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

Tanabe, M.

Chapter 2 – Orientation to the Tafilalet: Geographical and Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

The geographical term 'Tafilalet' for the southeast of Morocco originally derives from the name of a small oasis at the parting point of the River Rheris and Ziz, and was often applied to the stretches of the Ziz Valley by the colonial ethnographers. In a broader sense Tafilalet includes the whole administrative region of the Ar-Rachidia Province, although the local notion and usage of the term varies considerably (Mezzine 1987: 21). In this dissertation the term Tafilalet (greater Tafilalet) indicates the Ar-Rachidia Province, and the Tafilalet oasis in the Ziz Valley (map 2-1). The Tafilalet oasis is approximately fifteen km wide and about twenty km in length, enclosed by the Ḥamada du Guir to the east, where the reliefs of the hills are replaced by the *ḥamada*, the rocky desert plain mainly consisting of calcium, with scarce vegetation only suited for modest grazing of goats and dromedaries. To the south lie the golden dunes of Erg Chebbi, and to the west is Jbel Sarhro and Ougnat consisting of granites and limestones, which descends progressively to the east until the Jbel Ougnat completely disappears into the alluvial plains.

One of the dominant environmental characteristics of the Tafilalet is the extreme dryness of the weather. The annual winter snowfall in the eastern High Atlas Mountains, Jbel Ayachi, and on the basin of the lakes provides the vital source of water for the sedentary agriculture in the valleys of upper Rheris and upper Ziz. The eastern High Atlas accounts for approximately two-thirds of the entire High Atlas chain and is considerably drier in climate compared to the rest. The precipitation is received as annual snow falls from November to April, which provides the water reserve for the entire year. Apart from the sedentary agriculture, pastoral activities constitute the primary occupation for the population of the eastern High Atlas. Further in the south, the amount of precipitation drops considerably: in the oasis town of Erfoud it can be no more than seventy mm/year and in Rissani as little as 59 mm/year. Because of this scarcity of water the agriculture of southeastern Morocco would not have been possible without irrigation technology. Both rivers Rheris and Ziz consistently receive water provision from the melting snow of the eastern High Atlas, which flows as an avenue of greenery for more than a hundred km through pre-Saharan Morocco. This has made the oasis of Tafilalet a connecting point to Sudanic Africa through trans-Saharan trade since its medieval days of Sijilmassa.

This chapter situates the life of the Ayt Khebbash artisans in the geographic, demographic and historical context of the Ar-Rachidia Province region. I shall first look at the demographic and economic characteristics of Ar-Rachidia Province with particular reference to Rissani, a pre-Saharan town on the southern edge of the Tafilalet where I carried out my fieldwork on the Ayt Khebbash artisans. By so doing I will highlight the regional characteristics of the Tafilalet as well as providing a background for the subsequent discussion on the impact of labour migration on the traditional patterns of socio-ethnic stratification. Secondly, by drawing on the past anthropological and historical literature, I shall discuss the ethnic diversity and heterogeneity of the inhabitants of region and the question of what the historically formulated *taqbilt* (Tamazight for tribe, *qabila* in Arabic) mean to the work-based identification of the Ayt Khebbash artisans in towns of modern days.

It is a controversial question in anthropological literature whether 'tribe' – 'segmentary tribal organisation' in particular – did exist or do continue to matter in the analysis of Moroccan society (Cf. Geertz 1979; Munson Jr. 1981; 1989; 1993; Rosen 1984; Gellner and Munson Jr. 1995; Hart 1996; Eickelman 2002; Pouillon 2005). In the context of the Tafilalet, I will argue that the notion of 'tribe' is locally reformulated in the process of personal identification through work, and in the collective endeavour to control the resources. As I shall discuss later in chapter four by citing the example of a land dispute in the Erfoud region, the Ayt Khebbash artisans' sense of tribal affiliations is not only loaded with symbolic meanings, but also related to material pursuits, such as the claim of property rights based on tribal units. As Eickelman argues, the local concepts of tribal identities emerge primarily through social actions and are therefore constantly shifting, and not formally articulated in ordinary situations (2002). However, the practical notion of tribe and other concepts of social identities, such as linguistic categorisation, implicitly and explicitly structure the Ayt Khebbash people's everyday activities, such as their claims to property rights, electoral choices, work and marriages.

In the final section of this chapter, I shall conclude that the transformation of the personal identities of the Ayt Khebbash artisans is inseparable from the post-independence centralised state-building process and the expansion of the world capitalist economy. The social identities of the inhabitants of the Tafilalet remain strongly attached to their 'tribes', and these shifting tribal identities continue to influence and shape the local notion of 'Amazigh-ness' and the ways in which they attach mean-

ing to different identifications, such as being a 'Muslim' and a 'Moroccan citizen'. The practice of everyday work is a component of social identification within the tribal milieu of the Tafilalet, by which the locals conceive of their relationship to others and acknowledge their group boundaries.

2.1 Demographic and Economic Profile

Ross Dunn claimed that if southeastern Morocco had a capital, it was the Tafilalet oasis[12] (1977: 84). Once a centre of long-distance trans-Saharan trade and the homeland of the Alaouite monarchy, the fertile oasis has supported a relatively dense population, and it serves as a meeting point for numerous tribes, clans and *qṣar* communities in order to strengthen their otherwise fragmented social relations. In the Ar-Rachidia Province there are more than four hundred *qṣur* nestled amidst the palm groves, forming a picturesque chain running alongside the valleys of the Ziz, Rheris and Guir rivers. A *qṣar* (pl. *qṣur*) was a fort-like structure of housing found in the Tafilalet, as well as in many other parts of the pre-Saharan area. Inside, the residents occupied two or three story mud brick dwellings, which formed a walled village with a single entrance. Each *qṣar* functioned as an economic unit whose members shared various resources, though the arable land was privately owned.[13] The majority of the pre-Saharan population lived in the oases, except for those herding transhumant or nomadic groups. They were grouped in patrilineages depending on social class (Dunn 1977: 44). Dunn estimates the settled population of this region in the 1960s at approximately 67,000, living in 164 *qṣur* (1977: 84).

Due to its economic and defensive functions, the *qṣar* played an important political role, such as providing a venue for the annual election of the *amghar* (tribal chief), and the *qṣur* often allied with one another or with the Amazigh nomads living in the surrounding area, depending on their interests. They also collectively owned the canals and the rights to water. The majority of the *qṣur* was inhabited by the Arabs while the lower Ziz Valley and the plains by Ayt Aṭṭa and Ayt Izdig Amazigh nomads; this is

12 For an overview of publication on the Tafilalet region and the oasis, see: Wahīhī, Saʿīd. 2011. *Tīfilālit al-kubrā. Muqāraba bībliyūghrāfiyya*. Al-Ribāṭ: Jāmiʿa Muḥammad al-khāmis-al-Swīsī, Manshūrāt al-maʿhad al-jāmiʿī li-l-baḥth al-ʿilmī.

13 For an analysis of a *qṣar* dwelling population in pre-Saharan societies, see also: Moussaoui, Abderrahmane. 2002. Espace et sacré au Sahara : Ksour et oasis du sud-ouest algérien. Paris : CNRS ; Nijst, A. L. M. T., et. al. 1973. Living on the Edge of the Sahara: A Study of Traditional Forms of Habitation and Types of Settlement in Morocco. The Hague: Government publ. office.

Map 2-1 Ar-Rachidia Province

why the Tafilalet oasis is called 'the Arab island in a Berber sea'.

The harshness of the climatic conditions of the Tafilalet can be characterised by its extremely low precipitation, high temperature, and *sherqi*, the dust storms. The *sherqi* blows mainly in spring and summer, but may occur any time during the year, lasting for few days to several weeks. The scorching summer heat can reach 49 degrees Celsius and the winter can be as cold as five degrees below zero.

Despite the harsh natural conditions, agriculture remains an important economic activity for the inhabitants. The northern extent of the Sahara closely follows the northern escarpments of the *ḥamada* (stony desert) that encircles the Tafilalet, which marks the southern limit where river water of a non-Saharan origin is utilised for agriculture (Joly 1953: 70). The human settlement emerged in this relatively inhospitable environment by development of irrigation technologies counter-acting the problems of drought and flood. The Ziz is a river that frequently dries up during the year, but it can also flood as a result of rapid snow melt during spring. In the past, the flooding of the Ziz disrupted human life while replenishing the water table of the date palms,

before the construction of a dam at the provincial capital Ar-Rachidia (previously known as *Qṣar es-Suq*) in 1971. It was estimated in 2009 that 60,000 out of 7.7 million hectares in the zone under the responsibility of ORMVA/TF (Office Regionale de Mise en Valeur Agricole/Tafilalet) in Ar-Rachidia Province were irrigated (*Office Regionale de Mise en Valeur Agricole/Tafilalet* 2009). The rest consisted of access road (45 per cent) and uncultivated land (52 per cent).

We shall now look at the topographical and geological characteristics of the entire Ar-Rachidia Province. The province covers 60,000 square km, and is geographically bound by the province of Figuig to the east, Beni Mellal, Azilal, Zagora, Ouarzazate and Tinerhir[14] to the west, Khenifra and Boulemane to the north and by the Algerian border to the south. The province shows a physiographic feature of inclining, from the northeastern edge at an altitude of 2000 m down to southeastern edge at an elevation of 600 m. According to this topography, the province can be divided into three areas: 1) mountainous area, 2) intermediate area, and 3) plain (desert/oasis) area, as shown below.

Table 2-1: The main agricultural activities in the three areas in Ar-Rachidia Province

Category	Altitude	Main water source	Agricultural Activities
Mountainous Area	About 2000 m in mountainous	Rivers and springs	Fruit trees mainly apple, cereals and fodder crops are planted and livestock like sheep and goat is raised by pastoralists.
Intermediate Area	1000~1200m in Plateau	Inlet from the traditional canal and pumping	Various production systems for date, olive, cereals, beans, fodder crops and vegetables.
Plain (Desert and Oasis) Area	600~800m in plain	Flooding water and Khettara irrigation system	Dates are mainly cultivated, also cereals, fodder crops, vegetables, cumin and henna.

Source: *The Study on the Project of Rural Development in Errachidia Province in the Kingdom of Morocco*. December 2009. Tokyo: Sanyu Consultants Inc. Padeco.

14 As mentioned in chapter one, Tinerhir Province was created to the west of Ar-Rachidia Province by the administrative division of 2009. However, for historical and cultural reasons I conventionally use the provincial boundaries (map 2-1) before 2009 to highlight the regional integrity of the study area.

The mountainous area include higher Ziz, Guir and Rheris valleys (High Atlas), the intermediate area is the middle Ziz, Guir and Rheris (Ḥamada du Guir), and the plain area consists of the plain of Tafilalet, lower Ziz and Todra (High Algero-Morocccan plateau). Located in the north of the Anti Atlas, from Ar-Rachidia to Boudnib, the morpho-structural units are varied: anticlinal arch excavated by water erosion of Precambrian and Archaean formations, Apalachian relief stretches through the mountainous zone where alternate monoclinical crests of Archaen formations (Jbel Bani, Jbel Ziz) and depressions (plains of Drâa, arch structure of Daya-el-Maïder, Zemmoul) form pine-plained multi-folded structure of the Jurassic era (Lias and Dogger epochs). At the southern edge of Atlas highland, the plateau-piedmonts zone with altitudes of 1500-2000 m is located, consisting of limestones and granites. Further southwards lies the intermediate zone, where the vast plateaus meet the western edge of the Sahara, bordered with crests. Thereby a stony stretch of desert called *kem kem* (Continental intercalaire) extends into Daoura and also to the Drâa (Cf. Joly 1962; *The Study on the Project of Rural Development in Errachidia Province in the Kingdom of Morocco* 2009).

The plain zone, which is the focus of my research area, is located further south: the major part of the Tafilalet region including the towns of Erfoud and Rissani, where the greatest oasis of Morocco extends over thirty km from north to south, and five to sixteen km from east to west. The black desert plateau called *ḥamada,* consisting of tertiary deposits and calcareous Mesozoic stone, extends both southwards and northwards from this area. The desert zone is situated in the southern-most fringe of the Ar-Rachidia Province. There, an undulated plateau with an altitude of 900 m rises, where both sand dunes and rocky *ḥamada* expand in between synclinal remnant hills of the Ordovician and Silurian eras, characterised by sandstone formations, containing horn-shaped fossils and trilobites.[15]

Rissani is located at the southern edge of the oasis, serving as a connecting point across the Sahara into Sudanic Africa. The market town is known for various artisanal traditions, which gives the impression that the inhabitants are living on commercial and artisanal works at first sight. However, agriculture also remains important to the overall economy of the town. According to the statistics of Rissani, administered by the Municipality Moulay Ali Cherif which includes 133 nearby *qṣur*, about 40 per cent

15 The geological data derives from unpublished sources and interviews obtained from my visits to the Division des Affaires Economiques, Province d'Ar-Rachidia and the Ministère de l'Energie et des Mines, Direction Régionale de Meknès in Ar-Rachidia.

of the active population engages in agriculture, 50 per cent in commercial activities, and 10 per cent in artisanal work (*Monografia baladia moulay ali cherif* , 2009). The agricultural terrain covers 13,000 hectares with 11,650 hectares irrigated land, producing the necessary wheat and vegetables – epitomising the fact that without irrigation, there is no agriculture in the Tafilalet. Another major resource contributing to the local economy are the date palms owned by the Ministry of Finance (*ʔarādi makhzaniyya*, meaning government-owned land). The palm grove in the Tafilalet is renowned to be the largest in the world, and more than 1,400,000 palm trees produce high-quality dates, while the tree itself is used for basket weaving crafts. Cultivation of the palm grove is the backbone of all agricultural activities in the Tafilalet, for it creates a micro-climate which helps the growth of other plants and crops such as olive trees, wheat, vegetables and forage (Tilioua 2003). Although a new industrial zone is planned, so far there are no industries in Rissani. The local economy is dependent on agriculture, animal herding, petty commerce and some artisanal work such as leather crafts, woodwork, basket weaving, pottery and fossil sculpting.

The artisanal sector is considered an important economic activity in Ar-Rachidia Province as a whole, following agriculture, commerce and tourism. Although the exact number of people informally engaged in artisanal work is hard to obtain,[16] it is estimated by the Artisanal Delegation that approximately 4700 people in the province are working in this sector, and 2608 people are in the process of apprenticeship (2009). Major artisanal activities include traditional weaving (women), traditional and modern sewing (men and women), fossil/marble processing (men only), traditional tanning (men only), carpentry (men only) and iron processing (men only) (table 2-2).

In particular, fossil/marble processing is considered to be a regional specialty of Ar-Rachidia. Fossil artisans are concentrated in Rissani and Erfoud, the towns located close to the layers and quarries of fossilised stones. The items produced in this sector vary, such as tables, boxes, ashtrays, washbasins, plates and other decorative items. There are both handicrafts and semi-industrial production modes, but the majority falls into the former category. Of the finished and semi-finished products, 90 per cent is sold abroad in the international market, such as in France, Spain, the US, Germany, Switzerland, the UK and Canada.

16 This is because most of the *ateliers* and shops of the artisans in Ar-Rachidia Province are not registered.

Due to the lack of an industrial sector, labour out-migration to urban centres is an important factor influencing the economy of the Ar-Rachidia Province region. The population census of 2004 states 195,440 urban inhabitants and 361,172 rural inhabitants, showing the steady rural-urban population movement when compared to the census of 1994 and 1982.

Table 2-3: Population of Ar-Rachidia Province

		1982		1994		2004
	Milieu	Population	Population	Household	Population	Household
Ar-Rachidia	Urban	64,731	155,280	25,537	195,440	35,528
	Rural	356,476	366,837	50,941	361,172	53,866
	Total	421,207	522,117	76,478	556,612	89,394
Total region Meknès-Tafilalet	Urban	626,225	965,682	187,157	1,202,487	254,963
	Rural	885,821	938,108	142,134	939,040	156,485
	Total	1,512,046	1,903,790	329,291	2,141,527	411,448

Source : *Monographie de la Région Meknès-Tafilalet*. Novembre 2006. Royaume du Maroc Haut Commissariat au Plan, Direction Régionale de Meknès.

The demographic dynamic is, as a matter of fact, a reflection of the lack of substantial economic activity, especially with regard to the absence of employment opportunities for the youth. Despite the economic potential of the rich mineral resources, the mining sector is not providing sufficient income for the local population, and the extreme climatic conditions of the mountainous and pre-Saharan area allow very limited agricultural activity.

In terms of urbanisation rate, Ar-Rachidia Province shows a modestly higher rate than that of national average. With the formation of several small towns and cities, the urbanisation rate surpassed 50.7 per cent in 1994 and reached 58 per cent in 2008, in contrast to the national average of 51.4 per cent and 57 per cent. Except for the provincial capital city Ar-Rachidia (77,000 inhabitants in 2004, with an annual population growth rate of 2.1 per cent), the other towns in the province are small with approximately 20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, with an average population growth rate of 2.6 per cent (*Objectifs du millénaire pour le développement, rapport régional 2009*

Meknès-Tafilalet). Although there are no records kept, the inter-rural migration rate began to accelerate in the 1970s due to droughts and the openings of work opportunities in artisanal and other sectors in the smaller towns.

Apart from inter-rural migration, rural-urban migration was usually limited to domestic destinations, such as Nador, Tanger, Casablanca and Agadir, since the Ar-Rachidia migrants played the role of replacing the out-going labour force to Europe from large Moroccan cities.[17] An exact record of labour out-migration from the Tafilalet to other regions does not exist, yet one can see the effect on the lives in the *qṣur* of the oasis. According to interviews and observations in Douar Sifa, Qṣar Tabassamt (villages near Rissani) and Tafraoute (a village southwest of Taouz), most of the young male inhabitants are unemployed, living on occasional income from construction or mechanical work, while performing agricultural work in the fields. The domestic income is dependent on the family members working in large Moroccan cities or abroad. From the household furnishings and equipment one can see the family's living standard in the villages, depending on the income of the family members working as labour migrants elsewhere.

In addition to migration, there are also other societal factors altering the human landscape of the Tafilalet: the liberation of the *Ḥaratin* (sing. *Ḥartani*) class, which we also find in the other oases of the pre-Saharan region, and the population growth, which is a common feature country-wide (Miller 1995). The term Ḥaratin designates a category of dark-skinned agriculturalists living in the oases of Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria, who are not descendants of slaves. It is a marked characteristic of the oasis societies in the northern Sahara, that the subordinate status of people called Ḥaratin has been incorporated into the elaborate social hierarchy which includes traditional literati and religious authorities, nomadic or transhumant population groups, freemen and slaves (Ensel 1999). The 'institutionalised racism' and inequality was the foundation of the agricultural system in the oasis (De Haas 2010: 16-18). Due to their marginal social status, Ḥaratin historically played an important role in performing hard agricultural labour in the Tafilalet oasis, such as ploughing, weeding, cultivating and harvesting, as well as keeping the *khettara* system, the subterranean irrigation system maintained by annual deepening and re-levelling (Miller 1995: 62). The system

17 For the theme of international migration in socio-cultural change in the oasis societies, see De Haas, Hein. 2003. *Migration and Development in Southern Morocco: The Disparate Socio-Economic Impacts of Out-Migration on the Todgha Oasis Valley*. Ph.D. thesis. Nijmegen: Radboud University.

Table 2-2: Number of people employed in artisanal sector in Ar-Rachidia Province

Number by Cercle

Cercle	Number of craftsmen / women	Number of apprentice / trainees
Ar-Rachidia	1,545	903
Erfoud	906	569
Rissani	907	430
Rich	444	275
Goulmima	750	404
Assoul	129	26
Imilchil	52	1
Total	**4,733**	**2,608**

Number by domain

Domain	Number of craftsmen/women	Number of apprentice/trainees
Textile	605	612
Wood	1,216	608
Leather	242	70
Metals	402	303
Food	251	148
Building	432	165
Plants	127	-
Clay/pottery	335	131
Others	1,123	571
Total	**4,733**	**2,608**

Source: Secrétariat d'Etat du Ministre du Tourisme et de l'Artisanat charge de l'Artisanat, Delegation Provinciale, Ar-Rachidia 2011.

was developed to extract underground water far from the *qṣur* and fields by digging wells, connected by a tunnel sometimes as long as ten km. This *khettara* system has been mostly abandoned by now. Furthermore, another task once performed by the Ḥaratin was the pollination of the date palms, which was essential to life in the oasis where the cultivation of the date palms is one of the central human activities. As a result of the liberation of the Ḥaratin group from agricultural labour, the number of date palms is in decline, apart from the effect of a virus called *bayyuḍ*, which severely affects the palm trees.

In the Tafilalet the population growth rate is much lower than the Moroccan average national rate. According to Miller, the Rissani population grew from 2844 in 1960 to 3565 in 1971 to 4985 in 1982 (1995: 63). The statistics of the Municipality Moulay Ali Cherif show that the Rissani population in 1994 reached 18,450, and numbered 20,469 a decade later (2009: 21). The population growth in Rissani and the development of new housing quarters stretching outside the confines of the *qṣur* are the visible indicators of the effect in Ar-Rachidia Province.

2.3 The Inhabitants of the Tafilalet

The Tafilalet is culturally and ethnically diverse. There were *qṣar* dwellers and transhumant groups, among which social class distinction was much more pronounced in the former category. The most important groups are: the Shorfa (sing. Sherif), an Arabic speaking population who claim to be descendants of the prophet Mohammed, the Murabiṭin, who insist they are the descendants of reputed *marabout* (holy men), the Aḥrar, literally meaning 'freemen' (non-Shorfa, non-Murabiṭin Arabs), Igramen (Amazigh Murabiṭin), the Amazigh groups such as Ayt Morghad (Goulmima region), the Ayt Izdig (Rich area), the Ayt Aṭṭa (Aoufouss to Merzouga area), the Jews (until

mid-1960s), the dark-skinned Ḥaratin who worked as agriculturists and date-harvesters in the oasis, and the non-Ḥaratin black population Ismkhan, who were brought from Sudan during the epoch of trans-Saharan trade as slaves by the Amazigh captors.

2.3.1 Languages

Moroccan colloquial Arabic is the general spoken public language in most major towns in the Tafilalet, such as Ar-Rachidia, Erfoud and Rissani, except for the towns where the majority of inhabitants are Amazigh, such as Alnif, Goulmima and Tinejdad. The major Berber language in the Tafilalet is called Tamazight, which is a variant also spoken in the plains around Meknès and Fès, in the Middle Atlas and the central High Atlas. In Morocco there are two other main Berber language variants, Tarifit in the Rif, Tashelhit in the western High Atlas and the Sous Valley. Most Imazighen living in or around the Arabophone towns are bilingual in Tamazight and Moroccan Arabic. Few of them are literate in standard Arabic or French, depending on their educational level.

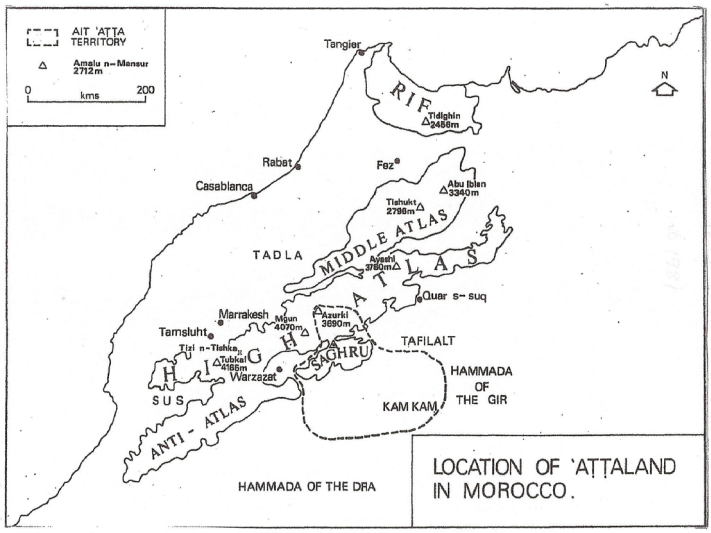
2.3.2 Shorfa and Murabiṭin

The two Arabic-speaking groups, Shorfa and Murabiṭin, held the most prestigious positions in the oasis communities, and respect for them is still prominent at present days. The Shorfa were believed to be descendants from the prophet Mohammed, through the lines of Moulay Idris of Fès or Moulay Ali Cherif of Rissani. The latter, who was the founder of the Alaouite dynasty which came to power in the seventeenth century, is the major group in the Tafilalet. Most of the Shorfa are found in the *qṣur* of Wadi Ifli district. Murabiṭin were believed to be the descendants of holy men who were revered because of their spiritual powers as 'friends of God'. The existence of such holy men is a common feature among the Moroccan tribes, who form lineages or clans apart from the tribal lay community. The members of the holy man's lineage were responsible for maintaining his tomb and arbitrating conflicts, both inside and outside the tribe, for which they received offerings from their followers (Gellner 1969). Occasionally they built the religious centres called *zawiya*, which played a role as a sanctuary. The groups most well known in the Tafilalet are the Aoulad Sidi al-Ghazi, the Aoulad Abu Ziyan of Kendasa in the lower Guir Valley, and the Aoulad Sidi Moulay Karzaz of the Saoura Valley (Dunn 1977: 43). Both the Shorfa and Murabiṭin used to be strictly endogamous, occasionally a son was permitted to marry outside the group, but a daughter never was, in order to maintain the holy descent line.

2.3.3 Ayt Aṭṭa and Ayt Khebbash

The majority of the Amazigh nomads living in and around the Tafilalet oasis belong to the largest tribal group of southern Morocco called Ayt Aṭṭa. They are distributed over the area of Beni Mellal, Ouarzazate and Ar-Rachidia, historically living a transhumant or nomadic life and speaking the Tamazight language of the Middle and Central High Atlas and of the pre-Saharan area. They remained independent from the central authority until the French 'pacified' the region, after an intense warfare in the Jbel Sarhro and in the central High Atlas in 1933. According to the detailed ethnography on the Ayt Aṭṭa political organisation by David Hart, members of the group are believed to be descendants from a single common ancestor called Dadda Aṭṭa (grandfather Aṭṭa), who was born in the Sarhro and was killed in a battle against a group of northwestern Saharan Arabs (Hart 1984: 4-5). The commonly known legend tells that Dadda Aṭṭa had forty sons, who lost the battle against the neighbouring tribe Ayt Seddrat. All the sons were killed by the Ayt Seddrat, but they left 39 grandsons and one granddaughter (Hart 1981: 11-15). By the sixteenth century, the grandsons of Dadda Aṭṭa spread all across southeastern Morocco, building up their territorial base while engaging in occasional warfare against the surrounding Amazigh tribes and the sedentary Arabs. The legends as such provide justification for the tribe's organisational cohesion, described by Hart (1981; 1984) and Gellner (1979) as a 'segmentary lineage system'.

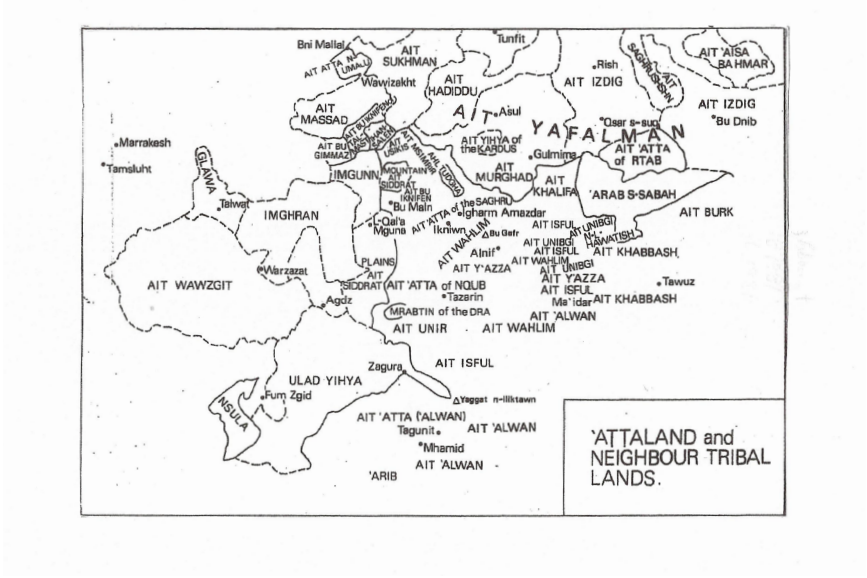
The Ayt Aṭṭa tribespeople, especially their fraction Ayt Khebbash, are the focus group in my dissertation, for they constitute the majority in the domains of fossil sculpting and mining in Rissani. In the 1960s, detailed analysis of the segmentary tribal organisation of Ayt Aṭṭa was done by David Hart (1981; 1984), followed by the historical research on colonialism by Ross Dunn (1972; 1977), the study on the Ayt Aṭṭa revolt by Spillman (1936) which focuses on the Drâa Valley rather than the Tafilalet, the archaeological research on Sijilmassa by Lightfoot and Miller (1996; Miller 2001), and the geographical and anthropological study of the Tafilalet region by Fernand Joly (1951; 1953; 1962). Recent ethnographies include the study on Ayt Khebbash concept of honour by Marie-Luce Gélard (2003; 2008; 2010), and the historical research on art and gender roles of the Ayt Khebbash women by Cynthia Becker (2000; 2006). Although the Ayt Aṭṭa tribe and southeastern Morocco have been studied in this literature, the socio-economic transformation of the region and the effect of global capitalism and migration on the everyday lives of people have, surprisingly, been neglected. The research of Claude Lefébure (1986) on the Ayt Khebbash people's involvement in lead



Map 2-2 Location of Aṭṭaland in Morocco. Source: Hart, David (1981).

mining during the Protectorate period gives insight into the previously nomadic population's gradual sedentarisation in towns from a historical viewpoint, but he did not study the identification process of the Ayt Khebbash miners from the perspective of work. In my present research, I look at the transforming life of Ayt Khebbash people through the lens of work practice, and by following their life-long travel routes from animal herding in the Aṭṭa lands to mining, sculpting and brick-laying in the new world of the commodified labour market.

The Ayt Aṭṭa land, as the 'roots' of Ayt Khebbash artisans, is bound by the Drâa Valley to the west, the Dadès, the Todra and Rheris valleys to the north, and the Ziz Valley to the east (map 2-2). Most of the Ayt Aṭṭa and its fractions were pastoral transhumants, but also possessed a *qṣar* or a house. They were normally situated in the economic centre of their region for usage as a market, or as regular lodgings. They put up their tents near the *qṣar* where they housed their slaves. Many of the Ayt Aṭṭa preferred to live in their black tents for four to five months during the year, a few metres away from the *qṣar* (Spillman 1936: 63). The tents were made of wool or camel hair, black in colour and designed to protect them from summer heat and winter chill. Spillman, who observed the Ayt Aṭṭa tribe in the 1930s, notes that their diet was extremely frugal, consisting of flat bread, dates, dried figs, milk and sugar (1936). It was rare for them to

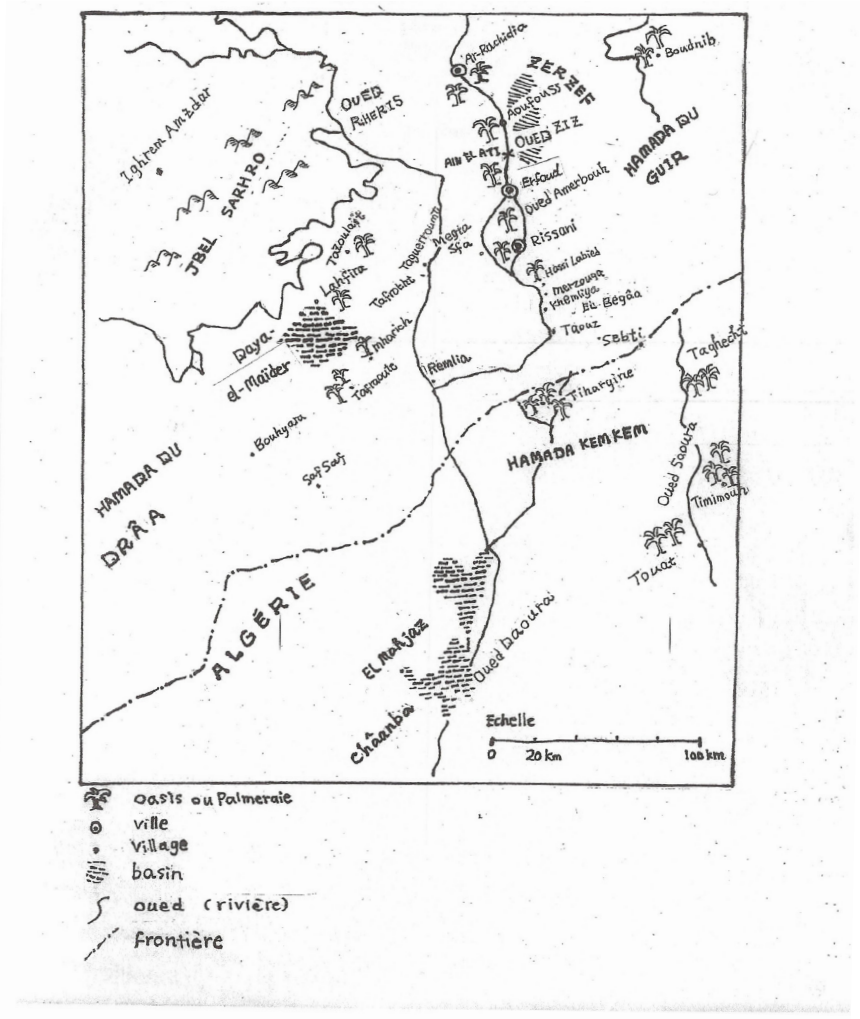


Map 2-3 Aṭṭaland and neighbour tribal lands. Source: Hart, David (1981).

eat much of lamb, goat, beef or camel meat, and the consumption of wheat or coffee was considered a luxury, and even fruits and vegetables didn't have much place in their diet (Spillman 1936: 67).

Joly (1951) claimed that the Ayt Khebbash subsistence was different from the other Ayt Aṭṭa, that they were nomadic year round and herded camels. However, this overarching assertion is highly questionable, since the 'Ayt Khebbash' group itself is large and diverse, with different Ayt Aṭṭa clans and black population joining them and becoming members in the course of time. My own observation is that the Ayt Khebbash consisted of both nomadic and transhumant groups, but to avoid confusion, I shall use the all-inclusive and generic term 'nomad' and 'nomadic' to address the Ayt Khebbash people's mobile, animal-herding lifestyle.

The Ayt Aṭṭa expanded to the north in search of pastures for their sheep, but their deployment to the Drâa Valley and to the Tafilalet were said to be a result of requests from the Ḥaratin, the black population of the oasis who engaged in agricultural labour and date-palm cultivation, who were seeking protection (*tamurt*) against the chronic attacks of other tribal groups (Hart 1984: 4-7). The Ayt Aṭṭa was the dominant group in the Tafilalet and in the Drâa, and they established patron-client relationships



Map 2-4 Desert and oases of Ar-Rachidia region

with the other groups which fell under their protection, such as the Jews, the Ḥaratin, non-Ḥaratin blacks, and the Arab tribes. For example, the Jews could be bought and sold by the members of Ayt Aṭṭa lineages or clans in the Drâa Valley until the French 'pacification' in 1933. The relationship was described as 'serfdom', rather than slavery, because of the dependence of the clients on those protectors (Hart 1983; Ensel 1999). A Jewish client could move into his patron's apartment in the *qṣar*, by paying annual rent in gifts, and sometimes contributed to his patron's reception or ammunition ex-

penses These patron-client relations continued until the mass out-migration of the Jews later in the 1960s (Hart 1984: 125-127).

According to Hart, the Ayt Aṭṭa had several Arab tribal client groups, such as the Beni Mhammad in the Tafilalet and the Drâa, and the Aarib south of the Drâa bend (1984: 144-146). Arabophone tribes were present across the plains of eastern Morocco, the lower Guir valley, and the Zousfana-Saoura corridor (map 2-3). The major tribes in this zone were the Bani Gil and Aoulad al-Nasir on the high plains, the Daoui Mani and the Aoulad Jarir in the lower Guir and Zousfana areas, and some other small groups in the mountains of the *qṣur* (Dunn 1977: 36). For example, the eastern Rguibat paid a fixed annual toll of fifteen dromedaries to the Ayt Khebbash, in order to have access to the Drâa and Tafilalet markets, at least until the 1930s (Hart 1984: 144). The social structure of the Beni Mhammad in the Tafilalet resembled that of the Ḥaratin, such as the institutional borrowings from the Ayt Aṭṭa, the annual election of tribal chiefs by rotation and collective oaths and so forth (Hart 1984: 144-146). They even referred to themselves as *brabar* ('Berbers'), not as *ʕarab*, a fact which reflects their clientship and dependence upon the Ayt Aṭṭa.

2.3.4 The 'African' Ethnic Category

The monograph (2009) of the Municipality Moulay Ali Cherif states that Rissani is inhabited by three 'races' (*al-ʕunṣur*): Amazigh (Ayt Aṭṭa), Arab (Shorfa) and African. Within Morocco, the term 'African' is often used to indicate the dark-skinned people, whether Moroccans or sub-Saharan Africans. In the Tafilalet, 'African' means either Ḥaratin or Ismkhan. The Arab and Amazigh categories also consist of diverse ethnic backgrounds, for there are both black and white Arabs and Imazighen (Cf. De Haas 2010). In this case, skin colour also matters in the social hierarchy; people prefer to marry with lighter skinned groups. Otherwise, there are some Ḥaratin who bought the 'Shorfa' title and consider themselves as 'Arab-Shorfa', and there are Ismkhan who adopted the surnames of their former Amazigh captors/employers, speaking Tamazight and considering themselves Amazigh in a broad sense. A number of Ismkhan became Amazigh – as is the case for some of the Ayt Khebbash – upon their marriage or at the time when they obtained freedom from their former Amazigh captors/employers, by going through a ritual of animal sacrifice. When being asked about their *taqbilt/qabila* (tribe), their usual response was that they were '*gnawa*' (meaning the people who perform *gnawa* music or people from Guinée), Ayt Khebbash or African. The term Ismkhan is not considered an insult, in contrast to the term Ḥaratin. Even

though, contrary to Cynthia Becker's claim that the term Ismkhan is used for the positive construction of group identity (2002; 2006), they are not always proud to call themselves as such, especially in the case of Rissani inhabitants. The majority of those I talked to preferred to identify themselves as members of Ayt Khebbash group.

Some of the non-*Shorfa* and non-*Murabiṭin* Arabic speaking people call themselves *Aḥrar* (freemen), in order to distinguish themselves from Ḥaratin or 'slaves'. In addition, about five per-cent of the population of Rissani's modern quarter consists of Dwiminiaa, the Algerian dialect Arabic speaking agriculturalists who originated from Oujda, Bouârfa, Boudnib and western Algeria. Overall, the population is divided in two linguistic categories, although language does not constitute an impermeable ethnic boundary: Arabic speaking groups and Tamazight/Arabic bilingual groups. The Rissani inhabitants primarily recognise their ethnic boundaries according to this linguistic divide, and skin colour. This means that each group is endogamous in principle within the three *al-ʕunṣur*: Arab, Amazigh and 'African' (black) categories.

2.3.5 Ḥaratin

As mentioned before, the Ḥaratin are considered to be among the oldest inhabitants in southeastern Morocco. They were dispersed throughout the Tafilalet and usually worked as labourers for the sedentary groups of higher social status, and for Ayt Aṭṭa and Daoui Mani. Some of the Ḥaratin owned property and were independent farmers. The Ḥaratin as manual labourers serving others were situated at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and these classifications still hold meaning even after their liberation in the 1930s upon arrival of the French. The term Ḥaratin derives from an Arabic word *ḥart*, meaning crops such as wheat, vegetables and dates, and Ḥaratin indicates the people who harvest them. Although the term itself does not have negative connotations, calling someone a *Ḥartani* is considered as an insult in present days.

Several of the *qṣur* in the region had only Ḥaratin inhabitants, and they were mostly bilingual in both Arabic and Tamazight, since they needed to communicate with their protectors who were both Arab and Amazigh nomads (Hart 1984; Ensel 1999). The Ḥaratin were said to be 'tribeless', for they did not have any tribal or clan system, which was considered one of the reasons of their low social status.[18] For this reason

18 For the analysis of social hierarchy in the North African oasis, see also Villasante-de Beauvais, Mariella. 1996. *Groupes serviles au Sahara: Approche comparative* à *partir du cas des arabophones de Mauritanie*.

they traditionally fell under the jurisdiction of the Sharia rather than that of customary law (Hart 1984: 130).

According to Jacques-Meunié, who studied the Ktaoua-Mhamid area in the Drâa Valley, the Ayt Aṭṭa and the Ḥaratin formed a patron-client relationship called *raʕaya* (Arabic term equivalent for *tamurt* in Tamazight, meaning 'to pasture', 'to guard' and 'to protect)' (1982). From the side of Ayt Aṭṭa, this relationship entailed offering protection against depredation of other tribes. The Ḥaratin in return worked for them as agricultural labourers and date-harvesters, while also receiving one-fifth of the total harvest. In the Drâa Valley, unlike in the Tafilalet, the Ayt Aṭṭa had almost monopolised the region as protectors so that this system of *raʕaya* was highly institutionalised (Hart 1984: 133-135). In contrast, the *qṣur* under control of Ayt Aṭṭa were limited in the Tafilalet oasis, since other groups such as Ayt Morghad and Ayt Izdig were also prominent. Furtheremore, the *qṣur* in the region were densely populated and the people were to some extent capable of defending themselves rather than totally relying on the protectors.

2.3.6 Ismkhan

The other dark-skinned population of the Tafilalet is the *Ismkhan* (a Tamazight word meaning 'slave'). They still allow themselves to be called this way until present, albeit discreetly, claiming their ancestry to Bilal, an Abyssinian slave freed by the Prophet's uncle in the seventh century. On certain occasions, if not on an everyday basis, they distinguish themselves as an 'ethnic group' who possess a special healing power, demonstrated during the annual *Ismkhan* festival in Khemliya, a desert village on the south of Merzouga (map 2-4).

Unlike the Ḥaratin, who represent an ancient population of the Tafilalet, the Ismkhan have arrived recently from the Sudan, mostly two or three generations ago. They are descendants of the enslaved people brought during the trans-Saharan trade, usually having darker skins than the Ḥaratin, since very little intermarriage has occurred with the other ethnic groups. The trade itself traces its origin to the ninth century, when material goods such as gold, ivory, ostrich eggs, salt and clothes, as well as human beings were exchanged across the Sahara.[19] The enslaved black Africans in Morocco

Paris : CNRS ; Marouf, Nadir. 1980. *Lecture de l'espace oasien*. Paris : Sindbad.

19 According to Lloyd Cabot Briggs, in the middle ages the Europeans were also active in developing

typically worked as domestic servants, cooks and concubines with wealthy families (Lydon 2009). Slavery was abolished by the French upon the establishment of the protectorate in 1912, but it continued in the Tafilalet until finally the French took control of the region in 1933.

Prior to the French arrival, the Ayt Aṭṭa usually guarded the caravans leaving and returning to the Tafilalet, and they enslaved Sudanic Africans en route. The captured Ismkhan worked for the Ayt Aṭṭa families, for example by herding flocks or fetching fire wood and water, and depended financially on their captors. They adopted the Tamazight language and Ayt Aṭṭa customs and belief systems. Upon the age of marriage they were often freed and entered into a patron-client relationship, which required payment from the annual harvest or animal sacrifice. After the French conquest of the region in 1933, the Ayt Aṭṭa were no longer in control of their territories and the slavery and patron-client relationships started to dissolve. The Ismkhan were freed but left without means for survival, so most of them started working in the lead mine of Mfis run by the French (Becker 2002: 103). They formed the village Khemliya near the mines, and a large number of Ismkhan started to live together for the first time. Becker states that it was at this time they invented their collective identity as 'slaves' who claim to be the descendants of Bilal and who possess a healing power through rituals (2002). Nowadays, however, very few Ismkhan remain in Khemliya since most of them left for towns such as Rissani and Erfoud to find salaried jobs. In fact half of the population in the village of Khemliya consists of white Imazighen, contrary to the popular image projected by the *gnawa* music festival that it is a '*gnawa* village' exclusively inhabited by a black ethnic group.

2.3.7 Jews

The Jews used to be a major ethnic group that co-habited with others in the Tafilalet. The oasis had a Jewish population of about six thousand in the late nineteenth century, and their largest quarter (*mellaḥ*) was in a *qṣar* of Rissani. In the whole of Morocco the Jewish groups were to be found in secluded quarters, the *mellaḥ*, where their social and cultural activities were confined to their groups. The poorer Jews lived in mountains and towns, mostly as small-scale artisans and shopkeepers, or hawkers or

commercial relations with the people of south-western Sahara and the western Sudan. In the early fifteenth century the Portuguese under the leadership of Prince Henry the Navigator established commercial outposts in the Western Sahara (Spanish Sahara), and began to extend their trading operations southward and by 1448 built up a flourishing slave trade all along the Atlantic coast of West Africa. See Briggs 1967.

peddlers (Pennell 2000: 34-35). The wealthy Jews, descendants of the Sephardim families who were expelled from Spain in the late fifteenth century, were rabbinical and group leaders who became influential bankers and merchants with a strong connection to the political power (Deshen 1989: 8).[20] In the Tafilalet, the Jewish settlement existed since the eighth century A.D. According to Jacques-Meunié, however, the Jews lived in great numbers in the east bank of the Ziz River as early as in the second century B.C., and they were the wealthiest inhabitants of the region (1982). The Jews lived inside the *qṣur* of the Tafilalet, and the Jewish merchants played an important role in the medieval trans-Saharan trade of Sijilmassa, when they controlled much of the trade in Sudanic commodities between the desert posts on the fringes of the Sahara and the Mediterranean coast (Levtzion 1982: 255).

Several documents illustrate that during the Middle Ages the Jewish network based on kinship and religious ties operated between the northern edge of the Sahara and the Mediterranean (Goitein 1967; Jacques-Meunié 1982; Levtzion 1982). In collaboration with the Kharijites, they established a complementary trade system of which the Jews controlled the routes between Almeria, Fès and Sijilmassa along one route and Fustat, Qayraouan and Sijilmassa on another route. The Kharijites controlled the route from the southern Maghrib across the Sahara to Tadmekka and Awdaghust. Together they created '*la civilisation citadine*' (Jacques-Meunié 1982), which prospered from the ninth to eleventh century. The Jewish community of Sijilmassa maintained close relationship with Qayraouan, Fustat and even as far as Baghdad, contributing to Sijilmassa's reputation as a centre of learning with highly educated and cultured inhabitants. Although the economic prosperity of the Jews was threatened during the epochs of Almoravid and Almohad conquests, they continued the commercial activities to the nineteenth century well after the destruction of Sijilmassa in the sixteenth century. During the French protectorate period the Jewish communities scattered over the Ziz, Rheris and Guir valleys, while mixing with the other Arab and Amazigh inhabitants of the region. However, most of the Jewish population left for Casablanca, Israel, France and Canada by mid-1960s, and the *mellaḥ* in the towns are now inhabited by Arab and Amazigh families.

20 Most of the Moroccan Jews emigrated to Israel, France, the US and Canada during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of the 1950-60s. However, neither King Mohammed V nor the leadership of Istiqlal Party were anti-Jewish. Many Moroccan Jews supported the Istiqlal Party and there was a Jewish minister, Léon Benzaquen, in the first government, and a number of Jews with university degrees played a major role in the state administration. See Pennell 2000, Ch.8 and Levy 2005, p.140-145.

2.3.8 Social Hierarchy

As is clear by now, the Tafilalet inhabitants are ethnically diverse, with a marked social hierarchy permeating the entire social structure. Despite the historical evidence of inter-marriages between different ethnic groups, it is not the norm in post-independence Tafilalet, especially when it comes to the inhabitants whose lives are confined to the region. Although people who have access to urban centres such as Casablanca and Rabat, or have family members living abroad, tend to be less concerned about the partner's ethnic background, there are strong tendencies to marry within each of the three 'official' ethnic groups, and certain occupational characteristics correspond to the groups. For instance, since the liberation of the Ḥaratin group from agricultural labour in the early 1930s, many of them turned to the occupation of butchers, welders and mechanics in Rissani, jobs others generally avoid to choose. Also, many have migrated out of the Tafilalet to cities such as Casablanca (Miller 1995). Therefore, one can find that all the butchers and most mechanics are Ḥaratin by origin, while a great majority of fossil sculptors, taxi drivers and the flock sellers in the *suq* are Imazighen who started to move into Rissani from the late 1970s in search of cash income. On the other hand, the rest of the artisans, merchants, civil servants and politicians are mainly white Arabs, who usually dominate the more privileged positions in the townscape. The hierarchical social structure of the past, according to the ethnic and linguistic divides, continues to influence the modern-day occupational differentiation in Rissani, which is further reproduced by endogamous marriages.

The division of labour seen in modern day Tafilalet towns is largely the historical continuation of the past, with the privileged white Arab families at the top of the social strata. The prefix 'Moulay' (equivalent to Sir) is used to address the Arab men from 'noble' (Shorfa) background, and by extension to address unknown people on the street with respect. This is not to claim that social mobility is absent, for a few people from the former Ḥaratin group became school teachers, or presidents and active members of local associations. Several Ayt Khebbash people made a fortune in barite mining or illegal smuggling and became influential in local politics, as I shall discuss later in chapter three. However, it holds true that the Ḥaratin and other dark-skinned groups are still either explicitly or implicitly discriminated against and are generally confined to certain domains of work which others will avoid.

2.4 Historical Background of the Tribal Identity

In this section I turn to the historical background of the tribal organisation and the subsequent development of a collective Amazigh identity in the region. The notion of 'tribe' itself is highly contested, and tribal identity is something that local people, authorities and ethnographers create and use in different contexts for different purposes. In the case of the Ayt Aṭṭa, Ayt Morghad and so forth, 'tribe' may be defined as the group which claims descent from a common ancestor. The identity of the ancestor of the group is sometimes known, with elaborate legends associated, such as in the case of the Ayt Aṭṭa as the descendants of Dadda Aṭṭa, a tribesman who presumably lived in the sixteenth century in the Jbel Sarhro. The groups which are socially and politically dominant often elaborate such legends into ideologies and use them to fix political alliances with members of other tribal groups and to enhance their position vis-à-vis state authorities (Eickelman 2002). In other cases the founder of the tribes could be unknown, members only refer to a legend of venerated holy men. Some of the non-Shorfa, non-Murabiṭin Arabs created the category *Aḥrar* (freemen), to distinguish themselves from Ḥaratin or slaves, although they do not have an explicit 'segmentary' lineage organisation that bonds them together.

Furthermore, in the Tafilalet, people often identify themselves in the idiom of kinship rather than with their place of origin itself. The Arabic speaking tribe Beni Mhammad referred to themselves as 'Berbers' in order to strengthen their relationship to their protectors Ayt Aṭṭa, which was a reflection of the fact that tribal identity was fostered primarily in order to protect the interest of the group. As the recent case of the Ismkhan shows, whether the kinship was real or fictive holds little importance, so far as their claim to be a member of the agnatic group was socially accepted. Based on the local tribal system, they claimed themselves to be descendants from a common ancestor (Bilal), but in fact the group was built upon a toponomy principle. Heterogeneous populations brought from different areas of Sudanic Africa merely came into the same village Khemliya and occupied the territory: that eventually became the basis of the group identity in question. Furthermore, the Ismkhan, especially those who live in towns, consider themselves to be members of the Ayt Khebbash; they are thus integrated into the dominant Tamazight-speaking group who were their former captors and employers. Evidently, group identities based on kinship or fictive ties functioned as a unifying principle to create bonds between people who had common social, economic and political interests. People do not always emphasise their relations to one another through patrilineal descent, but also through the concept of *qa-*

raba (closeness) (Eickelman 2002: 136), which can develop through cooperation with one another, real or fictive kinship and patronage arrangements, and other bonds of mutual interest. This group identity, which can be called 'tribalism', still holds its place in post-independence Morocco, and this sense of affiliation can become more important in the age of labour migration and globalisation.

In post-independence Morocco the influence of tribal groups were dramatically reduced and very few tribes remain acknowledged as political entities. However, the social, economic and to some extent political actions of the inhabitants of the Tafilalet remain strongly 'tribal' in the marriage patterns, occupations and so forth. Tribally organised people inhabited Morocco for centuries. Shoup states that the Arab Sherifian, the Saadian (1554-1659) and the Alaouite dynasties (1666-present) also grew from solid tribal support along with that of some Sufi brotherhoods (2006: 125). The Saadian had support primarily from the Maʕqil Arab tribes in the Drâa Valley, and Jbel Bani of the Anti Atlas, whereas the Alaouite dynasty was backed by both Arab and Berber tribes in the Tafilalet and Angad (Shoup 2006: 125-126). In short, the close collaboration between the Moroccan State and tribal groups has been an important theme throughout the history of the country.

At a linguistic level, the collective Arab/Amazigh consciousness is also prominent in the Tafilalet, not only in areas such as Alnif, Tinejdad and Goulmima, where the majority of the inhabitants are Tamazight speakers, but also in towns of Rissani, Erfoud and Ar-Rachidia, where Moroccan Arabic is the public language. Historically, the Berbers considered themselves as members of a tribe, within an Islamically conceived and permeated world, and not as members of a linguistically defined ethnic group (Gellner and Micaud 1972; Rosen 1972). However, due to the French colonial 'divide-and-rule' policy which forcibly drew a division between Arab/Berber ethnicity, and the influence of recent Amazigh activism in defence of Berber cultural identity, the collective identity as a linguistic group started to uphold its rights in the Tafilalet (Rachik 2005; Hoffman and Miller 2010; Maddy-Weitzman 2011).

Morocco has been inhabited by tribally organised peoples for centuries, and this tribal organisation has changed profoundly throughout the ages. The country was brought under Umayyad control in 705AD, and Shiite and Kharijite Islam became accepted among the Amazigh tribes. The political unity of Islam did not last long, however, for in the 770s Muslim Spain became independent under a refugee prince of the

Umayyads, as well as Tlemcen (Algeria) and northern Morocco, where the arrival of a second refugee from the East in 788 established the Idrisid Dynasty in Fès (Brett and Fentress 1996: 88-89). The Kharijites ruled Tlemcen (to 790) and Sijilmassa in the Tafilalet, and the Ibadiyya established their own government at Tahert in western Algeria. In the meantime, the Imazighen of the south identified themselves with the new religion independent from the imperial government of the original Arab conquerors.

The Islamic influence extended to the principles of state formation, settlement, trade and commercial transactions. Especially the commercial incentives dictated the occupation of southern Morocco, such as the oasis towns in the south and southeast of the High Atlas: Sijilmassa in the Tafilalet, Tamdult in the Anti Atlas Mountains, Igli in the Sous Valley, and Massa on the Atlantic coast south of Agadir. These towns housed many of the Arab-Muslim immigrants from the north, part conquerors and part merchants driven to exploit the silver mines in the Anti Atlas, and most importantly the gold of western Sudan which was brought across the Sahara from Ghana (Brett and Fentress 1996: 90-91). This long distance trade of the Islamic world brought the whole of Morocco into the grasp of Islamic civilisation, supplying the country with new rules, regulations, obligations, permissions and prohibitions. As the Islamic influence was tied to the growth of trade and trade relations, the establishment of Muslim market towns was mostly welcomed and the tribal Imazighen professed their faith to gain admission.

In the Tafilalet, Sijilmassa was founded in the middle of eighth century by Kharijite Zanata Berbers, who forced the population of the area to resettle within its walls. Since the end of the tenth century the Zanatas belonging to the Maghraoua tribe controlled the city, who continued to dominate the western Saharan trade route (Abun-Nasr 1971: 93). The Kharijite kingdom survived on networks of trade with other Kharijite settlements in the North African desert and with Fès, based upon their Islamic ideology. They did not impose strict religious codes to the people, which encouraged the incoming of non-Kharijites as well as Jews.

In 1054 the Almoravides conquered Sijilmassa, who imposed ultra-orthodox Sunni Islam and the Maliki school of law. Even West Africa, like Ghana, connected to Sijilmassa by trade route, became the focus of Islamic conversion by the Almoravides (Miller 2001: 33). Driven by practical interests, the Arabs and Berbers cooperated with each other in Sijilmassa, conducting trade and administering government. The Ḥaratin did

the manual labour and accounted for the majority of the population. The numerous Jews held special positions as traders and merchants in precious metals (Miller 1995: 60). According to Miller, due to the political and spiritual transformations, the Saharan gold trade increased whilst Sijilmassa and the Sudan became components of the loosely united Almoravide empire, and other west African countries such as Takrur (lower Senegal River area) and later the empire of Mali became more involved in the trans-Saharan trade (2001: 33). Because of the rise of these new African economies, which were connected to the north by Almoravides, followed by the Almohads and the Merinides, Sijilmassa's economic and spiritual independence declined.

The unifying thread between different peoples throughout Morocco became, as seen in the case of Sijilmassa, the religion: orthodox Sunnite Islam of the Maliki rite. The dynastic political power, as with the current ruling Alaouite family, became centred in the Sultan who was allegedly a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed. The Sultan controlled a court and ministers, and deployed an army which also served as a tax collecting force (Hart 1972: 27-28). However, the territory called *blad l-siba* (land of dissidence), largely mountainous area and the desert, remained entirely tribal, and the free people seldom if ever paid taxes to the central government. The tribesmen maintained their own forms of socio-political organisations with little or no interference from the state – the Ayt Aṭṭa had never known the authority of the *makhzen* before the French occupation in 1933.

In the tribal regions of Morocco such as the Tafilalet, the linguistic divide between Arabs and Berbers was far less important compared to the relationship between agnatic groups, and such a group seldom acknowledged any unit wider than the tribe itself. In the protectorate period, however, the French colonial policy of state-building enforced the division between two ethnicities, epitomised by the *ḍahir* (royal decree, Standard Arabic: *ẓāhir*) of 1930,[21] commonly known as *ḍahir berbère*, in which they divided Morocco in the so-called 'Arab/Islamic/Urban' Atlantic Plains and the Berber/Tribal/Atlas Mountains. This forced division was based upon the French notion of *le berberisme*, influenced by Robert Montagne and other colonial ethnographers' study of the tribes in southern Morocco, in which they claimed the European/Christian origin of the Berbers, and the Arabs as 'invaders' who imposed Islam upon them. Such

21 The *ḍahir* was based upon the 1914 decree that stated France's intention to retain customary law among the rural tribes, and was intended to regulate the functioning of justice in tribes of Berber custom, who did not always follow Islamic law. See Hoffman 2010.

fabricated myths promoted the tribal identity among the peoples living in the 'Berber' zone to keep them separated from the 'Arab' zone (Maddy-Weitzman 2011).

The Native Policy Council administered Morocco's cities and its tribes by appointing *pasha*-s to urban governorships and designating tribal chiefs as *qayd*-s (meaning overall authority) (Hoisington 2000: 64). Several of the pioneering studies on the Moroccan tribal system were undertaken in this period, including the important work on Moroccan tribal structure and social relationships by Jacques Berque (1955).[22] Also, commissioned by the French *Mission Scientifique*, *La carte des tribus* (The Tribal Map) was published in 1933, which fixed each tribal group to designated geographical areas to create 'official' boundaries (Hart 2000).

The French military progression into the Moroccan *blad l-siba* took time since the establishment of the Protectorate in 1912, for General Hubert Lyautey, the Governor General of Morocco (1912-1916, 1921-1925) had been ordered to send most of his troops to the front in France at the outbreak of World War I (Trout 1969: 241). The Ayt Aṭṭa uprising in the Tafilalet (1918-19) was barely suppressed with the help of the Glaoua *pasha* of Marrakech, El Haj Thami, who acted as the head of the army of 10,000 and crossed the Atlas and marched through the Dadès and Todra valleys up to the Tafilalet, joining the French troops of Boudnib in January 1919 (Trout 1969: 242). Since then the 'pacification' of southeastern Morocco was left to native forces of the *pasha* of Marrakech, an operation which was finally completed by the surrender of the Ayt Aṭṭa tribe after the intense siege of Bou Gafer in Jbel Sarhro in 1933 (Dunn 1972; Hart 1984).

Around that time, the newly introduced *ḍahir* of 1930 designed by Protectorate officials came into force, and much of the communally administered land was confiscated by the government and sold to the French (Vinogradov 1974). In the post independent period, state administrative policies further partitioned rural lands into smaller areas for effective control. The rural commune (*jmaʕa*), which is the immediate level of government administration, has become a local organ of the *makhzen*, in contrast to the role it played as a tribal court in the pre-protectorate period (Hoffman 2000a: 89). During the French protectorate period the *jmaʕa* was still headed by an *amghar* (tribal chief) agreed upon annual elections, and the population lived according to lo-

22 Jacques Berque highlighted the dynamism and flexibility of tribal structures, as well as posing a critique on the colonial assumption of Arab/Amazigh division. He stressed that the spread of Islam had contributed in altering the local conditions and had blurred the ethnic boundaries. See Berque 1955.

cal custom and Islamic norms (Buskens 2010: 92-93). After the independence in 1956, however, the council member was replaced by the government employees appointed by the central government, in order to effectively implement state policy and administer the social and economic life of the individuals. In short, the territorial component which defined the tribe – the land – which was linked to the affinity based on clan and lineage, rapidly dissolved before the new social, political and economic system and the role of the tribe was reduced to personal and group identity.

In post-independence Morocco, the process of centralisation of power necessitated a further breakdown of the tribal system, such as confiscating lands of the *qayd*-s, the former tribal leaders, and making them mere government employees under direct control of the Ministry of the Interior. Between 1958 and 1960, the commune system was extended to the rural areas, in an attempt to break the political, economic, and social power of the tribes by replacing it with a new affiliation to the local areas and to the central government (Shoup 2006: 134). Furthermore, the first constitution in 1962 defined rural communes as legitimate local units, while abandoning the tribal category as a political entity. This was a reflection of the nationalists' hostility towards the French use of rural tribal chiefs in administering the country. They claimed that Arabic should be the official language of Morocco and that tribal customary law was also subject to abolishment, replaced by a judiciary law implementing *sharia*, in an attempt to unify the Moroccan national community as 'Arab' and 'Muslim', pledging allegiance to the Alaouite throne (Buskens 2010; Wyrtzen 2011). In other words, the newly created administrative boundaries and nationalist ideology corresponded to state objectives, challenging the geographical and linguistic contours of individual identities based on tribal affiliations (Hoffman 2000a).

As we have seen, the political, ethnic and linguistic categories within Moroccan society are fluid, while state incentives tried to fix them to make the people eligible to French colonial rule and the subsequent government after independence. Imazighen were generally considered as marginal, and their tribal relationships as disconnected from the wider society. The proliferation of Arab nationalism in the Middle East and North Africa further denied the significance of Berber languages, by emphasising the connection of the Arabic language to Islam as a symbol of national unity. States of sub-Saharan Africa acknowledged Berber languages as among the national languages, since Arab nationalism was absent there (Camps 1996). Their linguistic distinctiveness was regarded as insufficient to form a politically influential ethnic identity, until

the proliferation of the Amazigh cultural movement that took hold of Morocco in the 1990s. Influenced by the international Berber community of Paris, Algeria and of the world wide web, King Hassan II promised to incorporate a Berber language programme in public schools. The World Amazigh Congress took place in the Canary Islands, where world delegates agreed on the promotion of Amazigh identity and culture.

The Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe (IRCAM) was founded in 2001 upon the decree of King Mohammed VI, with the objective to develop Amazigh culture and language in Morocco. This was a response to international and domestic pressure to create an image of a transparent state of social justice and human rights, and an attempt to incorporate the Amazigh movement into the national politics of development. As a gesture to counterbalance the expanding Islamist movement, the Moroccan state recruited a large number of Amazigh militants with advanced degrees from different associations and ideological fractions to incorporate them into the Institute's research centres (Silverstein 2010). As a result, the establishment of IRCAM divided the Amazigh movement into opposing groups, those who support the institute's policy and those who were against it. The activists recruited to the institute were often denounced by their former allies as been transformed into the representative of the state, to work for the interest of global Arab nationalism.

It is important to note that, regardless of their political visions, the promoters of Amazigh identity are highly educated, capable of speaking a conceptual language readily accessible to the international audience, and are often far removed from the socio-economic reality of the mass Berber speakers. The Amazigh cultural movement is articulated with complex cultural politics that crosses religious, ethnic and racial categories of belonging. For example, by taking a philo-Semitic position and allying themselves with the Jews, the Amazigh activists of Goulmima in the Ar-Rachidia Province present themselves as Europeans in origin in an effort to distinguish themselves from Arab Muslims, who have often been stereotyped in the West as being close to fundamentalists (Silverstein 2011). Furthermore, Silverstein argues that the Amazigh activists' philo-semitism is a racial project in order to claim hegemonic power and maintain distinction from the black population who accumulated wealth as migrant workers in Europe, and became increasingly influential in local politics by means of land acquisition (2010; 2011; 2013). In other words, the Amazigh cultural movement often signals the activists' cosmopolitan inclusion by scaling up of local

rivalries to national and transnational levels, using the medium of global languages of 'human rights' and 'development', in order to compete for local dominance. Therefore, the 'Amazigh culture' and 'Imazighen' categorized and defined by the activists does not represent the reality and interest of the largely illiterate Berber language speakers of rural Morocco. As I mentioned earlier in chapter one, Amazigh activism is not the focus of my research, for it is a world apart from the everyday life of ordinary Imazighen in the Tafilalet. Instead, I look at the construction and reconstruction of identities among the Amazigh artisans through work practice, and the local notion of being Amazigh which is fostered through different experiences from the activists.

Crawford and Hoffman's statement (2000: 126) that the majority of rural Berber speakers are not involved in the Amazigh movement holds true in the Tafilalet. It is estimated that in Morocco some 40 to 45 per cent of the population speak one of the Berber languages, and 50 per cent of Moroccans are counted as rural residents (*Caractéristiques Démographiques et Socio-économiques de la population : Rapport National*: 2004). In the case of Rissani, the Tamazight-speaking population is normally aware of the international Amazigh movement and influenced by it, but in terms of their collective identification, there are important differences compared to ideology promoted by the activists. For example, the Tamazight-speaking fossil artisans, although the sense of antagonism against the Arabic speakers does exist, are not keen to promote Tamazight language with their children for pragmatic reasons, and the identity on a tribal level is more pronounced than the global discourse of Amazigh identity in their everyday social interactions, a point which I shall elaborate in the following chapters.

In other words, the personal identities of many local inhabitants of the Tafilalet remain to be 'tribal', even though the tribe as political institution has largely been dissolved.[23] According to my survey conducted among 50 fossil artisans in Rissani (age from twenty to 51 years old), of the 32 married men, only one was married outside his ethnic group. It is estimated roughly that there are about 300 people working in the domain of fossil sculpting in Rissani. Within the 50 sample population, 49 were Amazigh (Ayt Aṭṭa, mostly of the Ayt Khebbash sub-group) and one was Arab, and the one Amazigh artisan in his mid-forties, Addi, responded that his marriage to an

23 Ait Hamza notes that in Dadès-Todra area, local tribal organisations called *jamʕa* or *majlis* (council of elders) can control social actions and decisions of the inhabitants, such as controlling land use, water and pasture. See Ait Hamza, Mohamed. 2002. *Mobilité socio-spatiale et développement local au Sud de l'Atlas marocain* (*Dadès-Todgha*). Passau: Verlag Gmbh.

Arab woman from Meknès was a hard-fought romance in which he won her hand against all adversities: he met strong opposition from the bride's family who preferred the woman to marry her cousin within her own extended family. With this notable exception, the great majority of the sculptors preferred to marry within their own tribal sub-groups, strictly observing the customary law such as *tafargant* (Tamazight term meaning respect), a rule of abstinence of inter-marriage between certain Ayt Aṭṭa sub-groups and clans. This marriage preference among the Rissani fossil artisans demonstrate the fact that the tribal group is still an important social unit in the process of personal identification among the Tafilalet inhabitants.

Following the French occupation of the Tafilalet in 1933, the region became more integrated into the larger national entity due to infrastructural development and subsequent ease of travel, army recruitment and an economic crisis that forced the male population to migrate to the cities. After independence, especially following the implementation of the Five Year Plan of industrialised agricultural development in 1968, the Moroccan economy started to disintegrate due to a lack of food production for the domestic population and the high inflation rate that reached 17 per cent in 1974 (Pennell 2000). It was during this period that the rural inhabitants' migration to Europe and Moroccan cities started to accelerate, which involved the Berber speakers' concomitant Arabisation. However, in spite of all the demographic, economic and social changes, the assimilation of Tamazight speakers into an Arabic-speaking environment is by no means a straightforward process. For many of the Imazighen the tribal frame of reference has hardly changed, whilst adjusting oneself to modern economy and this social identification is practiced through the medium of language.

Linguistic value in a society is largely based upon its hierarchical role in the labour market, for the dominant language exerts authority upon other minority languages (Bourdieu 1991). The second generation of the Rissani fossil artisans hardly speaks Tamazight fluently, and it is all too common that the Tamazight-speaking parents converse in Moroccan Arabic at home with their town-born children. At primary schools, only three to four pupils out of thirty in a class do speak some Tamazight, and the newly introduced Tamazight language curriculum is not improving the situation, for the school teachers who are supposed to teach the language are normally Arabophones. They are trained only an hour per week to teach Tamazight. Added difficulty is the Tifinagh script adopted by IRCAM and the Ministry of Education in which the text is written: none of the Arabophone teachers, nor Tamazight speakers (perhaps

with the exception of highly educated urban intellectuals) have ever seen this mode of writing in their lives and at a glance of the text book the Imazighen resign to the fact that 'Tamazight is so difficult', as if it was not their mother tongue but another arcane foreign language. Ironically, the adoption of Tifinagh script has added another barrier against the promotion of the Tamazight language, for the instructors cannot teach the language they are unable to read while the Tamazight-speaking parents cannot be language helpers for the same reason. All in all, state ideology could not solve the salient economic reality in which the Tamazight speakers live; they need to speak Moroccan Arabic in public space, and learning standard Arabic and French will give them better chance for upward mobility. As a result, the Tamazight language programme at school remains to be an ideological façade of the authorities which in fact hinders the actual learning and use of Tamazight.

However, the local political economy of Tamazight and the TV, radio and music mediums are powerful forces that encourage the survival of Tamazight language. Although the school programme of Tamazight language teaching proved to be unsuccessful, among the first generation Tamazight speakers living in towns the language continues to hold an important social value, precisely because they learnt it orally, without going to school and writing in Tifinagh script. If we consider the significance of oral culture in rural Morocco, as opposed to literacy, the local value attached to unwritten conversation and poetry can be seen in a different light, even though modern schooling and the state administrative system both have an invasive impact which place standard Arabic as the language of authority and Moroccan Arabic as the public language. As Hoffman argues, both the economic and the symbolic rationale cannot fully explain the reason why Berber languages in rural Morocco continue to be a vibrant vernacular in social practice (2000b). Therefore, the political economy of Tamazight should include a 'constellation of valuations of several organisational systems' that the Tamazight speakers associate with Tamazight-speaking places, the valuations of which defy the abrupt shift in moral systems under the condition of migration and globalisation (Hoffman 2000b; 2008). In other words, tribalism, which is a social identification expressed through language and articulated in terms of language itself, contains no inherent impediment to progress. Rather, such an identification can become stronger under the modern condition of 'de-tribalisation', in which individuals seek for the security of kinship and family relations against the uprooting socio-economic transformations of global capitalism.

2.5 2011 Parliamentary Election and the Rissani Fossil Artisans

The geographic, demographic and historical overviews demonstrate the fact that the Tafilalet has a regional integrity as well as that it is highly diverse and heterogeneous in terms of natural conditions and the ethnic composition of the inhabitants. The political, economic and social relations of the *qṣar* inhabitants and Amazigh nomads fostered over centuries continues to influence the discursive construction of group boundaries in modern town life. The previous discussion on tribal identity brings me to the final point that work-based identification among the Rissani fossil artisans is a form of social differentiation which should be placed in the context of historically formulated local organisations. Putting it in another way, the domain of fossil sculpting itself is an encompassing product of world capitalism on the one hand, but on the other also a local 'craftwork' of tribally based human endeavour for survival. The Imazighen arriving in Rissani and Erfoud typically start their apprenticeship at their own agnates' *ateliers*, until they are ready to embark on their independent family business by renting their own garage with their brothers or friends. When they have accumulated enough experience and money, their family in their home villages will arrange for them marriages with women within their own lineage or clan. Their strong attachment to tribal identities defies the state incentive that de-tribalisation is the necessary step in the move towards urbanisation and modernisation.

However, neither the tribal identity nor the broader sense of Amazigh consciousness are ever completely fixed, as the contextual factors continue to influence the formation and re-formation of personal and collective identities. The social identity which we see as 'tribal' or 'traditional' are in a constant process of invention and development, which is intricately connected to places where people work, as they move between *reḥla*, towns and cities as wage labourers. The strong associations the Ayt Khebbash people make with *tamazirt* (land, place or homeland) and *l-ʕa'ila* (extended family) are reconstructed in the context of the wider socio-economic transformations wherein they recognise the group boundaries in relativity through the medium of Tamazight language.

Let us now look at the recent electoral choice of the Tafilalet inhabitants in the light of the discussion of tribal identity. On 25 November 2011, the national parliamentary elections were held in Morocco in an increasingly turbulent political climate that swept the entire Middle East and North Africa. As expected, the Islamist party of Justice and Development (PJD) won the overwhelming majority of 107 seats, leaving the

Istiqlal Party[24] far behind with a result of a mere 60 seats. My intention here is not to analyse Morocco's fractured party politics, but to shed light on the ways in which the local residents of Rissani responded to this election and its relation to tribal identity issues. First and foremost, the political choice directing the local inhabitants was their strong support for the PJD. Their principles of non-violence, democracy, constitutionalism and allegiance to the Alaouite monarchy, as well as their emphasis on Islam in education and civic culture to consolidate Morocco's cultural identity appealed to most who favoured political and economic reform without radical change in social life. Here the ethnic background issue was irrelevant to the choice of candidate, just as the PJD candidates in the Ar-Rachidia Province were simply considered as Islamists, without much reference to their ethnic backgrounds. Mustapha Zemmouri, who won the largest share of 21,054 votes together with a fellow PJD member Youssef Alioui, is a Zemmouri Berber from Khémisset who grew up in Ar-Rachidia. In the entire Ar-Rachidia Province Zemmouri is a minority tribe and Mustapha's support ground does not come from a tribal base but from wider social strata including both Arabs and Berbers who trust PJD as the forerunner of economic and social development of the country. In the electoral choice of PJD candidates among the Imazighen of Ar-Rachidia, their identities as Muslims and citizens of the centralised Moroccan state were ever more present in search of pragmatic solutions to problems people were facing in everyday life.

However, with regard to the choice of non-Islamist candidates, my source provides evidence that the Arab/Berber divide, tribal issues, as well as local power politics and corruption played a decisive role. According to my survey conducted among fifty of the Rissani fossil artisans, the overwhelming majority (95 per cent) responded that they would vote for either Brahim Amraoui or Mubarak Izulayn (both from an Amazigh background), with the former being slightly more popular than the latter, being a new face on the local electoral scene. Amraoui was the current president of the rural commune Taouz and also a primary school teacher in Erfoud, coming from an Ayt Khebbash family. His campaign strategy was to put his 'Amazigh-ness' associated with a 'clean' (non-corrupt) image to the foreground, rather than promising concrete issues or providing views on policies. Many of the fossil artisans who worked for his campaign claimed that he did not bribe people to gain their votes as the Arabs would do, because he was an Amazigh. There is not enough evidence to make an over-

24 Istiqlal (Independence) Party is the oldest political party in Morocco, founded in 1944 during the struggle for independence from France and Spain.

arching statement that many of the artisans favoured Amraoui because he was from the same Ayt Khebbash background, but at least the tribal identity played an important role, as did their sense of distinction as Imazighen against the Arabs. In Rissani, located 30 km north of Amraoui's home village Hassi Labied (also called Adrouine), in six of out of 23 ballot bureaus he came the close third following the two Islamist frontrunners Zemmouri and Alioui.

Although Amraoui did very well as a first time candidate, in fact the majority of Rissani votes, after the PJD candidates, went to the wealthy and politically influential local merchants Amin El Yahiaoui and Hassan Zoubir, both from an Arab background. In Tafraoute, a Tamazight-speaking village in the Sidi Ali Commune at the southernmost end of the Ar-Rachidia Province, the former president of the Sidi Ali Commune worked for the campaign of Zoubir and another wealthy merchant for El Yahiaoui, dividing the overwhelming local votes among these two candidates. Tafraoute is the village of origin of many of the Rissani fossil artisans, and the inhabitants' clan backgrounds are Irjdaln, Ayt Taghla and Ayt Amar, which all belong to Ayt Khebbash group. However, it was the complicated local political relations and intense bribing campaign that dictated the inhabitants' choice, rather than tribal affiliation or whether he is an Arab or Amazigh. The electoral corruption (*l-reshwa l-intikhabiya*) was less blatant in this election, but it was still a common practice for wealthy candidates to give out money to win votes. As the wealthy and locally influential candidates tended to be from an Arab background, many of the Imazighen associated the 'un-Islamic practice' *l-reshwa* with Arab-ness, but the Arab informants would claim that the Berbers would do the same if they had the money to bribe.

This leads me to the final observation of the contested and often situational boundaries of the Arab/Berber divide. The fifth successful candidate Mohammed El Alaoui, was from an Arab Shorfa family who grew up in Qṣar Tigida, a small village at 10 km distance from Goulmima. He was the president of the commune Mellal, located close to Tinejdad, as well as a successful entrepreneur based in Ar-Rachidia. As his surname suggests, El Alaoui's family was from the Rissani area from which most of the 'Alaoui's', including the current monarchy, originated. However, due to the Tamazight-speaking environment in which he was raised, his first language was Tamazight and all of his entourage considered him to be an 'Ayt Aṭṭa'. In his family, intermarriage with the Ayt Aṭṭa was a common occurrence and for this reason the ethnic division did not mean much for their social identification. It is rather common among Shorfa families living

among the Imazighen, that the Arab/Berber divide is more of a linguistic matter, to the extent that Shorfa that are fluent in Tamazight cross the ethnic boundaries and they are socially accepted as Arabs who are Ayt Aṭṭa at the same time. This is an example of a 'Berberised Arab' in the milieu of Goulmima where Tamazight language is publicly dominant, as opposed to Rissani where the Imazighen are 'Arabised'. So in El Alaoui's case, his electoral campaign was not considered or judged from the perspective of Arab-ness or Amazigh-ness – he was supported both by Arabs and Berbers for the very reason of the discursive boundaries he projected, which epitomised the historical and social dynamics of the Tafilalet itself.

2.6 Conclusion

As discussed earlier, the creation and reinforcement of a 'Berber' ethnic category dates back to the Protectorate period. Since the 1990s, the notion of 'Amazigh-ness' promoted by the international activists and intellectuals started to influence the ways in which the local people define and re-define the boundaries of their symbolic groups. We have seen in the example of the electoral campaign that standardised conceptualisation of the ethnic categories appeared in some situations. For example, Imazighen typically associated 'un-Islamic' (*ḥaram*) practices, money and racism with the Arabs, while linking their own 'Islamic' (ethical) behaviour, ancestral land, and ethnic pride to the Berbers. This symbolic identification occurs when the Imazighen experience difficulties with state institutions, and are forced to acknowledge their social exclusion.

I have discussed in this chapter the dominance of Arabic language at schools, and the dominance of Arabic-speaking merchants in local politics. This is undoubtedly related to the centuries-old social hierarchy formulated in the pre-Saharan oasis town, which continues to bind the socio-ethnic stratifications, and structures the actions of the individuals. This is not to say that the Imazighen in Rissani necessarily live in opposition or hatred against the Arabs, although each group keeps their marriages endogamous. They co-habit and cooperate, while limiting their social interactions with other ethnic groups. The interactions of the Tafilalet tribes, clans and the *qṣar* communities have largely been contingent upon economic considerations, and up to present days their social ties to different groups are formulated in defence of their uncertain economic life. In Rissani, the diverse and conflicting local interests together with the colonial and post-colonial policies fostered a very complex pattern of social relations among the inhabitants. In this historical context, the Imazighen situation-

ally created and manipulated several patterns of discourses against the others for the convenience of their everyday life, moving back and forth between the contested facts and images.

This Tamazight language-based ethnic identification is a by-product of the social interaction with the globalising economy in which local people are progressively integrated into the modern centralised nation-state. However, the local identification processes are grounded in people's own understanding of the new socio-cultural environment, and in their complex construction of several ideas, based upon their own versions of history. The colonial, nationalist and Amazigh activist narratives of histories all forward a homogenised and essentialised vision of 'Europe' versus 'Islam/Arab', or 'Arab' versus 'Amazigh', which often represent the interests of the urban elites in power. As I shall elaborate in chapter five, the rural Imazighen are aware of multiple agencies and divergent power relations; not only Arab nationalists and Islamists but also Berber-speaking elites and intellectuals' control of media, educational programmes and other resources. The Imazighen of the Tafilalet villages and towns therefore participate in the national process of integration in a paradoxical way, as their positions as artisans or wage labourers are constantly shifting and as their movement is expressed as both displacement from one location to another, and in continuity of their participation within the imagined *tamazirt* ('homeland') and tribal affiliations.

Because of these conflicting processes of identification, the Imazighen create and redefine the boundaries of their symbolic group, which is not always based on 'official' administrative designations but rooted in locally shared conceptual frameworks in which they are situated. Since the conceptions of 'tribe', 'patrilineal descent' or 'closeness' are relative and change with actual social arrangements, the groups involved legitimise their new relations by shifting the ways in which they identify with their ancestors, land, and links with particular saints (Eickelman 2002: Ch. 6). As Anthony Cohen forwards, group boundaries exist in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of fact, by extension, the distinctiveness of group and thus the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in their structural forms (1985).

To conclude, an understanding of the geography, demography and history of the Ar-Rachidia Province region provides a background to make sense of the identifica-

tion processes of Rissani Ayt Khebbash artisans in their everyday work. The powerful force of globalisation and capitalist economic development compelled the Imazighen to migrate to nearby towns and urban centres in search of cash, which did not only affect the local economic structures but also their cultural world views. Accordingly, they have crafted out their own practical conceptions of 'tribe', which helped them to make sense of what it means to be an 'Amazigh', a 'Moroccan citizen' and a 'Muslim', in the process of engaging in and withdrawing from the mutually constitutive worlds of modernity and tradition.

Table 2-4: The 2011 Election results in Ar-Rachidia Province

	Name	Party	Town/Village	Ethnic background	Number of Votes
1	Mustapha Zemmouri	PJD	Ar-Rachidia	Zemmouri (B)	21,054
2	Youssef Alioui	PJD	Erfoud	Shorfa (A)	
3	Amin El Yahiaoui	RNI	Rissani	Shorfa (A)	9,627
4	Hassan Zoubir	PPS	Rissani	Ulad Hiya (A)	8,889
5	Mohammed El Alaoui	PT	Ar-Rachidia	Shorfa (A)	6,914
6	Hmad Taous	PSU	Goulmima	Ayt Morghad (B)	5,655
7	Brahim Amraoui	MDS	Hassi Labied	Ayt Khebbash (B)	4,983
8	Mubarak Izulayn	UNSP	Aoufouss	Ayt Izulayn (B)	4,588
	total# votes for 18 candidates				80,557

1-5: Successful candidates
A: Arab, B: Berber
PJD: Parti de la justice et du développement (Justice and Development Party)
RNI: Rassemblement national des indépendants (National Rally of Independents)
UNSP: Union socialiste des forces populaires (Socialist Union of Popular Forces)
PPS: Parti du progrès et du socialisme (Party of Progress and Socialism)
PT: Parti travailliste (Labour Party)
MDS: Mouvement démocratique et social (Democratic and Social Movement)
PSU: Parti socialiste unifié (Unified Socialist Party)

2-1 Rissani town centre

2-2 Rissani *suq*