

ESTABLISHING TRADITION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHIEFLY AUTHORITY

IN THE WESTERN HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS

OF MOROCCO, 1890-1990

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Tradition

Tradition, Weber reminds us, is not so much a matter of social institutions and arrangements enduring unchanged over long periods of time, as it is a mode of thinking and speaking about the ways in which institutions and arrangements of the present derive their authority. The essence of tradition is that arrangements in the present are legitimated by reference to the past - to the gods, to the ancestors or to the collective weight of past practice.

But though the social discourse of tradition may be heavily oriented to the past and though it may emphasize continuities over time, it would be a mistake to think that traditional authority is somehow static or that it is incompatible with change. On the contrary, as Weber saw very clearly, one of the signal attributes of tradition is precisely its ability to represent change in the guise of continuity. Because traditional authority rests on a web of verbal interpretation concerning the links between the past and the present, it allows for a broad range of de facto social readjustments to occur, while at the same time sustaining an overall *sense of continuity* with the past. In a dynastic usurpation in a traditional monarchy, for example, the success of a new lineage in claiming royal insignia may be due, in the short run, to their military might; but, in the long run, any success the usurpers enjoy is more likely to be a matter of how well they mobilize the royal genealogists to construct a suitable 'ancestry' and to reinterpret the royal myths to embrace the de facto changes of the present.

By placing the emphasis on language usage and demonstrating to what a degree 'the past' is a creative construct of the present, Weber opened up a major new

direction in the understanding of social change and ideology, one which has proved particularly fruitful in social anthropology. The point of this is not to deny that history affects the present. But rather it is to emphasize that consciousness of the past is very much a social production of the present.

It is to this latter point that this paper is addressed. It is my intention here to use a comparison of two chiefly families in two adjacent tribes¹ in southern Morocco in order to reveal some of the subtleties and paradoxes of 'traditional authority', particularly as it confronts the dilemmas and challenges of the modern and postmodern worlds. One of these chiefly families is 'traditional' in the sense that it governs a tribe which has a long tradition of chiefly rule, has provided the chiefs for this tribe since the early nineteenth century, and - although we are here dealing with a position which is appointive - is popularly regarded as having an hereditary claim on the office. By contrast, the other chiefly family only became associated with the chiefship as a result of an appointment in the early years of Moroccan independence in the late 1950s, in a tribe which had a marked 'republican' orientation, and which had in fact not been governed by a single chief from the mid-nineteenth century down to the beginnings of French colonial administration in the late 1920s. Yet, as we shall see, despite these differences, both families are able to articulate traditional authority very effectively in the present.

The Idaw Tanan and their Place in the History of Southern Morocco

The people of the Idaw Tanan confederation inhabit the extreme western part of the High Atlas chain (Map 1). This portion of the High Atlas does not attain the towering heights of the central portion of the High Atlas further east, but it is extremely rugged and irregular in its topography. The Idaw Tanan homeland consists of a vast tilted limestone plateau which rises from sea level at the Atlantic coast in the west to a maximum elevation of 1800 meters at the highest point in the east of the confederation. The plateau is deeply dissected by riverine gorges which cut through it, making travel and communication difficult. Two villages which appear only a few kilometres distant on a map will frequently turn out to be six or seven hours' journey apart, owing to the hundreds of meters of vertical

¹ In the Maghrib, the concept of 'tribe' is not subject to the same controversies which have come to surround the concept in subsaharan Africa. The Arabic word *qab_la* and the Berber term *taqbilt* are established folk concepts to denominate various levels of named territorial groupings which share a common history and traditions, and were in use long before colonial powers picked up the usage (Berque 1959; C. and Y. Lacoste 1991).

distance that need to be traversed, up and down precipitous switchback trails in the deeply-cut gorges. These differences in elevation, slope and exposure create a great variety of microhabitats. During the winter months, warm coastal fogs wend their way many kilometres inland along the bottoms of the gorges, enabling banana groves to thrive in sheltered localities, while, less than ten kilometres distant as the crow flies, snows lie on the barley and rye fields of farmers who belong to the same confederation.

Like their immediate neighbors in the mountains, the Idaw Tanan are speakers of the Tashelhait language, the principal Berber language of southern Morocco, and share with their neighbors a montagnard culture generally termed Shiba (French, *Chleuh*). They are sedentary villagers practicing a mixed economy based on cereal and orchard cultivation and small-scale stock herding.

The role of the Idaw Tanan in the history of southern Morocco has been largely passive and inward-oriented, primarily as a result of the social isolation which the inaccessibility and ruggedness of their mountains has afforded them. For the better part of Moroccan history, the Idaw Tanan were a dissident people, beyond the effective reach of government control. This is in striking contrast to their immediate neighbors to the north, the Ihahan, who are culturally and linguistically identical to the Idaw Tanan, except that they live in considerably flatter and more open country. The Ihahan, famed as rearers and riders of horses, have long been a 'government' people, and have on numerous occasions supplied mercenary troops for the pacification of many southern Moroccan peoples, including, on several occasions, the Idaw Tanan.

The Idaw Tanan are particularly famous for two things in their history. The first is their steadfast devotion to their patron saint, Sidi Brahim u 'Ali, around whose tomb and saint cult the confederation was politically organized. In pre-protectorate times the saint's descendants, a lineage of marabouts (*igurramen*) or hereditary saints, helped to mediate inter-tribal disputes and to articulate resistance to the state. The second is the role of their homeland as a sanctuary - a place where criminals, political dissidents and persons in flight from bloodfeuds could find refuge, protection and livelihood working for local patrons, while waiting for things to simmer down in their places of origin in order to return home. The refuge business provided the Idaw Tanan tribesmen with an ample supply of adult male labor for their fields and herds, persons who worked in return for their food and protection and who eventually went away, and did not press claims to inheritance.

The tradition of independence and dissidence continued long into the protectorate period. The Idaw Tanan mountains were one of three enclaves in the High Atlas which resisted pacification from 1915, when the French military presence was

firmly established in southern Morocco, until 1929, when, after decades of intense pressure on the part of neighboring political strongmen and a three-year blockade, they surrendered to French officers and allowed the entry of government troops unopposed².

Government in Pre-Protectorate Times

Historically Idaw Tanan consisted of six autonomous tribes, united, as we have said, in a loose confederation to deal with their common affairs (Map 2). The confederation had a council which met periodically and during crises, together with the marabouts of the saint cult to discuss their common affairs. The confederal council was the highest of four nested levels of councils, the others existing at the tribal (*taqbilt*), sub-tribal (*afus*) and village (*lmuda^c*) levels.

Politically the most important of these was the tribal council, *lejma^ct n-taqbilt*, which administered a written tribal code of customary law, maintained law and order within the tribal territory, and negotiated relations with outsiders. The five tribes were of differing size and each maintained its own separate accommodations with outside powers. Also, each had its own distinctive governmental style. Two of the Idaw Tanan tribes, Ait Tankert and Ifesfassen, had tribal councils which had been, in effect, advisory to hereditary chiefs since at least the early nineteenth century. The other three tribes, Ait Wa^czzun, Ait Awerga and Ait Wanukrim, lacked chiefs and, instead, elected a 'president' (*muqaddam*) who served in an executive capacity for a period of a year, and whose principal duty was to determine fines for infractions of the customary law code. The Ait Wa^czzun had had a single chief for a brief period in the 1840s, a strongman named Bihi Akherraz, whose dictatorship persists strongly in oral tradition down to the present. Once they had managed to dispose of him, the Ait Wa^czzun never again vested leadership in a single chief, until the establishment of the French protectorate. These two governing styles - which we might call 'chiefly' and 'councillary', respectively - became deeply rooted in the social lives of the tribesfolk yet, despite the differences, meshed fairly smoothly at the level of confederal business.

Traditional Idaw Tanan chiefship - and here I am using the term broadly to include both those tribal chiefs who bore the title chief (*amghar*) and those 'notables' who served as councillors - was completely secular in its orientation (Ahmad and Hart 1984). In Idaw Tanan, religious authority was monopolized by

² For an extended account of the pacification see Hatt 1992a. See also Spillman 1967; Huré 1952; Vallérie 1934; Usborne 1936.

the marabouts (*igurramen*) who, in part because they did not compete with the tribesmen for worldly goods (subsisting mainly on tithes and on income from running shrines and associated institutions), were effectively able to incarnate wider communal values in a spiritual idiom. The marabouts alone were of no tribe in particular but were 'of' the confederation as a whole. Both chiefs and councillors sought to associate themselves with marabouts in carrying out their tasks, but marabouts always maintained a certain aloofness from the fortunes of particular chiefs and concentrated on bestowing their blessings on inter-tribal gatherings³. This marked division between secular and supernatural authority is one of the cornerstones of Idaw Tanan political life and served as an effective check on the accumulation of power, both on the part of secular chiefs and of marabouts⁴.

It seems more than coincidental that those tribes which had 'chiefly' traditions were those which were geographically vulnerable to state power - located on the southern and western edges of the confederation - whereas those which had 'councillary' traditions were located in the more remote highland parts, where it was more difficult for government influence to penetrate. The two strongman-chiefs maintained relations with agents of state power and at least in some instances are known to have paid token forms of tribute to state-appointed *q_ ids* (governors). Given that they governed internally through their tribal councils, they might be regarded in some sense as 'buffers' who enabled their tribesmen to maintain their de facto independence while at the same time dealing with the realities of state power.

The subtribes (*ifassen*), which corresponded to major valleys or watersheds, were primarily concerned to regulate land usage - grazing and collection rights to resources within their territories, which were marked by boundary cairns (Map 3). They were also the units which sent representatives to the tribal councils.

The villages (*lemwadi*) were social units defined by the congregations of mosques uniting from twenty to upwards of eighty or so households. Idaw Tanan villages vary in their layout and degree of nucleation, according to their ecological

³ However, retrospectively marabouts claim credit for the downfall of all unpopular chiefs through the mechanism of their saintly ancestor's curse. There is a large corpus of maraboutic legend which reinterprets confederal history and the history of the various tribes in terms of the patron saint's supernatural protection.

⁴ While the actual configuration of chiefly power was secular, this does not mean that the *language* of politics was not, as indeed all Moroccan political discourse tends to be, pervaded by religious idiom, metaphor and invocation.

situation. In those flatter, plateau areas where settlement was dispersed, the village would be composed of a number of hamlets or houses spread over a considerable area. In steeper and more mountainous areas where settlement was more concentrated, villages were large and compact. The village council was identical to the adult male membership of the village congregation, and it met, and in fact still meets, every Friday following the weekly worship. The village council is concerned with a wide range of common affairs pertaining to village life, in particular, with the maintenance and operation of the complex irrigation systems which are the key factor in village economic life. Although in principle every household head had a 'voice' in village affairs, the council was in practice dominated by older men of influence who were heads of lineages and lineage segments within the village. Like the Kabyle villages described by Bourdieu (1962), Shilha villages are best described as 'gentilitial democracies', in which there is a formal equality, not of persons, but of landowning kin groups.

In addition to the form of political organization described above, the Idaw Tanan had an additional form of organization into a system of 'three thirds' (Map 2). This was not a governmental arrangement, but rather a form of balancing for the calculation of dues or assessments at the confederational level. Each of the two larger tribes, Ait Wanukrim and Ait Tankert, formed a 'third' (*telt*) by itself, while the three smaller southern tribes together constituted the third 'third', with five proportional shares in it as follows: the Ifesfassen and Ait Wanukrim, being numerically larger, had two shares, and the Ait Awerga, being smaller, had one share. Because of the five shares in it, this 'third' was called 'the fifths', Lakhmas. Although this made Lakhmas in effect a sort of super-tribe, equivalent to the two larger tribes, there was no regular Lakhmas council⁵.

Through these political institutions, and thanks to the relative inaccessibility of their homeland, the Idaw Tanan managed to maintain their independence from government control for nearly three centuries, from circa 1600 to 1928. This independence was not due so much to their military power, which was fairly negligible, but rather to their effective use of their knowledge of the local terrain to frustrate government attempts to impose an effective administration over them. During this period their land was invaded on a number of occasions by both *q_ids* and by royal military expeditions, compelling the tribal councils to submit to state authority. But in each instance, before a year was out, the unfortunate individual

⁵ The fourth *taqbilt* of the Lakhmas 'third', the Iberruten, historically constituted a part of the Ayt Wanukrim, but, in the machinations attendant to the creation of the tribal system of protectorate times, managed to attain the status of a *taqbilt* by itself.

who had accepted an appointment as governor was assassinated, the payment of state taxes (*naw_ib*) ceased, and the traditional chiefs and councils resumed their old functions.

The Protectorate Period

In 1912 French forces entered Morocco under the protectorate agreement and began the task of reorganizing the old Moroccan *makhzan* (central government) into a modern state. In addition to redefining the administrative structures, they faced the enormous task of bringing the vast mountain and desert periphery of southern Morocco under administrative control, i.e. 'pacifying' the numerous dissident tribes, like the Idaw Tanan, south of Marrakesh. They went about this through a combination of direct military means and indirect political means which involved working through a number of warlords (*q_ids*) whose power had grown considerably in the tumultuous years leading up to the protectorate. The military effort was impeded by the outbreak of World War I and from 1915 through the early 1920s the French were forced to rely heavily on the *politique des caïds*⁶ - encouraging the *q_ids* to use their influence to bring dissident tribes within their spheres of control and, thus, into the fold of the central government.

By the end of World War I, Idaw Tanan was one of a few remaining bastions of dissidence in the High Atlas, subject to intense pressure from two neighboring *q_ids*, Sa^cd Agilul of the Ihahan to the northwest, and ^cAbdulmalik Atiggi, of the Intug^wa, to the northeast. These two warlords, each hoping to annex as much of Idaw Tanan as possible, used their power and influence to provoke disorder in Idaw Tanan, and the decade of the 'twenties was a period of extraordinary violence and confusion, during which dozens of tribesmen were assassinated and thousands of people were forced to flee the homeland to seek refuge elsewhere. In the midst of this disorder, the confederal institutions came close to breaking down entirely. Finally, a protracted drought during the years 1926-28 broke the back of Idaw Tanan resistance and in early 1929, following an agreement with the Idaw Tanan leaders, French troops entered Idaw Tanan and began to set up a local government. The first task of the new regime was the distribution of relief supplies to a population which had suffered years of drought and social disorder.

⁶ By this term I refer to the general protectorate policy of supplying political intelligence to the indigenous *q_ids* of the surrounding confederations, in this case, Ihahan and Intug^wa, and encouraging them to form alliances with notables of the dissident confederations toward the end of bringing the dissidents gradually within the orbit of state influence.

By this time, the French evidently had second thoughts about their *politique des caïds* (Burke 1976: 65) and, instead of allowing the *q'id* ^cAbdulmalik Atiggi to annex Idaw Tanan, they moved in and administered it directly under a military government. The confederation of Idaw Tanan was kept as a discrete administrative unit, to be administered out of a '*Bureau*', established at Imuzzar, near the site of the principal weekly market of the Idaw Tanan. The bureau consisted, physically, of a fort, which contained administrative offices, a prison, and quarters for the administrative staff. A road was started, connecting Imuzzar with the coastal highway. The *Bureau* was under the authority of a French *capitaine* stationed at Imuzzar, who had under his command a contingent of troops (*mokhzanis*), and a small administrative staff.

In protectorate theory the *capitaine* was supposed to be advisory to the native authorities, but in practice he exercised an almost unlimited range of powers, including the naming of the tribal chiefs.⁷ It had been agreed in negotiations which preceded the French entry that Lahsen Bu Naga, hereditary chief of the Ait Tankert, would remain chief of his tribe, but all the other tribal chiefs would have to be named by the *capitaine*, after consultation with the councils of the various tries.

The first tribe to agree on a chief were the Ait Wa^czzun. Given that they had the strongest traditions of 'councillary' government, one might have anticipated that they would have the greatest reluctance to agree to a chief. But, as it happened, they settled on an *amghar*, Bihi ^wAshaw, who had emerged out of the political troubles of the 1920s as a powerful strongman who had organized a personal militia of some twenty or so henchmen in order to protect his home village of Isk from the raids and depredations that became quite commonplace in Idaw Tanan during the drought years of 1926-28. So successful were Ashaw's 'vigilantes' in keeping Isk free from predatory raids that Ashaw's protection service came to be hired on a contract basis by other villages in his sector of the tribe. By the time French forces entered Idaw Tanan, Bihi ^wAshaw commanded the single most

⁷ In protectorate theory French officials were always supposed to be 'advisory' to opposite numbers in the Moroccan administration whose appointments were, again in theory, supposed to be under the control of the Moroccan state (Bremard 1949; Bidwell 1973). Although in places like Fez and Rabat some care was taken to maintain this fiction, in rural areas, and in particular in rural areas under military administration, it was completely ignored, as the case of the Idaw Tanan tribal chiefs makes clear. For most of the protectorate period, there was no one 'native' official who was the *capitaine*'s opposite number (although toward the end a *khalifa* was named), and the fact that the tribal chiefs were appointed by and answerable to him was not in the least disguised.

formidable body of firepower in Idaw Tanan and was widely admired for the direct way in which he dealt with the thieves and raiders who proliferated in the confusion that surrounded the capitulation to the French.⁸

The appointment of the remaining Idaw Tanan chiefs proved a complex and time-consuming business. An *amghar* of the Ait Wanukrim tribe named Hmad u Sa^c_d who had, like Ashaw, become a prominent strongman during the anarchy of the 1920s, aspired to become chief of the Lakhmas, the southern 'third' of the Idaw Tanan confederation. Although, as we have noted, the Lakhmas was not a traditional unit of governance, Hmad u Sa^c_d argued that, since the two larger 'thirds' were each under strong chiefs, the peoples of the Lakhmas third 'needed' a single strong chief in order to counter the weight of the two larger tribes. He was not, however, able to persuade the Ifesfassen and Ait Awerga to accept him as chief, and had to settle for the chiefship of the Ait Wanukrim tribe alone. In this, he also had to contend with an insurrection by a small subgroup of the Lakhmas, the Iberruten, who steadfastly refused to accept him and used the occasion to become an autonomous 'tribe' in their own right.

Among the Ifesfassen, the traditional chief, Muhammad n-Ait Umghar showed a great reluctance to deal face-to-face with the French authorities and one of his sons, 'Abdullah, accepted the appointment as chief, and, after many months of wrangling, the last of the tribes, the Ait Awerga, settled on a chief of their own.

During the early years of the 1930s, Idaw Tanan was administered as a military region from the *Bureau* (*Tashelhait lbiru*) established at Imuzzar, and during this period facilities and roads were built and a system of law and order established. Hundreds of families who had been compelled to flee their homeland during the anarchy of the 1920s returned as a result of the new conditions of security and the massive building effort pumped an unprecedented amount of cash into the local economy, making this, in retrospect, a period of relative prosperity. In the mid-1930s Idaw Tanan was reclassified as an area under civil control, administered by the *Direction des Affaires Indigènes* under a *contrôleur civil*, who was nevertheless always colloquially referred to as the *capitaine* (*Tashelhait lqaftan*).

⁸ Although Montagne claims that petty Berber chiefs do not maintain dungeons in their houses (this being, according to him, a characteristic of the so-called 'Lords of the Passes' like the Glawa and Gundafa chiefs), it is universally agreed among Ait Wa^czzun elders that Bihi "Ashaw had one in his. I have visited the chamber in question and it would certainly have served as an effective prison. Knowledgeable persons claim it remained in use for well over a decade following the French entry into Idaw Tanan.

The division of functions between the *Capitaine* and the tribal chiefs was complex and multi-faceted, but might be summarized as follows. The *Capitaine* acted proactively in matters of security and with respect to major crimes, and in matters relating to the design and construction of significant infrastructure (for whose budget he was responsible); but for the most part he dealt through the tribal chiefs in other judicial matters relating to intra-tribal matters, such as the resolution of disputes and village-level development. Under his tutelage, the tribal chiefs developed a corpus of customary law through which they processed, with very French bureaucratic thoroughness,⁹ legal cases and they were put on salaries and, at the *capitaine's* discretion, issued small administrative budgets of their own, and had their travel expenses - they shuttled continually between their homes and the Bureau at Imuzzar - rebated monthly.

Through the thirties, there was a degree of turn-over among the appointed tribal chiefs as the protectorate officials sorted out administrative mechanisms appropriate to the needs of the various tribes. Lahsen Bu Naga of the Ait Tankert proved to be a considerable success in the eyes of the civilian controllers, effectively representing his people to the Bureau and effectively representing government policy to his people, and as a result he became a confidant of the several '*capitaines*' who administered the Idaw Tanan and was allowed a particularly wide latitude in exercising his discretion in administrative matters. The two chiefs who had arisen as strongmen during the 1920s, Bihi ^wAsaw and Hmad u Sa^c_d, managed to remain in power during the earlier, more militarily-oriented period, but eventually lost the confidence of their tribesmen and were replaced.

One factor which obviously played a role in this sorting-out of tribal chiefs was literacy. In pre-protectorate times, there was no particular necessity for a tribal chief or notable to be literate, as matters of writing could be easily handled by scribes retained by the chief or council. But in the protectorate government the flow of *papasserie* was heavy and seems to have proved an impediment to the illiterate or semi-literate strongmen who had risen to power in the last days of independence, and these were gradually replaced by chiefs capable of managing their own paperwork. In this, Bu Naga had the advantage of being a highly literate man of almost scholarly reputation, as the Bu Naga family had its own private *madrasa* in their home village of Aghri, and, although he never claimed any titles of religious scholarship, enjoyed a certain legitimacy as a man of religion as well, as we shall see later. Protectorate administration was, incidentally, trilingual. All

⁹ The law was codified, reconciled with Islamic principles through advice from both Muslim legal experts and tribal elders, and extensive *procès verbaux* were kept of the proceedings.

the *capitaines* spoke Tashelhait to some degree, and, while the official paperwork of administration was in French, most of the internal paperwork of the chiefs' administration was in Arabic.

The flush of economic prosperity which Idaw Tanan enjoyed during the mid-1930s came to an end with the approach of World War II and the political uncertainties to which the war led, although cash income from military service to some extent offset the loss of revenues connected with economic development. The after-war years were economically straightened and saw a heightened emphasis on military security as the Moroccan independence movement increasingly became the central preoccupation of protectorate officials. Although in retrospect one can see that there was comparatively little anti-colonialist agitation in the Berber-speaking mountains - that was predominantly an urban concern - the French continued to fear an insurrection in areas like Idaw Tanan, which had an historical predilection toward dissidence, and imposed a very tight regime of security over the confederation.

Independence and the Rural Communes

In 1956 Morocco became independent and the French *contrôleur civil* was replaced by a Moroccan official who bore the traditional title of *q'_id*, appointed from the Ministry of the Interior, and whose functions were nearly identical to those of the old *contrôleur civil*. Administratively, Idaw Tanan became a *qiy_da* (French *caïdat*) attached to the super-*qiy_da* (*qiy_da mumt_z*, French *cercle*) of Inezgane. Internally, the *q'_id* dealt with six appointed tribal chiefs, much as his French predecessors had done before him.

In the years after independence Morocco set about designing institutions of *auto-gestation* and *animation* that would allow local communities to have a say in the direction of their development and also allow them to accumulate experience in planning their futures and allocating locally-collected revenues toward projects which elected representatives had decided upon. Thus was born the Moroccan system of rural communes (*jama'_t qaraw_yya*). These communes were supposed to represent a common heritage of both the Arabic- and Berber-speaking peoples, and thus to provide a common structure for managing local development initiatives while at the same time allowing each community to shape its development in ways it had chosen, through its representatives. Idaw Tanan was divided into three rural communes, identical to the old 'three thirds' division of the confederation. The communal budgets were concerned primarily with collecting taxes and entrance fees at markets and using the revenues collected for local improvements, either to the market itself (e.g. new stalls and shops) or building improvements such as concrete irrigation canals for villages. The bulk of

direct development funds for major projects such as roads and electrification remained in the *q_ id*'s administrative budget.

Perhaps by Western standards of development and change, the rural communes might seem ineffective and inefficient. The ratio of controversy to the actual amounts of money spent is high, and the tutelary role of the *q_ id* shows no sign of withering away, as was originally envisioned, once the communes developed experience in managing their own affairs. In fact however, the *q_ id* has become the indispensable mediator and advisor for the commune's deliberations. As noted, the annual sums expended through the commune budgets remain smaller than the *q_ id*'s discretionary budget for local improvements, but, if one knows where to look, there is evidence of the communes' improvements everywhere: in the markets themselves, as well as in nearly every hamlet and village in the commune.¹⁰

The communes also serve as electoral districts for representatives to the National Parliament (*majlis*), a body which has, through several incarnations, not developed much beyond an advisory role in the operation of government, although the representatives do serve as useful patrons for tribesmen having business with the national government.

¹⁰ Improvements at the village level consist primarily of replacing old earthen irrigation canals for village irrigation system - the very core of village prosperity and social solidarity - with concrete canals, and, in drier areas, the construction of large covered concrete cisterns. A recent trend has been the construction of clothes washing facilities at the traditional sites along streams where women washed clothes: these consist of a sloped pavement over which water washes, containing a number of basins lined with river pebbles to facilitate the scrubbing of clothes. Usually shaded by large olive trees, they represent the principal centers of female gathering and information-exchange, and are, next to the markets, the most vital centers of quotidian social life in Shilha society. Since the construction of the first of these, they have gone to the top of everyone's list of desired improvements, an eloquent testimony to the massed power of women. Indeed, rather than wait for the rural communes to get around to constructing washing facilities, something which might realistically take ten to fifteen years in some cases, a number of villages have simply gone ahead and contracted for the building of their own washing facilities on the basis of their own internal assessments, an indication that the rural communes have indeed resulted in the gestation of a certain spirit of local initiative.

The Administration of the Chiefs

The rural communes, however effective they may be in fostering a sense of participation in the designing and execution of public works, do not, however, constitute a civil administration. That remains the province of the *q'_id*, working together with tribal chiefs, whose functions and competencies have been altered only in details from protectorate times.¹¹

The Idaw Tanan tribal chief is, first and foremost, a cultural broker, mediating between two political systems which operate on entirely different principles. With the Bureau, he must perform deal in the idiom of modern bureaucratic political action, carrying out orders, countersigning a fair mass of paperwork, and representing his tribesmen, who often find the bureaucratic procedures of government bewildering, to the government. Vis-à-vis his tribesmen, he behaves in the manner of a Berber 'big man' (*amghar*), knowing how to listen patiently, but also speaking assertively when he needs to, and not hesitating to use his personal influence and reputation (which, in the case of a successful chief, often far exceeds his authority) on occasion.

A chief spends a considerable amount of time travelling, spending at least two days per week at the administrative center at Imuzzar, visiting the scene of a variety of incidents which require to be reported, as well as making occasional visits to Inezgane or Agadir to represent tribesmen who have gotten into trouble there. There is no way a chief could possibly tend his own fields and manage herds while discharging his chiefly responsibilities, and so chiefs are always men of substance to begin with; several are successful traders and merchants and the remainder come from large and solidary lineages which can provide the labor to keep their agricultural interests intact while they serve their people. All of them rely on close family members as staff and messengers; as with traditional *amghars*

¹¹ The principal difference is that the independent government has removed all official recognition of customary law, since this is a topic which offends the sensibilities of religious leaders, not so much in the local area, but at the national level. The setting up of a separate system of customary Berber tribunals has long been regarded as the precipitating factor which led to the rise of the Moroccan nationalist movement in the 1930s, owing to the perception that the French were, by segmenting the populace between two legal systems - Muslim and customary - seeking to divide the populace in order the better to rule it. 'Customary law' has been an extremely sensitive subject ever since, and all references to it have been expunged from administrative manuals and documents. In practice, however, both the *q'_ids* and tribal chiefs recognize and practice a number of elements of local customary law in their day-to-day management of disputes and problems.

(Montagne 1930: 274ff.), chiefship is very much a 'family business'.

On a daily basis, the chief's house is the political nerve center of the tribe. In the larger tribes, on a typical day, fifteen or twenty tribesmen wend their way to the chief's house on business of one sort or another. Some of this is routine paperwork, but most of it consists of consultations on matters of immediate concern to the tribesmen. As a result of this traffic, there is very little that goes on within the tribe of which the chief is not aware. All routine incidents - fights, fires, injuries, collapses of buildings, quarrels over fields and water, the appearance of strangers in the area, the running-away of wives, births and deaths - are reported to the chief, often several times over, as partisans on different sides seek to characterize the incident to their own benefit.

Chiefs' houses are always substantial, but remain stylistically within the norm of traditional Shilha architecture. Like the house of any man of standing, they contain a large guest-room surrounded by low banquettes, which can accommodate forty to fifty guests, but the floor is of packed earth and the decor limited to a few posters showing the holy sites of Mecca. Most routine business is conducted in an adjacent room, in a style that most tribesmen are comfortable with: seated on the floor, barefoot, on reed mats, knees pulled up, and with a glass of mint tea in the right hand, to the sound of mules braying and cocks crowing outside.

In almost all their dealings with the government, tribesmen almost always deal with their chief in the first instance, and, if they need to appear before the *q'id*, they are usually so tongue-tied that it is the chief, with whom they have previously consulted, who presents the details of their case (from memory). In most cases which are brought to the *q'id*, the chief has investigated it and briefed the *q'id* in advance, so the actual questioning in the latter's office is most often pro forma.

The personal fortunes of chiefs who have been in office for years are quite variable. Signs of obvious impecuniousness would undermine their authority, but on the other hand there are strong social sanctions on the display of worldly goods. Obviously they are in a position to profit quite considerably from their authority, but, if they do, they do so discreetly. They are the recipients of a constant flow of small presents, *adiya* (sugar loaves, tea trays, cassette players, etc.), which are very much a part of Moroccan political culture, but which local custom prevents them from displaying, so they are sold off to help defray the expenses of hospitality which their positions oblige them to provide. A perennial Berber joke on this subject involves the bestowal of a present to a chief: 'I believe I've given him that very tea tray once before'.

In each village (i.e. mosque congregation) the chief, with the endorsement of the

q_id appoints an official called an *ajerray* who receives a small salary, and who is, as it is put in the French system of bureaucracy, the *responsable* in that village: it is he who in the first instance reports births and deaths and investigates incidents bearing on public order, reporting them to the chief. It is to him as well that postal mandates from abroad are handed over and he is responsible for seeing they are delivered into the correct hands.

There is no official recognition of the old subtribes (*ifassen*) in the modern governmental system, although they remain significant solidarities in the eyes of the tribesmen. This means that the chief often has to 'translate' perceptions of politics from the local conceptual framework into the official one and vice versa. The pre-protectorate tribal councils (*ait arba'in*) have no standing in the eyes of the government, but in order to carry out his functions the chief from time to time calls together gatherings of notables (not usually the *ajerrays*) from the various sectors of the tribe in his guest room, and this functions as an unofficial tribal council. These gatherings are often crucial to the implementation of government policies and to the resolution of inter-sub-tribal disputes and are the crucial forums in which the chief wields his traditional authority, even though they remain officially 'invisible'.

Chiefly Discourse

The practical authority of chiefs lies in their ability to mediate between two political systems which operate in two completely different styles and through different political idioms - one bureaucratic and hierarchical and concerned with the implementation of policies mainly generated elsewhere, and the other personalistic and bound up in the subtle politics of reputation in the tribal sphere. The chief is, in effect, a broker between these two systems and his brokerage is not simply a matter of translation from one language to another (Tashelhait and Arabic), although language translation is often involved. Even when the tribesmen and the officials of the Bureau share a common language, communication can be difficult and few tribesmen care to have dealings with officialdom without their chief being present. Often all the chief does is to repeat the tribesmen's own words to the officials, but, because it is the chief who has uttered them, the tribesmen feel they are 'getting through' to the officials, and that the bewildering bureaucratic terminology which the officials are prone to use is under control. The chief is, in other words, the classic patron in a political culture whose idiom is patronage.

Much of the key action of a chief consists in his 'backstage' discussions with both of his constituencies, i.e. the *q_id* and his fellow tribesmen. Much of his value to the *q_id* consists of the background briefings he provides on tribesmen under his

jurisdiction, and for this he requires a lifetime of interaction with them in marketplaces and political fora. He must separate the 'serious' men (*ghwilli lli ggan irgazen nnit*) from the 'liars' and 'fools' (*id bu tkerkas, Ifanayin*) and those who are merely ambitious, and his characterization may affect the success of many of their ventures. The more successful a man is, the more he needs the cooperation of the Bureau, and so the tribal chief is in a position either to frustrate or favor his ambitions quite substantially. In addition, his estimate of the success of various governmental initiatives and how to present them to the tribesmen is critical to the *q'_id*. Of course, in the long run the Bureau makes its own estimates of the chiefs' reliability in these matters, and any chief's tenure depends on the Bureau's confidence in him.

On the other hand, in his dealings with his tribesmen, the chief often also deals in the political 'backstage' as well, distancing himself from the Bureau's policies themselves and offering advice on which initiatives need to be taken seriously and which can be safely ignored, or at any rate what a minimum acceptable level of compliance is likely to be. Like an *amghar* of pre-protectorate times, the chief does not operate among his followers by necessarily endorsing Bureau policies as such, but rather by presenting them as 'realities' which have to be dealt with and offering his knowledge of the 'other backstage' (i.e. the *q'_id*'s office) to help the tribesmen deal with them. In his discussions with his fellow tribespeople, his discourse has the aura of the political 'back room': unpopular (i.e. costly) initiatives are often 'sold' to the populace on the basis that accepting them will help get the *q'_id* out of a jam, and his gratitude will be reflected in the success of other ventures in which the tribesmen have a particular interest.

The chief is a symbolic interactor *par excellence*, playing one backstage off against the other, thereby helping to mesh two systems together, by allowing each to retain its own idiom and style. His credibility and usefulness in the eyes of the government consists in his ability to 'get things done' when it is important to do so. His power, as distinct from his authority, consists in the fact that this is such a valuable service that the Bureau does not look too closely into how the chief goes about it. The *q'_ids* are well aware that the chief accomplishes his ends by swapping favors and by reinterpreting its imperatives into the earthy and practical idiom of Shilha politics. His credibility and usefulness in the eyes of the tribesmen consists more in his patronage than in his ability to - in the language of political science - articulate political demands at a higher level. The ordinary tribesfolk do not by and large have very high expectations of the government, which they still call the *makhzan*, and, in any case, their demands tend to be so specific and mutually contradictory in their nature that nobody could possibly synthesize them into a single overall demand. The tribesmen's conception of politics is not on an ideological plane, but rather on a strictly personal one. When trouble breaks out,

they want someone to come and smooth it over, and, when they have any business with the government, they want their tribal chief to represent them.

The Ait Bu Naga

Having described the role and scope of action of the modern Idaw Tanan tribal chief in general terms, I shall now focus on two particular chiefly families, who have provided the chiefs of the two largest Tanani tribes over the past quarter century, the Ait Bu Naga of the Ait Tankert tribe and the Ait Bufus of the Ait Wa^czzun tribe.

In speaking of 'chiefly families', we must reiterate the point that tribal chiefship in the Moroccan system of administration is not an hereditary office, but is strictly appointive, at the pleasure of the *q_ id*, and that any chief may be dismissed at any time for just cause. There is no official presumption that a son will succeed his father in this office, and to the extent that some do, it is because they have been selected in consultation with the tribal notables in competition with other contenders.

But, given the particular role of the tribal chief as a broker between two structurally different systems, one rational-bureaucratic and the other 'traditional', *q_ ids* have on a number of occasions opted to replace a deceased chief with his son, who inherits the aura of his father's reputation. In particular, the chief's use of his immediate family as his staff often makes the chief's eldest son the best qualified candidate. He has spent his boyhood privy to the tribe's business and his years of service as confidant and messenger for his father have brought him into contact with everyone in the tribe.¹²

Si Lahsen Bu Naga of the Ait Tankert was the first tribal chief appointed by the Bureau, even before French troops entered Idaw Tanan. He was the third in a succession of Bu Nagas who had been the traditional *amghars* of the Ait Tankert in a line going back to the early nineteenth century. The Bu Nagas (the family name means 'cameleers') were merchants and caravan-organizers in the coastal trade with the port-town of Essaouira and have a succession of affinal linkages with the chiefly families of Idaw Gillul and Ineknafen among the *Ih.ahan*. In pre-protectorate times, as noted above, the Bu Nagas mediated political relations between the Ait Tankert and the Ihahan *q_ ids* acting - in the eyes of the *q_ ids* -

¹² While out on their father's service the elder sons of chiefs are sometimes given their father's 'seal' (a rubber stamp moistened by breathing onto its surface) and paperwork which they have thus 'signed' is routinely accepted as if had been stamped by the father.

as agents of the government, and making token payments of tribute to the *q_’ids*.

Externally, then, by playing on their special relationship with the Ihahan *q_’ids*, the Bu Nagas were able, albeit at the price of a bit of tribute, to keep the government at bay. Internally their authority was founded on their ability to keep order - that is, to intervene in feuds and inter-village disputes. They did this by maintaining a small militia, composed of men of the Ait Wazghi subtribe (their own subtribe), which dealt directly with troublemakers upon the order of the chief. Tradition has it that, thanks to the leadership of the Bu Nagas, the Ait Tankert were the most peaceful and orderly of the Idaw Tanan tribes in pre-protectorate times.

Over time their authority also acquired a third foundation. The Bu Nagas were the richest family in the tribe, thanks to their success in the caravan trade and their influence as chiefs, and their home village of Aghri Izdar flourished. With their wealth, they built a private family mosque and founded a religious school (*madrasa*) at their home village of Aghri, affiliated with the Darq_wa brotherhood (*tar_qa*), which had been growing in influence among the Ait Tankert since the turn of the century, and which became, as a result of Bu Naga patronage, the principal religious brotherhood among the Ait Tankert. Hundreds of 'lay' members of the order received their initiation into Darq_wa at the Aghri *madrasa*. All the Bu Naga males were educated at the *madrasa* and several of them eventually became instructors at it. Thus, although the family is neither clerical nor maraboutic in any conventional sense, as such, it nevertheless became associated with the religious life of the Ait Tankert people in a tangible way, and benefitted from the aura of religious legitimacy which this conferred.

Though the general configuration of Bu Naga power was based on a monopoly of wealth and force, the Bu Nagas nevertheless remained sensitive to the councilary traditions of the people. The Ait Tankert tribal council was maintained as a formal body throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To be sure, the council mainly existed to rubber-stamp approval of the chief's decisions, and the chief had a preponderant say in tribal decisions, but the continued existence of the tribal council served as a counter-weight to the chief's authority and tempered his power. Robert Montagne's characterization of the Bu Nagas' power as 'despotic' (1930: 291) seems an unduly harsh interpretation, at odds with the social memory of the Ait Tankert.

Lahsen Bu Naga, as we have noted, rapidly became the most respected tribal chief of the protectorate period, and his style of administration became a model for the other protectorate chiefs. His overall cooperation with the Bureau in development matters rapidly garnered a disproportionate share of benefits for the Ait Tankert. For a long time, they had a quasi-monopoly on *mokhzani* positions (postings as

irregular government troops, paid a small salary) and were particularly well represented on the various government commissions which advised the Bureau on customary law and other matters. Also, under Lahsen Bu Naga's patronage, a number of prominent Ait Tankert families gained monopolies in a variety of businesses which flourished in the 1940s and later, including the principal almond exporting business, a local bus line and transport facilities, wholesale enterprises, mining exploitations, processing plants for local products (carob powder, gum arabic, and dwarf-palm fibre) and a local hotel.

Following his death, he was replaced by his son, Si Muhammad, who governed through the transition to independent government and into the 1980s. Both an important link to the past and a reliable ally in social and economic development, Si Muhammad was undoubtedly the key native administrator of the Idaw Tanan confederation, relied upon by a succession of *capitaines* in the protectorate government and *q'ids* in the independent government for cooperation in maintaining order and getting development projects through. Following his death, Si Muhammad was in turn replaced by his eldest son, groomed since earliest childhood in the arts of governance. Thus, for the better part of two centuries, the political life of the Ait Tankert has been inexorably intertwined with their chiefly family.

The Ait Bufus

In contrast to the Ait Tankert, the Ait Wa^czzun of the higher and more isolated northeastern third of the confederation have had, as we have noted, a marked preference for the 'councillary' tradition of government. Indeed, they are in some sense an epitome of this style of tribal governance. Montagne (1930: 130) noted that, during various periods of reversion to *siba*, a number of tribes in the Anti-Atlas sent delegations to the Ait Wa^czzun in order to study their tribal institutions to use as a model for reconstituting their own tribal regimes along 'republican' (councillary) lines. Their brief period of chiefly rule under the strongman, Bihi Akherraz, during the early nineteenth century, left a legacy of bitter memories of chiefly rule.

Given this, one might have anticipated that the Ait Wa^czzun would have had difficulty in adjusting to the new regime of tribal chiefs which the protectorate administration ushered in. In fact, however, the transition was comparatively smooth. The reason for this, as we have noted, seems to have been that, of all the Tanani tribes, the Ait Wa^czzun were the most thoroughly devastated, socially and economically, by the anarchy which preceded the establishment of the Bureau. A decade and a half of looting, feuds, famine, and depopulation had reduced the Ait Wa^czzun to a state of dispirited passivity, and the chief who was appointed, Bihi

^wAshaw, had been the head of a band of 'vigilantes' who had provided what little order there was in the last years of the pre-protectorate period. Ashaw's rule was harsh and authoritarian and based on a de facto band of loyal henchmen; as the locals say, 'his dungeon was always brimming'. But it was still a restoration of order, and under his rule, the Ait Wa^czzun economy reconstituted itself and many of those who had fled were able to return and rebuild their houses and farms. Ashaw's style of chiefship served the Bureau well enough in the period leading up to World War II, but eventually his methods came to be seen as being too authoritarian and incompatible with the development aims of the Bureau, and he was replaced by a series of appointed chiefs up to the date of independence.

Following independence, the then chief was considered too tainted by connections with the colonial regime, and the government commenced a search for a new chief. Several prominent notables from various sectors of the tribe vied for the position and, perhaps to avoid exacerbating intra-tribal rivalries, the choice fell on a somewhat obscure young man in his thirties from the subtribe of Imzilen named 'Ali n-Ait Bufus, who, in addition to tending his fields and herds, owned a truck and ran a small grain transport business. The choice proved to be a happy one, and 'Shaikh 'Ali' (as he came to be known) grew into his new responsibilities, serving his tribe with boundless energy for the next thirty years. He was a striking figure, a frequent sight on the trails and *pistes* of Ait Wa^czzun, astride his mule, tall and handsome in his white beard and turban, his white woollen cloak flowing behind him as he trotted about on government business, or, in later years, stirring up clouds of dust in his Land Rover.

The invariable epithets which Ait Wa^czzun use to describe Shaikh 'Ali are *argaz* and *nishan*. The term *argaz* is simply the everyday Tashelhait term for a 'man', but in this sense it subsumes a potent congeries of social ideals: strong but self-controlled; shrewd but just; passionate in belief but reserved in demeanor. *Nishan* connotes 'straight': honest, forthright, plain-spoken and clear-eyed. To acquire and sustain such an image in the universe of mirrors which constitutes political life on the boundary between tribal and state politics is an extraordinary achievement, one which needs to be dissected.

I spent many weeks in the company of Shaikh 'Ali during the 1970s and '80s, observing the daily run of business at his house, at the Bureau, and many evenings going over the events of the day. He summed up his own philosophy in the phrase, 'You must not ever promise anything you cannot make happen.' This is not a simplistic testimonial to naive truth-telling. On the contrary, it recognizes that politics is a world of appearances and that each political actor has his own point of view and interprets the world as he would like it to be. They will put up with a great deal from politicians, but not inconsistency. Shaikh 'Ali's natural

advantage was that he was an exceptionally shrewd judge of persons and of systems and that he was circumspect in what he promised and rarely failed to deliver on that.

Having little in the way of economic favors or jobs to dispense, his stock in trade was to grant the favor of keeping unpleasant business 'out of the Bureau', i.e. not officially reporting it to the *q_ id*, with the troublesome consequences that might ensue. In fact, much of such business was, in fact, discussed with the *q_ id*, in private sessions over lunch and dinner, the *q_ id* almost always respecting the cloak of privacy which the Shaikh would throw over the matter. The tribesmen were grateful, for their part, for what appeared to be a cover-up, and the *q_ id*'s confidence in the chief's ability to 'manage' these affairs was increased, for these were, for the most part, matters which were administratively insoluble in any case - matters arising out of status considerations, ancient disputes over landownership, or inter-familial antagonisms, which the Bureau was in no way equipped to resolve. By thus acting as a gatekeeper in the flow of information between two incompatible political systems - the tribal system and that of the government - Shaikh 'Ali carved out a sphere of semi-autonomy and discretion which went far beyond the official definition of chiefly duties in administrative writ. This was, so to speak, an informal extension of personal power into the bureaucratic sphere. Not every chief proved capable of doing this, and, indeed, a number of chiefs of the other Tanani tribes who promised more than they could 'make happen' found their tenure of office short-lived.

By the end of his days, the (then) Hajj 'Ali Bufus had lived and served so long that the prospect of finding a new chief caused great consternation among the Ait Wa^czzun, and the Bureau took its time in arranging a new chief. As an interim measure, Shaikh 'Ali's son, Lhusain, was appointed as chief pro-tem. The son had the particular good fortune to resemble his father in physical appearance and mannerisms at the time of Shaikh 'Ali's early chiefship, and was well known to the Bureau owing to his long service as his father's deputy. Having accompanied his father on his governmental rounds for a decade and a half, the son was intimately acquainted with all the tribal notables and had, in turn, established close working relationships with their sons, who were gradually acceding to positions of local notability in their own right. After a year or so, it was clear that no other serious contenders for the chiefship had emerged and there was a groundswell of sentiment in favor of the son receiving a permanent appointment as chief. But, in the midst of a political culture in which the hereditary principle is so subtly pervasive, there is, in Moroccan administrative circles, a strong bias against hereditary successions. In this case, particularly since there had been a hereditary succession in the case of the Ait Tankert chiefship, another hereditary succession might have the force of establishing a precedent. However the demonstrated success of Lhusain's administrative skills and

his popularity eventually carried the day, and his appointment, said to have been cleared 'at the highest level', was confirmed.

It is, of course, too soon to speak of a 'Bufus dynasty' among the Ait Tankert, in the way one can speak of a 'Bu Naga dynasty' among the Ait Tankert. But, between them, the Bufus chiefs, *père et fils*, have unquestionably established a tradition of chieftaincy among tribesmen who were quintessential exemplars of the councillary tradition of governance. Though they have invented their own 'chiefly tradition', which differs in style and substance from the tradition of the Bu Nagas, it is no less a 'tradition' for the fact that it has been in existence for a fraction of a century.

Environmental Protection

While the hybrid system of tribal chiefs and rural communes has on the whole provided both an effective and a culturally sensitive form of local government and development, one area which remains problematical in state/tribe relations is that of the management of the environment. A brief exploration of this question will be useful in highlighting some of the limits of chiefly authority.

The essential environmental dilemma of the Western High Atlas revolves around the use of the 'wild lands', called *tagant* in Tashelhait, in the subsistence economy. In this subsistence pattern, the *tagant*, which constitutes the vast majority of the land surface, is used for a wide variety of purposes, two of which - goat grazing and firewood collecting - are, given the population densities of the Idaw Tanan, slowly destructive over the long term. The High Atlas chain is, in effect, the great barrier which protects central Morocco from the Sahara desert. There is a dramatic difference in appearance between the sere, desiccated, south-facing slopes of the mountains and the verdant, well-watered valleys of the interior of the mountains and of the north-facing slopes. And from the earliest days of the Protectorate, it has been recognized by the government that southern Morocco faces a problem of desertification of major proportions. As early as the 1940s, economic geographers argued that the region was within several generations of undergoing a major shift toward desertification if traditional grazing, logging, and firewood collecting practices continued unabated. In the time of the Muwahhids (Almohads), the High Atlas contained large forests of cedar and sandalwood, out of which many of the great buildings and monuments of Morocco were constructed, but of which almost nothing remains today. As a result of centuries of timbering, grazing and firewood-collecting, the vegetation has been gradually degraded to a brush-cover which in most locations barely exceeds the height of a person. Only the occasional lone 'marabout tree', tabooed because of its supernatural significance, or the village cemeteries, in

which grazing and firewood collection are prohibited (Hatt 1992b), attest to the ancient vegetative state of the land.

The problem of vegetative degradation is really the classic problem of environmental perception. Though the ecological crisis is readily visible in macro-geographical terms to outside experts, it remains largely invisible to the occupants of the land themselves, who view the landscape from a particularistic angle of view and in much shorter-term perspective. Gradual environmental degradation simply does not register in the consciousness of people who have lived their entire lives in a landscape, particularly a landscape which has provided their livelihood for centuries.¹³ Hence the sometimes aggressive measures taken by the government through the *Bureau des Eaux et Forêts* to restrict grazing and firewood collecting, appear as an irrational intrusion into the lives and domestic economies of the inhabitants - an appropriation by the state of resources which were traditionally managed by the tribesmen themselves.

In pre-protectorate times, the management of *tagant* lands was vested in the subtribal units (*ifassen*), which proclaimed various restrictions on over-use of collective lands, whether by members or outsiders, thus evidencing a practical awareness of the finitude of vegetative resources. Since the establishment of civil administration over the Idaw Tanan, the local population has grown steadily, partly as a result of the introduction of clinics and medical services, and partly as a result of the remittances of Tanani workers abroad, whose cash earnings enable certain families, who might otherwise have been obliged to emigrate in search of land,¹⁴ to remain, eking a living in the homeland. There is thus vastly increased pressure on the land, resulting in clearing of new farm land, herding and firewood-collecting, and, in places, alarming instances of ecological degradation.

Beginning in the late 1940s, the *Bureau des Eaux et Forêts* has maintained a branch office in Imuzzer, the administrative center of Idaw Tanan. The office has successfully planted a number of forests in various places in the Idaw Tanan mountains, now much used as demonstration forests to study the principles of scientific forestry. The staff of the local office consists of a number of

¹³ This is particularly so for the Idaw Tanan, who view their ecological adaptation through the lens of a distinctively local ideological construct involving the mediation of the confederal patron saint, Sidi Brahim u 'Ali, who, in return for the material support of the saint's descendants in the form of tithes, is said to supernaturally provide for their livelihood by increasing the bounty of the land to match the needs of the inhabitants.

¹⁴ Historically, the mountainous areas of Morocco have tended to shed excess population on a fairly regular basis toward the plains and cities of the north.

'brigadiers' (Tashelhait, *birgadis*) who patrol the mountains on mule-back, charged with enforcing restrictions on hunting, timbering, grazing and firewood collection. Each patrol typically results in a dozen or so citations for infractions of regulations, and these citations constitute the single most volatile interface between the populace and the government. The offenders are mainly youngsters involved in herding and women involved in gathering firewood for cooking. The head of the household involved receives a summons and is required to appear at Imuzzar to pay a fine, or, failing that, to spend a day or more in jail.

The state of relations between the *birgadis* and the populace is an ambivalent one. Most of the *birgadis* are in fact local men and the job is considered a desirable one, for one can earn a reasonable living without having to leave the homeland. At the interpersonal level, the *birgadis* are for the most part treated on friendly terms, often invited in for tea or meals, which they well know are cooked over 'illegal' charcoal, which would have resulted in a citation if the householder had been caught.

In this perpetual struggle between the forestry officers and the populace, the tribal chiefs are caught in the middle. On the one hand they are obliged to uphold the government policy of restricting firewood collecting. But, on the other hand, they are under enormous pressure from individual householders, who see the restrictions as intrusive and harmful to their own personal economic security. The forestry officers regularly hold briefings to explain the rationale for the protection measures for the 'commonwealth' of forest resources - ecological pep-talks, in effect - but, though the tribesmen assent to the cause in their presence, this results in little de facto change in actual behavior, for the alternative, the use of costly pressurized-gas cooking stoves, is beyond the means of families which have no regular access to cash earnings.

Moreover, the effectiveness of government educational programs has been undercut by inconsistencies in government policies. During World War II, when there was a critical shortage of petroleum products, vehicles in Morocco were converted to operate on charcoal, and the highlands of Iggi Izma in Idaw Tanan were stripped of vast stands of *Arbor vitae* and oak to supply the national demand for charcoal, a denuding from which the area has yet to recover. In addition, today the forestry office still leases out designated tracts of land to charcoal jobbers to produce charcoal for the Moroccan urban market and foreign markets.¹⁵

¹⁵ In an area not far from Idaw Tanan in the recent past charcoal contracts have been let out to Spanish companies to produce and bag charcoal on the spot for the European weekend barbecue market and hundreds of these bags have been stolen and found their way into the local markets, where sturdy bags are at a premium.

Although *Eaux et Forêts* contends that these exploitations are within the scope of good forestry management, and strictly balanced against the regrowth potential of the forests, they appear to the local tribesmen - who receive little of the benefit of the exploitation except occasional short-term wage employment - as appropriation of local resources for the benefit of the government. The credibility of *Eaux et Forêts*, precarious at the best of times, is undercut by its role in leasing out charcoal contracts for the benefit of outsiders.

The domain of ecological protection is thus a standoff and the perpetual war between the *birgadis* and the tribesfolk goes on. Meanwhile, the landcover is, sort of, protected. The gap between the larger aim of managing a resource vital both to the local people and to the nation has not been bridged by any party - not the Bureau, not the chiefs, not the rural communes and not the local forestry office. Indeed, there is no locus, traditional or modern, in Moroccan political culture which has any brief for articulating questions of this sort, which cross-cut the local and the national, save the marabouts, and no one, I believe, has sought to enlist them and the patron saint in the cause.

Conclusion

In its overall design, the modern Moroccan system of rural administration is a classic rational bureaucracy, based on the separation of person and office, and predicated on the rotation of officials from post to post, with advancement being conditional upon fulfilment of bureaucratic considerations of accomplishment and efficiency. Although chiefs are always appointed from the ranks of the social unit they represent, their tenure of office is subject to their satisfactory performance, and their jobs involve them in a wide range of activities which have no analogs in the tribal traditions of their societies, including development work and involvement in a wide range of projects promulgated by the national and provincial governments. In what sense, then, can the chiefs be said to be 'traditional'?

In order to pinpoint the 'tradition' here, one must take note of the existence of two distinct, and to a certain extent, incommensurable, political cultures, one constituted on the basis of rational-bureaucratic criteria, and the other constituted on the basis of what Weber would have characterized as patrimonial criteria. To the extent that any tribal chief is effective, he operates simultaneously within these

Whatever such contracts may gain in the way of needed foreign exchange is greatly outweighed by the cost in the contempt which such practices generate on the part of the mountain folk whose own domestic charcoal needs are restricted.

two distinct orders, and mediates between them. Vis-à-vis the Bureau, he is the *q_ id*'s point man, articulating government policy to the populace and engaging in 'backstage' discussions on how that can best be carried out, given the realities of popular opinion and the economic constraints inherent in the local subsistence economy. Vis-à-vis his tribesfolk, however, he operates in a completely different style, that of a Shilha *amghar* or 'big man', the center of a network of personal interaction based on reputation. As we have seen, the chief also engages in 'backstage' discourse with his fellow tribesfolk, in which he speaks, not in the voice of officialdom, but rather in the voice of a 'member', confronting the state system as an external phenomenon. His effectiveness resides in the deftness with which he is able to switch voices and the consistency with which he is able to play each role vis-à-vis its constituency.

By absorbing in himself the incompatibility between the two political orders, the chief enables the traditional political culture to endure, largely unchallenged by the differing principles of the state system. Vis-à-vis his fellow tribespeople, the chief presents himself as a traditional figure, operating out of his own guest-room, the center of a vast network of personal knowledge of his people's affairs. He speaks the language of the traditional status system and is able to engage the tribespeople in terms intelligible to them and in an idiom which they both share. Like them, he is a farmer and herdsman, subject to the same crop failures and subsistence dilemmas, and the same problems of small-scale business, that they face. He knows his fellow tribespeople as real persons, not as the categorical abstractions they appear to be in the bureaucratic system, and thus they have a sense of effective communication with him which they do not feel when dealing directly with the minions of the state bureaucracy.

As the contrast between the Bu Naga chiefs and the Ait Bufus chiefs shows, it matters little whether the chief's status is grounded in an actual historical tradition of chiefship, or whether it is of much more recent origin. Tradition is not so much a matter of objective historical continuity - though it often represents itself in terms of legitimization by the past - but is rather a matter of style and idiom in a situation where alternative styles and idioms are present.

The tradition of Idaw Tanan chiefship, harking back to the historical oscillation between its two principal forms - strongman and council - is not a tradition of authority based on insignia of office or royal regalia, nor, as we have seen, is it in any way endowed with divinity or any form of the sacred. It is a strongly secular and largely democratic institution, if the term 'democratic' is understood in the sense of a rough equality between landowning kin groups. Never having been, so to speak, lost, it is not particularly apprehended as a 'tradition' as such, and it is remarkably unselfconscious in its daily application. As I have attempted to show

here, its essence resides in its idiomatic character and its grounding in the network of interpersonal relations of day-to-day business in the tribal sphere. Tribespeople are by and large unaware of it as a phenomenon because, to paraphrase Evans-Pritchard on Zande witchcraft, it is the very web of meaning - the lens - through which they apperceive reality, and they do not perceive the lens itself. But for the chiefs, this tradition is an achievement, something which they produce and reproduce as they switch back and forth between the idiom of the Bureau and that of the tribe.

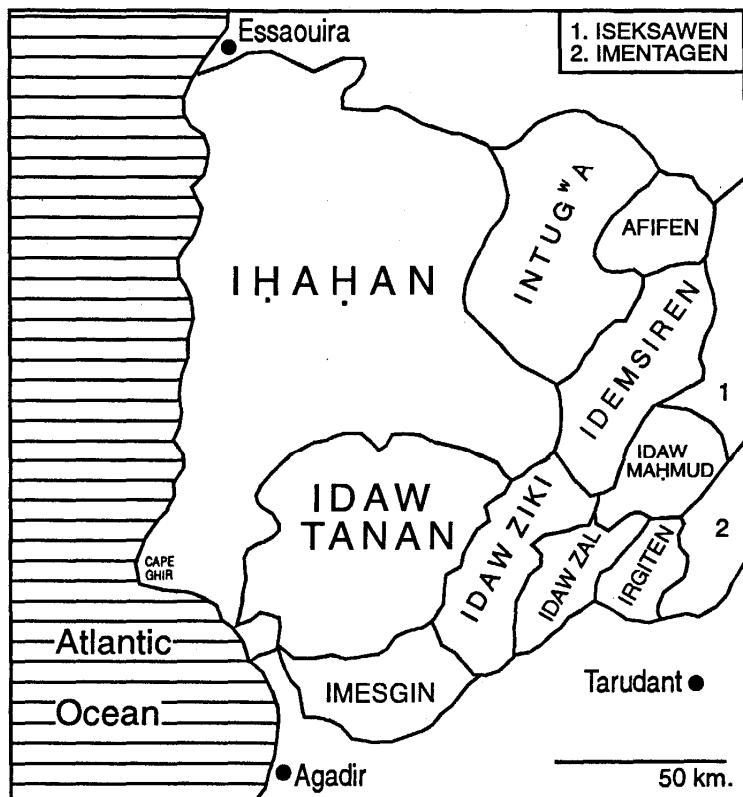
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D.G. Hatt

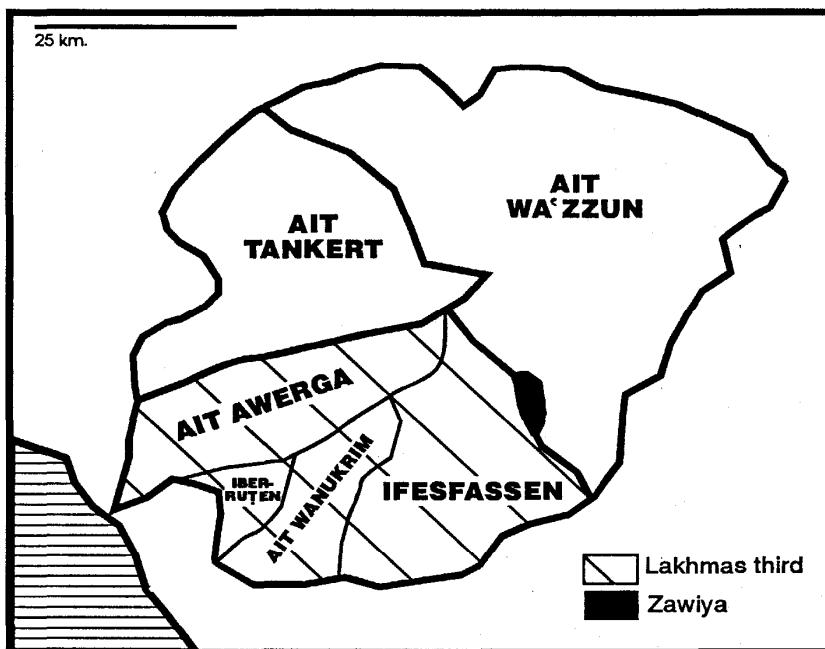
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Map 1



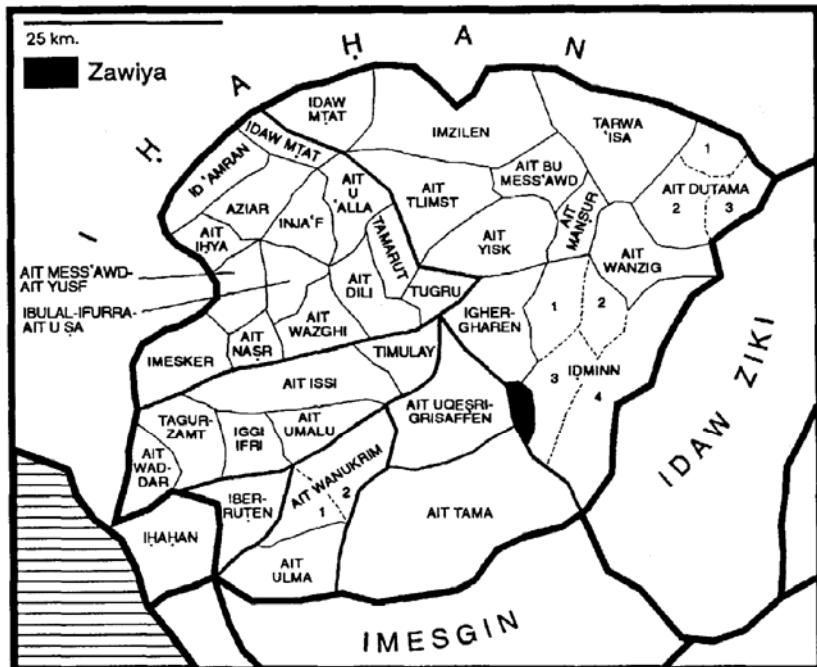
Confederations of the extreme western High Atlas Mountains, Morocco.

Map 2



The confederation of Idaw Tanan, showing the three thirds (Ayt Wa'zzun, Ait Tankert and Lakhmas) and the six tribes.

Map 3



The confederation of Idaw Tanan, showing the subtribes. Groupings of subtribes:

AIT DUTAMA: 1. Ait Ugadir Idaw Swar 2. Ait Luṭa 3. Ait Sh'aw

IDMINN: 1. Im'aizen 2. Tazentut 3. Ait Ussaka 4. Ikherdiden

AIT WANUKRIM: 1. Ait Wanukrim Izdar 2. Ait Wanukrim Ufella