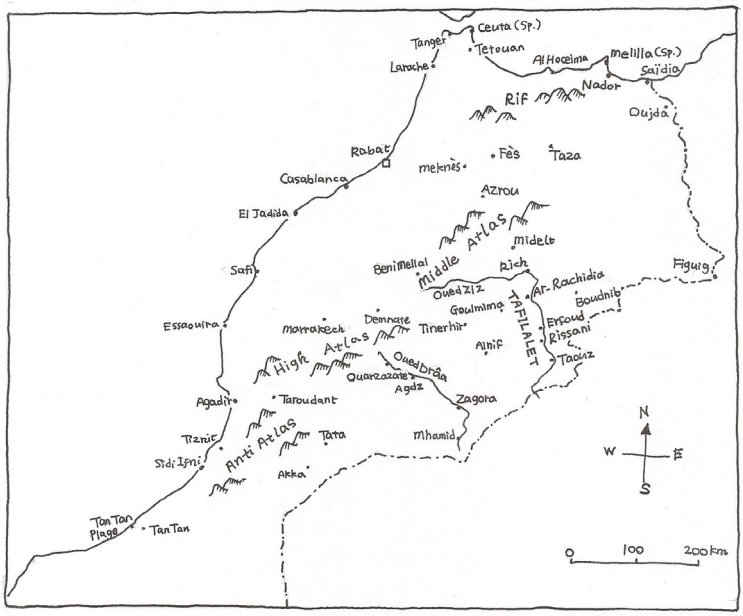
who engage in craft-work, but also miners are called *artisan* (from French *artisan*), because the word indicates manual work and the miners used to work with bare hands at the beginning of the Protectorate period. Therefore, I will use the term 'artisan' for fossil sculptors, construction labourers and barite/lead miners alike throughout this dissertation. In order to stress the dynamic nature of the identification processes among the artisans, I shall examine in detail various forms of their work practice, kinship ties, ethnicity and overall routes of travel from one profession to another, within the domain of their everyday lives.

In the context of this research, my primary interest is not in the collective 'Amazigh' identity projected by urban and international Amazigh activists, nor in the French colonial division of Arab versus Berber ethnicity.[2] While the collective Amazigh ethnic identity is for the most part based on delineated ethnic and political criteria, by the term 'Berber' or 'Amazigh' I just refer to Berber language speakers. In terms of personal identity, on the other hand, it greatly depends on shifting complexities of everyday life, such as situations at work, or how people imagine that others see themselves. I argue that the Amazigh artisans from the Ayt Khebbash group in Rissani, a town in the Tafilalet, do not have an essentialised Amazigh identity, but rather see themselves contextually through social interactions in everyday work and in relation to external power structures. Therefore, my aim is to provide an alternative view of Amazigh identity in the Tafilalet through the analysis of work as social practice, so as to understand the local notion of being Amazigh in the course of socio-cultural transformations.

Post-independence Morocco has witnessed accelerated rural-urban and inter-rural migration in the 1960s and 1970s (map 1-1). In the Tafilalet region, endowed with rich mineral resources, rural life has been transformed by the villagers' involvement in mining and artisanal work in and around towns such as Rissani, Alnif[3] and Erfoud, accompanying the rise in national production quota of silver, lead, zinc, barite and

2 The literature on the social and conceptual framework of Arab/Berber categories is abundant. See for example, Rosen 1972; Hoffman 2000a; Crawford 2001; Rachik 2005.

3 Alnif used to belong to Ar-Rachidia Province (Meknès-Tafilalet administrative region) until 2009 when the town was included in the newly created Tinerhir Province (Sous-Massa-Drâa region). The town is known for trilobite sculpting and the majority of the population consists of Tamazight speakers. Due to Alnif's historic relevance as a 'Tafilalet town' of fossil craftwork, it will be treated as a 'Tafilalet town' in my dissertation. However, Alnif is excluded from the Meknès-Tafilalet region since 2009 in the statistics of the Ministry of Energy and Mining presented in chapter five (tabes 5-1 and 5-2).




**Map 1-1 Morocco**

fossilised stones since the 1970s. Although fossilised stones used to be a symbol of misfortune and curse in local legends, they acquired commodity value due to the increasing demand from the West. Accordingly, the Ayt Khebbash men of the region transformed themselves from a nomadic herding population with a localised worldview to artisans, conscious of the world market in which their labour is sold.

However, as discussed in the ethnographies of Taussig (1980) and Nash (1972; 1979a; 1992) in the cases of Bolivian miners, local belief systems, such as the concepts of space and time, are constantly reinforced in the Ayt Khebbash artisans everyday practice at work. In Rissani, the Tamazight-speaking population live and work together with their kin-groups and those from the same area of origin, creating a 'village' within the town. Also, they typically maintain endogamous marriage patterns in an effort to preserve their tribal identities. In other words, the contemporary environment of capitalist production and the Western notion of commodity values are combined with beliefs in 'traditional' values from the nomadic past, which means that the kin-built social order is structurally durable and is strengthening the individual identities.

In this globalising socio-economic context, the cities and towns of the Tafilalet form a social field where people experience their daily lives as being subject to the contradictions of modernity. What characterises this modernity is the trinity of powerful institutionalisations, namely the nation-state, capitalist market economy, and organised Islam. Under the influence of these forces the fossil sculpting emerged in the 1970s as a distinctively 'modern' sector of artisanal work in the Tafilalet. The majority of fossil artisans in Rissani are Tamazight speaking Ayt Khebbash labour migrants from the nearby villages, such as Tafrokht, Melhaj, Taouz and Tafraoute, whereas all of the other 'traditional' artisanal sectors such as woodwork, pottery and basket weaving are inherited by the Arab families, that are older inhabitants of the *qṣur* surrounding the modern town quarters.

My question here is how the existing local practices and social relations change the meanings of the globalising discourses. The everyday lives of the Ayt Khebbash artisans are totally penetrated by the national and global cultural commodities and practices, hence the hybrid cultural formations are observable in the course of the articulation of locally embedded practices in relation to industrial capitalism and neo-liberal discourses. So how does the new work environment of the Ayt Khebbash artisans transform their self-perception and social relations?

To answer this question, I shall first examine the process of daily practice and the relationship between actors, goods and tools by critically adopting the framework of the 'communities of practice' presented by Lave and Wenger, which I will discuss in section three (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998[4]). This is to set a hypothetical 'space' where practice generates and sustains. This community does not refer to kin groups, tribes, villages or regions, nor does it indicate the institutional frameworks such as school, factory or bureaucratic organisation. For Lave and Wenger, it is a notion for understanding practice as participation in a broader framework of the social world, which is the reflexive community (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Although the community model has its limitations when analysing the multiplicious aspect of identity formation, it remains important with regard to the understanding of apprenticeship as a process of participation in the social practice.

4 See also Wenger, Etienne and Snyder, William M. 2000. 'Community of Practice: The Organizational Frontier', *Harvard Business Review* January-February, 139-145; Wenger, Etienne, McDermott, Richard, Snyder, William M. 2002. *Cultivating Communities of Practice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Second, I shall focus on this participation as a 'work-based' identification process, for the world of work is the epitome of 'modern' lifestyle away from the village. The newly emerging sectors of fossil sculpting and barite/lead mining, opposed to work oriented towards the natural order in the pre-industrial epoch, can be regarded as a partially modern system implanted in the local society with the logic of the world capitalist system. However, it should be stressed that work is not embedded in the system, but work itself is a social practice, wherein acting agents acquire new knowledge, techniques and lifestyles, in the multiple processes of confrontations and contradictions. In other words, work is a human action performed by artisans as everyday practice and constructed interactively vis-à-vis the social conditions of the work environment. Therefore, the focus of this research will not be on labour migration *per se*, but the ways in which the migrant artisans construct, reconstruct and transform their identities through everyday work in the context of the globalising socio-economic landscape of the Tafilalet region.

Third and finally, by drawing on evidence of field data, I shall contend that the contemporary social relations are actively reorganised by the practice of traditionalisation. As explained by Dell Hymes, people endow particular aspects of their experience with meaning that symbolically links them to their past, in the process of their social life, which he calls 'traditionalising' (1975). In rural Morocco, the Ayt Khebbash artisans understand their situation and transform it by strengthening their sense of belonging to their tribal origin, so as to overcome their difficulties and contradictions in everyday life. For this reason, the artisans do not assimilate or conform to the structural conditions, but instead hold on to their customs which they consider 'traditional' and are important for them on symbolic, emotional, social and economic levels. I shall argue that these historically formulated and reformulated tribal identities remain to be an integral part of the multiplicious identification processes of the Ayt Khebbash artisans, which is deeply connected to their participation in work and their articulation of discourses.

### 1.2 Relevant Literature and Theoretical Framework

In order to situate my research in the context of past anthropological work, I briefly review the study of practice in Middle Eastern anthropology.[5]

5 For an overview of Middle Eastern anthropology, see also Eickelman 2002: Ch. 6.

Within the discipline of anthropology, the functionalist analysis of African tribal societies was pioneered by Evans-Pritchard (1937; 1940). Later on, Emrys Peters studied the Bedouin tribal society of Cyrenaica, in which he stressed the complex interplay between colonialism, the local Sanusi brotherhood and the so-called 'segmentary' societies (1967; 1976; 1984). Although heavily influenced by his predecessor Evans-Pritchard, he challenged the assumption of Bedouin society as segmentary and static, and insisted that it should be situated in a wider political and economic context. In the same period, Ernest Gellner worked on Moroccan Amazigh society, highlighting the egalitarian and 'democratic' traits of tribal life, the symmetrical diffusion of power, and the elective nature of leadership in relation to the supreme authority of saints (1969). Also, he stressed the segmentary lineage model[6] as an important tool to understand the Amazigh tribal structure, the point of view of which was also confirmed by David Hart in his studies of the Ayt Waryaghar in the Rif and the Ayt Aṭṭa tribe of southeastern Morocco (1976; 1981; 1984).

Whereas Gellner and Hart focused on structural aspects of Amazigh tribal society, Jacques Berque stressed the dynamism and flexibility of tribal structures as well as the ambiguity of social relationships, while abandoning the colonial assumption of an Arab/Amazigh division (1955). He asserted that the spread of Islam contributed in altering the local conditions and that it blurred the ethnic boundaries. His work remains relevant to the analysis of social dynamics in the globalising environment of today, and still poses posing a resounding critique of generalised Amazigh ethnicity (Cf. Pouillon 2001; Rachik 2012).

Shifting further away from the classic theoretical paradigms of structural-functionalism, Pierre Bourdieu focused on the articulations between the practices of social actors and the larger structures and systems that constrain or transform those practices (1977; 1987 [1979]; 1990). Not only did he shed light on the everyday practice of social actors as a cultural process, but he also put the issue of power and inequality into concern. For instance, in his research of the Algerian colonial economy, he clearly demonstrated that migration is the product and expression of historical and international relations of material and symbolic domination, and that such relations 'structure' the economic practices of the peasants' daily lives (Bourdieu 1962; 1963; Bourdieu and Sayad 1964; Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001).

6 For the critiques and discussions on segmentary lineage model, see Munson Jr. 1981; 1989; 1993; Gellner and Munson Jr. 1995; Hart 1996; Eickelman 2002; Pouillon 2005.

However, practice theory has its own limitations. Much as De Certeau stressed the repetitive and unconscious aspects of daily life (1984), so did Bourdieu assume that *habitus*, the deeply buried structure that shapes people's dispositions to act in ways to accept the dominance of others, is internalised and inaccessible to consciousness (1977; 1987 [1979]; 1990). In other words, although practice theory remains important when analysing the relationship between internal dynamics and external forces of colonialism and capitalism, it fails to acknowledge social *transformation* while overstressing the structural aspect of social reproduction.

In addition, the cultural complexity, ambiguity and contradiction of human agents in relation to domination deserve more attention. As Geertz pointed out the difficulty of applying the Western model of individual to Moroccan society (1983), we must move away from the Western ideological construct of unified and freely choosing individual. Our focus should be on the capacity of human agency to interpret, evaluate and to formulate projects, without losing sight of the cultural, historical and political construction of the non-Western 'self' (Ortner 2006: Ch.2). It is the contextual analysis of acting agents in relation to their socio-cultural condition that we should now turn to.

In the case of the Ayt Khebbash artisans in southeastern Morocco, I argue that movement and work in several different domains throughout their lives are an integral part of social practice and identity formation. As in the words of Clifford, they 'dwell in travel'; people are constantly in transit, since their survival is a process in 'displacement, tangled cultural experiences, structures and possibilities of an increasingly connected but not homogeneous world' (Clifford 1997: 2). Their work-based identification is never limited to a single domain of work nor to a particular geographical space, which contradicts the classical assumption that the artisans are nailed down in a circumscribed location and that artisanal work is a 'rooted' profession. On the contrary, in the case of the fossil sculpting and barite/lead mining domains in the Tafilalet, it is largely an invented tradition created during the French Protectorate period and the subsequent expansion of world capitalism, wherein the nomadic Amazigh population sought for wage employment, solely for the purpose of their daily subsistence. In contrast to Eickelman's analysis (1985) of artisanal tradition in Morocco, the fossil domain is unrelated to Islamic science, but a product of European cultural hegemony. In order to sustain their volatile existence, the Ayt Khebbash artisans swap their professions according to the changing demands for minerals in the international market. However, their life-long travel – working in the French-run lead mines, then

moving on to fossil sculpting, and eventually engaging in construction labour in the large cities before returning again to Ar-Rachidia Province to exploit the barite mines – is maintained through the contested process of traditionalising modernities, which is an unpaved route directly connected to their nomadic past.

With such a historically formulated social practice in mind, we find that their identification processes entail a complicated experience of inner contradiction and clash with one's historically situated self and body. This is because participation in the social practice entails complicated interactions involving a historicised self, formulated through constant repetition of practice within one's personal history (Hodges 1998). We should take into consideration that local history as practice encompasses social participation, and that identities are cultural productions formed through the processes of hesitating, appropriating or refusing participation in practices that situate one's self and others. As Holland and Lave argue, identities live through the practice of identifications and those historical struggles are a 'crucible' for forging identities (2001: 3). In other words, identity and culture are both part of the complex historical processes entangled in the relations between actors' intimate self-making and participation in local practice.

For this reason, it is vital to focus on the aspect of identity created through practice within power relations. This is because the identification of acting agents occurs in the process of contradiction, confrontation and resistance while interacting with others and the outside world. As Laclau argues, coincidental identities are constantly endangered, and therefore can only be formed against contradictions within the power relations, and constructed identities are a set of numerous elements articulated with one another (Laclau 1990: 32). In short, identity cannot exist without discourse practice and exercise of power in all aspects of everyday practice.
As I have pointed out earlier, the identification processes among the Ayt Khebbash artisans in the particular locality of the Tafilalet involve intense conflict and confrontation with modern discourse power and forces of institutionalisation. The identities of the Ayt Khebbash artisans are formulated vis-à-vis the concrete administrative, social and economic forces, as well as against the encompassing discourse power of the West.

The economic importance of fossilised stones was discovered in the Tafilalet region in the early 1970s, due to the local Amazigh nomads' encounter with foreign geologists

and tourists. They first started digging out fossilised stones such as trilobites[7] and goniatites[8] along the carbonated strata from the Silurian and Devonian period, which were conveniently located near the towns of Erfoud and Rissani. The Amazigh nomads of this region, mostly from Ayt Khebbash group, eventually created the method of effectively visualising the stones using cutting tools, and then finishing with sand polish and oil treatment. In 1971, as the national interest in fossil craftwork increased, the Ministry of Energy and Mining installed electric machines in the urban centres, which encouraged the Amazigh people to migrate to towns such as Erfoud, Rissani and Midelt, equipped with water and electricity (*Etude sur le secteur des spécimens minéralogiques et fossiles* 2002: 27-50). At this time, the national and international market demand far exceeded the production, and so the new industrial units were created not only in the region, but also in Marrakesh and Casablanca. On the other hand, many of the Amazigh migrants continued to find work in small-scale *ateliers* owned by their kin groups or friends. Following the drought from 1981 to 1985, the mineral and fossil sector saw a dramatic expansion in the Tafilalet as increasing numbers of Imazighen were forced to abandon their pastoral lifestyle in and around the village to find subsistence in this sector.

What we can understand from this historical process is that the social relations which can be seen in their workplaces could not have been born out of the autonomous change within the local society, but is a product of the world capitalist system. Therefore, in the context of a modernising and globalising socio-cultural environment, it is vital to focus on the Amazigh migrants' newly acquired artisanal work as social practice. This is because the world of work epitomises the intensely conflicting field which has become divorced from home, family life, religious life and other diverse activities of the Amazigh migrants. As opposed to their former nomadic life, the kinship group is not always a producing unit of work, for they have come to engage in 'modern' work where groups of people from different families and ethnic origins interact in the workplace. As Bourdieu has discussed in his analysis of the changing notion of time among the Algerian peasants who became migrant workers in the city, the eco-

7 Trilobite is a fossil group of marine arthropods, from early Cambrian (521 million years ago) to Devonian period. Their sizes vary, but the typical size is from 3cm to 10cm.

8 Goniatite is a type of ammonite from middle Devonian period, dating back to 390 million years ago. Ammonite (scientific name: ammonoidea) an extinct group of marine invertebrate animals in the subclass ammonoidea of the class cephalopoda. The name ammonite derives from the spiral shape of its fossilised shells. It existed from the Devonian period to Cretaceous period.

nomic practices in the modern workplace have a crucial impact on the identification processes in the view of wider international relations of domination and inequality (Bourdieu 1962; 1963; Bourdieu and Sayad 1964).

For Morocco, the relationship between work and identity has been discussed by David Crawford in his study of a village in the High Atlas, which focused on the daily practice of work as labour, a protracted experience driven by poverty (2001; 2006; 2008; 2009; 2010). Based upon his strenuous participant observation in the Agoundis Valley of southern Morocco, Crawford demonstrated the daily subjective experience of hard labour as an important component in understanding their identities and the social organisation from which they are exploited. My current research is largely inspired by this momentous study of Crawford on the daily work and local identity among the Tashelhit-speaking farmers, which provided crucial insight into local notions of time, space and power from the perspective of labour, as well as questioning the overarching assertions of collective Amazigh identity promoted by the urban and international activists.

In the case of the migrant artisans in the towns, I shall argue that work is not only about the compelling necessity of survival, but also about the circulation of information, role-playing, and about the artisan's relationship to his tools and goods. The product he creates can be a projection of the self, and work as social practice is a meaningful process in which the worker affirms or transforms his personal significance and identities. For example, the Ayt Khebbash artisans often refer to the manual tools, such as a pickaxe or a hammer, as an extension of their hands, or even a 'lover' they parted in favour of the modern electric machines that they call a 'car', in need of constant care and maintenance. These expressions symbolise their idealised nostalgia for the village life they left, and also their pragmatic view on the current life in town.

It is also important to note that the work practice in the Tafilalet is strictly and unequally gendered. In my present research, the focus is limited to the male domains of wage-earning work and the perspective of gender and domestic roles shall not be explored. Fossil sculpting and various mining works are all performed by men, as well as labour migration to the cities outside Ar-Rachidia. Local women are not supposed to engage in any sort of wage-earning tasks, with the exception of home-based embroidery, carpet weaving and kaftan sewing promoted by local and international NGOs. Arab women have a centuries-old tradition of basket-weaving, merely to earn small

pocket money on market days. Although not prohibited, it is extremely rare to find female school teachers of local origin, because women are not encouraged to pursue higher education or a career. The phenomenon of female labour out-migration to the cities is a practice non-existent in Ar-Rachidia Province region, except for those abandoned by the family and working as prostitutes.

The subject of gendered identity among the Ayt Khebbash women in the Tafilalet has already been studied by Cynthia Becker in her ethnographies of female embroiderers and carpet weavers (2000; 2006). However, in her study she ignores the aspect of commodity production and how the female domain of artisanal work was linked to the formation of the capitalist market economy. On the other hand, the research of Claire Nicholas (2010; 2014) on the Moroccan female embroiderers' work practice and the transformation of gender roles in Marrakesh provided insight into the process of wider socio-economic transformations. She argued that the identification process of the migrant workers' involves the politics of 'tradition' in post-colonial state formation and socio-economic development, as they come to encounter foreigners or development actors, with backgrounds in varied skill, expertise and ethics of work (2010; 2014). Therefore, the shifts in how local artisans make sense of their crafts, and the ways in which they participate in work projects should be observed in relation to the political manipulation of discourse power and the intensified circulation of crafts in the commercial markets.

The literature on artisanal traditions in Morocco is vast and extensive (Cf. Ibish 1980; Amahan and Cambazard-Amahan 1999; Chikaoui 2002; Gaultier-Kurhan 2003; Buob 2009; Pieprzak 2010). It is a domain well studied in the French scholarship since the establishment of the Protectorate to understand the local craft industries for the purpose of economic development in a colonial framework. In recent years, Irbouh (2005) studied the impact of colonialism and the ways in which the craftspeople were turned into a subordinate labour force that served the interest of the colonial state, and how the standard of French visual arts was implemented in the process of weakening the power of the local guilds. However, the scope of these studies was limited to the cultural politics of colonialism, without attention for the identification processes of the artisans in relation to wider socio-cultural transformation.

As the study of work-based identities among the artisans is a theme little explored in the current anthropological literature on Morocco, the present study attempts to fill

in the gap in the analysis of everyday practice in the post-colonial localities by focusing on the processes of identification in the Amazigh work communities. By doing so I shall highlight the contradictions of discourse practice through an ethnographic description of the actors' complex experiences of hesitation, non-participation, resistance and agreement as ever-lasting processes of repetition and reconstruction.

## 1.3 Conceptual Tools

### 1.3.1 Work, Agencies and Identities

Every social being has a life of multiplicity and each social context creates shifting realities, in which the agents can become discontinuous and contradictory. Practice in daily life is more fluid than linear, since decisions, actors, plans and issues go through ever-changing processes whereby meanings and identities are reconstructed. While we should take into careful consideration the dialectic relationship between the structural constraints of society and agents discussed by Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and De Certeau (1984), we must explore the transforming aspect of the cultural, historical and political construction of agencies and identities in the local context.

In particular, taking into account the vital function of work in human activities, work could become the central focus in the analysis of social practice. Émile Durkheim undertook a pioneering study on work in industrialised capitalist society, in which he discussed the relationship between the division of labour and social inequality (1893). Later on, a significant amount of anthropological and historical research has been done on how the division of labour and control over labour processes are linked to social relations within the workplace and to the workers' places of origin (Cf. Mintz 1960; Wallman 1979; Burawoy 1979; Nash 1979b; 1989; 2008; Applebaum 1984a; 1984b; 1992; Gamst 1995; Kocka 2010). However, these previous researchers were inclined to emphasise the labour relations accompanying the spread of capitalism, such as worker and management relations or labour movement, and they gave little attention to the work itself performed by migrants as social practice.

In this research, I argue that the everyday practice at work cannot be reduced to the system, but is a human action involving complex processes of cultural hybridisation in the course of the social participation of the acting agents. The concept of 'work' itself is highly contested in different cultures; hence it is not easy to give a precise definition. In southeastern Morocco, Tamazight language speakers have a general concept

of work, *lkhdemt* (Tamazight), or *khedma* (Arabic), with a very broad connotation. In a strict definition *lkhdemt*/*khedma* used to mean 'clean' work at office or school which does not include physical labour. However, in daily conversations the terms are used to indicate whatever income generating activities, as opposed to *shughl* or *shughl lbit*, which means housework. More precisely, there are terms such as *tawwri*, meaning manual labour, and *tammara*, which indicates physically stressful labour. In my research, the term 'work' generally refers to the local notions of *lkhdemt* and *khedma*, which include the human activities designed to achieve or produce something, but exclude the domain of *shughl*. It is not my intention to create a binary opposition between industrial and non-industrial work, or to draw a sharp definition referring to specific types of work. Instead I use the term in a broader sense to focus on work primarily as a human action and not as part of a institutional, technical or ecological system, for the purpose of highlighting the practical context of the local artisans' identification processes. As said before, I intend to look at the changing nature of work under the impact of globalisation, its political relevance and cultural meaning from the daily experience of the local Ayt Khebbash artisans.

In order to analyse the processes of work as on-going identification processes, I shall adopt the 'communities of practice' model (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger and Snyder 2000; Wenger and McDermott 2002) which sees 'participation' at work as a central focus of practice. This is because, according to Lave and Wenger, cognition and communication in, and with, the social world are situated in the historical development of on-going activity (1991: 51). They stress the socially negotiated character of meaning and the concerned character of the thoughts and actions of persons-in-activity, claiming that learning, thinking and knowing are 'relations among people in activity in, with and arising from the socially and culturally structured world' (Lave and Wenger 1991: 50-51). In short, the world is socially constituted by the objective forms and systems of activity on the one hand, and agent's 'subjective' and 'intersubjective' understandings of them on the other (Lave and Wenger 1991: 47-58). Therefore, participation is based on situated negotiation and re-negotiation of meaning in the world, which indicates that understanding and experience are in constant interaction.

As Lave and Wenger focused attention on the ways in which participation is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations, they cite the apprenticeship among the artisans as a typical example of participation in the communities of practice, wherein

the actors acquire practical knowledge through imitating and learning the necessary techniques (Lave and Wenger 1991; Lave 2011). They call this learning process 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger 1991), for the newcomers are first given a legitimate but peripheral position as a learner in the *atelier*, and through this process of participation in the communities of practice they progressively move to the centre to become a skilled artisan.[9]

In my present research, the term 'community' refers to the conceptual definition of Lave and Wenger's 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). The significance of this community model lies in its conception as a mode of activity sustained by people's participation, which is far from the traditional sociological notion of 'community' that shares a common culture in a substantial manner. The communities of practice do not have institutional boundaries, but create different kinds of boundaries through a 'repertoire' of manner, ways of thinking, professional language, etc. (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Hence, this model highlights the complicated relationship between institutional boundaries and community boundaries, which is crucially important in the understanding of the complexities of social interactions.

In the analysis of the Ayt Khebbash artisans' apprenticeship in fossil sculpting, the 'community of practice' model shall be critically adopted in order to shed light on the ways in which people's practice are organised and transformed through 'mutual engagement' and 'negotiation'. In this context, 'identity' can be defined as the image and position of the self that the acting agents build within the communities of practice. Wenger discusses identity in terms of the relationship between 'identification', which coheres to the membership consciousness within the communities, and 'negotiability' which generates various meanings through the activities (Wenger 1998: 197-202). This notion of identification depicts the individuals within and outside the communities as negotiating the 'ownership of meaning' whilst immersed in the dynamic process of identification (Wenger 1998: 207). This dynamism is heightened, as the notion of legitimate peripheral participation implies, at the peripheries of the communities. However, Wenger does not discuss the identification processes of the agents which are influenced, defined and restricted by external forces. His notion of

9 For a critique concerning the application of the concept 'legitimate peripheral participation' to contemporary workplaces in advanced industrial societies and to the institutional environments in which people work, see Fuller, Hodkinson, et.al. 2005.

the communities of practice is limited in a sense that it presupposes homogeneity within and outside the communities in the processes of identification.

In discussing the identification processes of the Ayt Khebbash artisans through their apprenticeship in fossil sculpting, engagement in barite/lead mining and construction labour, the notions of 'dis-identification', 'marginality' and 'non-participation' presented by Diane Hodges (1998) also become crucial. This is because, contrary to Wenger's community model, the identification processes involve complicated interactions with the historically situated self, which cannot be reduced to a simple process of negotiation. As discussed by Hodges (1998), participation in the communities can be a challenge under the pressure of a hegemonic system, such as the bureaucratic complications which hinder the artisans in obtaining authorisations for mine exploitation. In the case of apprenticeship in fossil sculpting, I present the examples of physically handicapped artisans and those who are unable to become *mʕallem*-s (skilled artisans), and by so doing I shall argue that the notion of dis-identification implies the processes of 'multiplicious identifications' (Hodges 1998) through experiences of conflict, contradiction and exclusion.

### 1.3.2 Discourse Practice – Traditionalisation

Stuart Hall states that the social construction of the identification process involves the articulation between discourse power and the 'subjects' who can speak to it (1996: 1-17). In contrast to Bourdieu (1977; 1987 [1979]; 1990) who assumes *habitus* as rather generative, the theoretical paradigm of the identification process proposed by Foucault (1975; 1979), Laclau (1990) and Hall (1996), suggests the reality of confrontation between people's practice and the powerful force of discourse practice. In the context of my research, I shall use the term 'discourse practice' to indicate the ideologies and power relations involved in discourse. In discourse analysis, language is the primal domain of ideology which connects and restricts the agents with/from the social world. The ritualistic repetition of specific political and capitalist ideologies through social media and foreign business ventures has seemingly established consistent values in rural Morocco under the discourse power of the modern West. The European imposition of scientific values and consumer tastes on fossil crafts is one example of this. However, as Butler (1993) contends, we should not ignore the fact that under the restriction of discourse power, the self can de-construct the speech to emerge as a renewed political agency.

Therefore, I argue that the identification processes of the Ayt Khebbash artisans are not solely constructed through participation and non-participation, but also through practice within the power relations. For instance, in the course of the struggle for their rights over the tribal territory in Kudyet Draoua, which I shall discuss in chapter four, the Ayt Khebbash artisans formulate and reformulate a sense of belonging to their tribal roots, but this identification process is intricately connected to the very real social and administrative pressure from the local government or other ethnic groups they face on an everyday basis. This relationship between discourse power and multiplicious process of identifications of the Ayt Khebbash artisans shall be highlighted through observation of traditionalisation in their daily practice.

I understand 'tradition' here not as a bounded and authentic cultural element, but instead as a process in which every person and group makes an effort to give a specific quality to the elements of culture that establish a continuity with the past. According to Hymes, who first introduced the concept of 'traditionalisation', people selectively endow certain aspects of their experience with ascribed meaning and label them as 'traditional', in order to elevate them to a special status (1975). It often becomes an obligation for the group to repeat the practice to perform their identity and meet the requirements of that group (Gilman 2004). In other words, 'tradition' is invented so as to create continuity between the past and present, through repetition and rhetorical associations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Handler and Linnekin 1984). One of the examples is the changing patterns of marriage in the village Tafraoute, which I shall discuss in chapter three. Before the establishment of Sidi Ali Commune and the first communal election in 1992, inter-clan marriage was a common practice among the Ayt Khebbash tribal members. However, the electoral rivalries divided the population in two groups, one consisting of Irjdaln and Ayt Amar clans, against the Ayt Taghla clan on the other side, and inter-marriage between the two groups has become less common. In other words, the political rivalries born out of the modern electoral system created duality within the village, a 'tradition' that did not exist before when the inter-clan conflicts were resolved by the *amghar* (tribal chief).

Likewise, the local belief system and practices are changing in the course of the country's modernisation process and the meanings of 'tradition' have been transformed in the context of rural-urban and inter-rural exodus. However, this seemingly contradictory aspect of the identification processes should not be reduced to the binary opposition of tradition versus modernity. My present ethnography of identification focuses

on the multiplicious ways in which people respond to these binary oppositions and contradictions of discourse practice. Faced with the complexities of secular existence in the towns and villages, how do the Ayt Khebbash artisans create new meanings in everyday life against the discourse power of state and world capitalism? In what ways can the practice of traditionalisation can be a weapon in their multiplicious process of identifications?

### 1.3.3 Articulation of Communities, Local Politics and Development Organisations

Drawing on local histories and evidence of social change in the Tafilalet, I shall discuss here the relevance of communities, local values and beliefs in the context of wider social and political processes. The issue of migration is closely linked to development and modernisation, since there are specific organisations pursuing specific project objectives, such as foreign companies, local government or development organisations. As Crawford argues, the projects launched by these organisations as well as government policies of 'modernised' education have greatly affected the local people's cultural perception of 'self' (2006: 285-296). The expansion of roads and other infrastructure enabled the government to become more involved in the remote villages, and increasing numbers of previously nomadic Tamazight-speaking people came into contact with Arabic-speaking inhabitants of the towns, where the interaction between local politics, development projects and language became prevalent.[10]

In Tafraoute, the social change can be observed after the implementation of rural development projects, resulting in the recent establishment of three associations promoting local income-generating activities – fossil sculpting, carpet weaving and cumin/henna production. The villagers' interaction with NGO agents and tourists transformed their consciousness of the need for political and social manipulations from their side, in defence of their economic interests. Nowadays most of the once monolingual Tamazight-speaking villagers speak and understand *darija* (Moroccan Arabic), the dominant public language in Morocco. Also, those Ayt Khebbash people who abandoned village life quickly acquired fluent command of Moroccan Arabic in Rissani for dealing with a 'modern' work environment in the national society. A limited number of Ayt Khebbash male villagers and town inhabitants also learnt to speak French, in order to sell the fossil crafts to foreigners or to work in tourism. This was

10 On the subject of changes in linguistic patterns associated with change in regional and communal identity in relation to political manipulation, see Holes 2005.

one of the necessities for them to assimilate into the dominant culture in the process of being absorbed into the labour market. Simultaneously, however, they display a strong sense of solidarity and belief in their tribal roots, such as preserving their rituals, networking and speaking Tamazight within their linguistic group.

In the light of this expanding movement and social interaction, how can we understand the transformation of Moroccan identities described as 'contextualised self'(Geertz 1983), the 'selves' who gain definition from associate relations they are imputed to have with the society that surrounds them? How can the Moroccan conception of 'person' among the Tamazight-speaking artisans be implicitly or explicitly defined and re-defined in their articulation with larger processes of social change?

### 1.4 Fieldwork

The fieldwork of anthropologists is similar to the profession of paparazzi, and is also comparable to a 'parasite', in a sense that the task involves a long-term infiltration inside the local cultural context. Our result is entirely dependent on the acceptance, generosity, and openness of the local people whom we decided to be our target without their initial consent – we dwell on the body of others. Furthermore, the understanding of local affairs does not come from short-term formal interviews, but is fostered through experiences in daily interactions, small incidents we encounter, and through becoming a quasi-kin member of a local family. The days I spent in a family house receiving and observing the guests coming by, the time I spent strolling around the *suq* and sitting long hours in the café talking to all kinds of local men, my own apprenticeship in the artisan's *ateliers*, and the ways in which I socialised with this alien but familiar environment are the composing element of my story of the Ayt Khebbash artisans in Rissani and Tafraoute.

My initial encounter with Morocco dates back to 1998, when I took a short break away from my study in Britain. This ten-days-encounter with the robust landscape reflected against the glaring sun struck me to believe that I belonged to this place; despite all adversities that followed, I needed to come back to Morocco again.

My almost religious adherence to Morocco and Islamic culture led me to the belated second visit in 2007. Following several visits during 2008, I found a job as a study skills teacher at al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane in January 2009 – thanks to the generous support of the director of the university library and former dean of the Faculty of

Humanities, Professor Abdelhamid Lotfi - which enabled me to stay in Morocco and learn about local culture. Besides teaching, I audited a course of 'Berber Culture and History', which was basically a brief introduction to this domain of research. Since I wished to find time to learn Arabic and see the reality of Moroccan life, I quit my job and moved to Casablanca in June 2010, and worked for an NGO that provided support to street children. One of my aims of being in Casablanca was to start learning Arabic, so I took a three months language course in Moroccan Arabic and a two months course in Standard Arabic. Simultaneously I had a part time job at the newly founded Lebanese International University in Casablanca (which abruptly closed down in 2012 due to their business failure). I had spoken to the then-dean about whether I had a possibility to be affiliated to a Moroccan university in order to carry out a research project. Thankfully, he put me into contact with Professor Abderrahmane Lakhsassi of the Moroccan Centre for Social Sciences at Hassan II University - Aïn Chock. This institutional local belonging enabled me to carry out my fieldwork in the Tafilalet and to stay in Morocco until January 2014.

I moved to Rissani in October 2011 and rented a house of a local Tamazight-speaking family. My landlady Fadma was originally from Taouz and was an Ayt Khebbash member, her husband was from Mecissi, and had an Ayt Isfoul tribal background. Together they had four sons, plus an elder son from Fadma's previous marriage, who worked as a primary school teacher in Erfoud. Two of the couple's sons had left Rissani five years earlier to work in Spain, and one was studying Arabic language at the university of Ar-Rachidia. Since the husband was a driver and construction manager, he was often travelling elsewhere in Morocco. On a daily basis the house was inhabited only by Fadma and her youngest son, who was handicapped and went to a special class in the primary school nearby. I quickly became the best friend and family member of Fadma's household, and she often told me I was like a daughter that she wanted but never had. Likewise this family house had become the base of my fieldwork in Rissani until the end of my stay.

The Secretary General of the Rissani Municipality, Dr. Benchad El Alaoui, had kindly introduced me to the artisanal tradition of Rissani, and told me that most of the Amazigh population in Rissani worked in the domain of fossil sculpting and barite mining. Since my objective was to study Amazigh culture, I decided to focus on the fossil and mineral artisans. The fact that Rissani was an Arabised town inhabited by diverse ethnic and linguistic groups also lent special depth to the research, rather than

the towns exclusively inhabited by Tamazight-speaking groups. Upon my request Dr. El Alaoui introduced me to the then-president of the association for fossils and minerals. Thereafter, my participant observation started from the family and friends of this artisan, extending to the village of Tafraoute and the Riffian city Nador, which was a major destination for labour migration of the local artisans.

My stay in Rissani lasted from October 2011 to January 2014. Of the two years and four months I was based in Rissani, sixteen months were exclusively devoted to fieldwork. Much of the time outside this period was spent writing up the draft chapters in my room, making several trips to Casablanca and Rabat, including a one-month stay for a Standard Arabic course over Ramadan in 2012.

During the first three months in Rissani I was preparing myself to settle down, such as buying furniture and extending my local contacts, as well as travelling to Casablanca and Rabat to obtain necessary documents to write the geographical and historical background chapter. The only fieldwork I managed to do at that time was a survey among the fossil artisans concerning the parliamentary election. I briefly went back to Japan over the New Year period, and then in February 2013 got Youssef Hasnaoui to agree to work with me as my assistant. Simultaneously, I found a neighbour who kindly offered me to teach the Tamazight language. I had no former training in Tamazight, so I had to learn the language along the way during my stay in Rissani.

The ways in which I collected my field data was largely by conducting informal interviews in the *suq* ('market') café, family house, fossil *atelier* ('workshop') and in the streets of Rissani, Erfoud, Kudyet Draoua and Tafraoute, which I did on my own and sometimes with Youssef. Youssef was from a local Ayt Khebbash family, fluent in Tamazight, Arabic and French, with a law degree from Moulay Ismail University in Meknès. At the beginning my knowledge of Tamazight was rudimentary, so the primary language I used in interviews and conversations was Moroccan Arabic, except for some family information gathered in Tafraoute which was in Tamazight. French was only useful when talking to educated people, since most of the Ayt Khebbash artisans were unschooled and spoke only Tamazight and Moroccan Arabic. The in-depth interviews done with Youssef were largely in Tamazight. He first transcribed the numerous recordings in Tamazight and then translated them into French. The selected data used in this dissertation were translated into English by myself from the transcribed Tamazight/Arabic and French translations.

In addition to the informal interviews I used quantitative methods, such as surveying ethnic and family background, year of migration and domestic economy, by randomly visiting a selected number of houses in Rissani, Kudyet Draoua and Tafraoute. Furthermore, during the first half of 2013 I took an apprenticeship in a fossil *atelier* in the Moqaouama Quarter, approximately three days per week, as a method of participant observation. I washed the small fossil objects and polished them with sand paper in order to experience and understand how the artisans engage in everyday work and commercial transactions. A substantial part of chapter four is dedicated to the analysis of apprenticeship. However, in the years 2012 and 2013, there were virtually no new apprentices wishing to start learning the skills in fossil sculpting, so my data are based upon the interviews of the artisans' past experience of learning, together with my own lengthy observation in the *ateliers*.

In order to collect data for the chapter on the village, I made five visits to Tafraoute during my stay in Rissani, on three of which I was accompanied by my assistant Youssef. Each of the trips took approximately five to seven days, and we stayed in the family house of one of the *muqaddam*-s[11] of Tafraoute *tiwjdidt* (new Tafraoute quarter). I have chosen this village firstly because it was the home of a great number of Ayt Khebbash artisans in Rissani, and secondly because of the influence of Tafraoute-born business people on local politics. The most intensive research was done from September to November 2012, when we gathered information concerning kinship, migration, history and politics of the village. We investigated the dealings behind the communal election, drew the genealogy maps of selected families, found out the ways in which the existing associations were established, and visited forty households to understand the situation of labour migration. And most importantly, we recorded several life histories of the villagers and the legend of the Ayt Khebbash tribe told by a man aged over 90 years old, on the rocky hilltop off the road connecting Tafraoute *tiwjdidt* and *taqdimt* (new and old Tafraoute quarters).

For the data concerning labour migration outside of Ar-Rachidia Province, I travelled to Nador in January 2014, accompanied by two Rissani friends who had experience working there. I had already spoken to several Ayt Khebbash men in Rissani who had been in Nador, since so many of the fossil and barite artisans in Rissani had temporarily earned money in construction work, and the great majority seemed to have spent

11 *Muqaddam* is one of the village-level local representatives of the Ministry of the Interior who reports to the *qayd* (meaning overall authority, the commune-level government representative).

some part of their lives in Nador. Therefore, it was important for me to observe the Ayt Khebbash artisans' connections to the outside world and how this linkage was changing over time. Since my time was limited, I concentrated on talking to a few construction workers who were family members of my Rissani friends and visited their homes and workplaces, as well as going to the offices of the Province and the Employment Service (*Délégation d'Emploi*) to get a general overview of labour migration and economy of Nador.

### 1.5 Thesis Overview

The dissertation consists of the present introduction, four main chapters and a conclusion. The main chapters are divided according to space – Tafilalet (Ar-Rachidia Province), the village Tafraoute, the town Rissani, and *reḥla* (open space). In Tamazight language, *reḥla* means 'living as a nomad in an open space', and the term *irḥaln* (nomads) derives from this word, meaning 'people of the open space' or 'people in transit'. This is the environment wherein the Ayt Khebbash artisans vindicate the tribal identities and their means of dealing with their contradictions of life. The geographical space will be intersected by historical time, on regional, national and transnational levels, while outlining the mix of expulsions and compulsions in the life-long mobility of the people who continue to be *irḥaln*.

The second chapter 'Orientation to the Tafilalet' situates the life of Ayt Khebbash artisans in the geographic and historic milieu of the Tafilalet, Ar-Rachidia Province region. I shall first discuss the demographic and economic profile of the Ar-Rachidia Province, followed by an analysis of the ethnic diversity and heterogeneity the inhabitants, and how that relates to the identities of Ayt Khebbash artisans living in an increasingly globalising environment of the towns. Drawing on an example of the parliamentary elections which took place in October 2011, I will argue that the personal identities of the Ayt Khebbash people are strongly attached to their tribes and to their home villages, and for this very reason a regional specificity is crucial in the analysis of their identification processes.

The third chapter, 'Imagining *tamazirt* ('homeland')' is an ethnography of Tafraoute, the home village of many of the Rissani fossil and mineral artisans. I document the ways in which the village was formed in the 1960s when the nomadic population started to move in, by quoting local myths and legends. Through the analysis of various life histories of villagers, I will demonstrate that the village of Tafraoute is a modern

creation, produced out of drought and as a result of the local resistance against the French military advance, followed by the border dispute with Algeria in the 1970s. Furthermore, I shall examine the villagers' external links and marriage patterns and the impact of labour out-migration on the domestic economy, by citing the cases of a family who engages in fossil and barite works. I will also observe the impact of specific development projects and local politics, focusing on bureaucratic exactions for various things and services, how these are viewed in different ways by different people, and how they relate to changes in cultural perception of 'self' among the villagers.

The fourth chapter, 'Sculpting the town', focuses on the Rissani artisans' apprenticeship and commercialisation of fossil crafts. I shall first examine the development of fossil extraction and sculpting work in Rissani in the context of environmental factors and the local history of French colonial rule, in order to situate the practice of Ayt Khebbash men in the historical process of herding, agriculture and mining works. Second, I shall analyse the apprenticeship of fossil artisans as a process of participation in the social practice, by using the notion of 'legitimate peripheral participation' within the 'communities of practice' developed by Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). This is to demonstrate that work is a social practice wherein acting agents acquire new knowledge, techniques and lifestyles, in the multiple processes of confrontations and contradictions. Third, I will examine the ways in which fossil sculpting and its commercialisation were affected by the global economic crisis and state policies, and how artisans responded in a continuous effort to create their new 'traditions'. I will then look at another community of practice they engage in outside of work, which is strongly related to their tribal identity and historical memories from the nomadic past: the community of political protest formed in opposition to the local government's sales of tribal land. By so doing I shall highlight the ways in which the practice of everyday life, which is strongly attached to tribal identities, opens up new possibilities for understanding social identifications among the Ayt Khebbash artisans of the region.

In the fifth chapter, 'Exploring *reḥla*', I shall look at the Ayt Khebbash fossil artisans' shift to barite mining in response to the world economic crisis. As the demand for barite in the international market started to rise in the 2000s, increasing numbers of fossil artisans started to move into the mining sector, either temporarily or permanently. There are several artisans who had previous experience working in mines of lead, zinc and barite, as mine exploration has been closely related to central state policy since

the French Protectorate period; for those it was a return to their previous work. Also, I will examine the historical process and current situation of labour migration to large cities, discussing the example of construction work in Nador. This is to demonstrate the transformation of the local connections to the external world. Through analysis of the migrant artisans' creation and re-creation of 'traditional' time and space, I intend to highlight the ways in which they experience participation and non-participation in shifting social landscapes, within the ever-complex process of migration, modernisation and globalisation.

In the sixth and final chapter, I will draw some conclusions trying to answer the questions I asked in this introduction. By discussing the concrete example of the ongoing social change and its effect on the local artisans' consciousness and household economy, I shall point out the reality of their continuous double dependency: as a wage labourer within/around the commercial enterprises and as a national of a third-world nation in the capitalist market. I will conclude that the local Ayt Khebbash artisans counteract and redefine this vulnerability in their own terms and by their own initiative, using their home-grown forces of control in everyday practice.