

Tradition and Modernity in the Oukaïmeden Valley: Changes in the Rites and Practices of Seasonal Transterminance

Tradición y modernidad en el Valle de Oukaïmeden: Cambios en ritos y prácticas de transterminancia estacional

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ABSTRACT

Oukaïmeden Valley is a high-altitude pasture reserve in the Moroccan High Atlas. Two groups of Berber shepherds, the tribes of Rheraya and Ourika, have been accessing the valley several centuries ago. The origins of the collective regulation that rules this summer access are found in religious practices previous to the conversion to Islam. This article focuses on the co-existence in the valley between tradition and modernity after the arrival of the tourism to Oukaïmeden, and the changes that modernity produce in Berber shepherds' perception of their tradition. In order to do this, rites, traditions and use rights on pastures are described in relation to the results of an etnoarchaeological enquiry performed among modern Berber shepherds that reflects information about grazing and the agdal system as well as the view that they have about rock art, tumuli and other prehistoric remains scattered on the Oukaïmeden landscape. The main conclusion points out a kind of balance between tradition and modernity in the valley, in spite of the progressive decline of traditions and ways of living.

KEY WORDS: *Transterminance, agdal, rituals, azib, tradition, modernity.*

RESUMEN

El Valle de Oukaïmeden es una reserva de pastos de altura a la que acceden desde hace siglos los pastores de las tribus beréberes de Rheraya y Ourika, en el Alto Atlas marroquí. La normativa consuetudinaria que regula el acceso a los pastos en verano tiene un origen religioso y previo a la llegada del Islam. El artículo analiza la coexistencia en el valle de tradición y modernidad, representada esta por la llegada del turismo a Oukaïmeden, así como los cambios que la modernidad provoca en la percepción que de su propia tradición tienen los pastores beréberes. Para ello se describen ritos, tradiciones y derechos de uso de los pastos en relación con los resultados de una encuesta etnoarqueológica entre los actuales pastores beréberes que recoge tanto datos sobre el pastoreo y el régimen del agdal como su opinión sobre el arte rupestre, los túmulos y otros restos arqueológicos dispersos en el paisaje de Oukaïmeden. La principal conclusión señala la existencia de un cierto equilibrio en el valle entre tradición y modernidad, pese al declive progresivo de tradiciones y formas de vida.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Transterminancia, agdal, rituales, azib, tradición, modernidad.*

Introduction

Oukaïmeden Valley is a slightly sloped flatland, a natural environment located in the Moroccan High Atlas. From Spring to October -as the first snow falls- it becomes a grassland. The main features that determined its evolution were its altitude, higher than 2600 m. above sea level, and its accessibility through many mountain passes. Two groups of Berber *transterminant* shepherds have been accessing the valley through these passes: from the West, the *Rheraya* tribe; and from the East, the *Ourika* tribe.

The seasonal use of these high mountain pastures is several thousand years old. Nevertheless, its use as a community pasture, following certain rites of access and a common set of rules -the *agdal* Berber system- dates back several centuries. These rites and rules are clearly related to the perception of the Oukaïmeden Valley as a border, a boundary that highlights the struggle for a scarce resource: fresh pasture at the end of the summer, when the usual pasture lands are running out and livestock survival depends on the access to fertile lands.

In the context of the conflict over this territory, hundreds of animal, weapon and anthropomorphic figures were carved into stone by the ancestors of the current Berber shepherds since prehistoric times, along with some geometric carvings. Many of these petroglyphs have been already identified and documented, but they have not been connected with the rest of the archaeological remains of the valley or their natural environment. The goal of our project is to establish this connection. The proposed methodology of this project is the study and systematization of these petroglyphs, their dating and interpretation following the principles of landscape archaeology. Achieving this goal will help not only to figure out the meaning of the petroglyphs, but also to define the parameters under which the environmental resources were traditionally used. It will also provide us with a clearer understanding of this traditional way of life: due to the environmental stability of the past 5,000 years, this way of life must have been similar to that of the first populations of the valley.

Assuming an ethnoarchaeological approach, this premise allows us to use the study of material culture and the organizational traditions still present among Berber shepherds to increase our knowledge about Prehistory which, in turn, can be used to reinterpret the meaning of the archaeological remains of the valley, especially the petroglyphs. This is why we conducted the study of one of the *azibs* of Oukaïmeden. An *azib* is a high mountain village built in stone by the shepherds as a permanent but seasonal home used during the summer to house

their family and livestock. An anthropological inquiry was conducted for the same purpose among Berber people. The inquiry attempted to gather information on traditional shepherding that could contribute to get data, references and ideas about the use of the Oukaïmeden Valley as a pasture reserve, based on the experience of people living seasonally or, nowadays, permanently in the valley. The inquiry was designed and performed by Ruiz-Gálvez in fall 2009 and the information gathered was transferred to the present writer. Both instruments will help to show the changes experienced by the current inhabitants of Oukaïmeden Valley as a consequence of the modification undergone by their environment. This study also confirms the survival of the traditional rites that ruled the *agdals* system for centuries and the shepherds' perception of them.

The Oukaïmeden high mountain *agdal* has suffered perhaps the most intense colonization by Western culture. It is the only *agdal* where a paved road crosses the valley and also the only one where traditional Berber shepherding coexists with the users of fully equipped ski resorts built in the mid-twentieth century (ski lifts, hotels, *chalets* and other touristic resorts). This makes the Oukaïmeden Valley an exceptional location to study the survival of traditional practices among the changes caused by Western civilization. To avoid terminological confusion in this paper, the terms tradition and modernity are used in their broadest sense. The term tradition will be used to refer to the ancient habits, rites and social structures of Berber shepherds. The term modernity will refer to all the social changes that Western civilization has introduced into these habitats, without judging the negative or positive aspects of this combination. Also, we will avoid the modernity/postmodernity debate, useless here, because we intend to integrate both elements.

Thus, despite the chapter devoted to analyzing the knowledge about traditions displayed by several anthropologists and the varying results of the inquiry conducted among current Berber shepherds, This paper is little more than the *in situ* ratification of the urgent need to document a way of understanding and acting within a landscape, which is fading away as modernity turns traditions into past.

The Oukaïmeden *Agdal* and the Transition to Modernity

The use of communal pastures in Oukaïmeden is subject to a very precise regulation that limits the

time periods for the livestock to access the valley and demarcates the territory that each group of shepherds -those from *Rheraya* and those from *Ourika*- must use.

This regulation, understood in a very broad sense, is called *agdal*: it comprises not only a set of rules, but also several religious rites and a legendary justification of its origins. The term “*agdal*” is regularly used in *Maghreb*, although its meaning is hard to understand due to its complex origins and the *polysemic* nature of the word. A literal translation could be “evergreen meadow” (Mahdi 1999). Nevertheless, the term also applies to limitations of a different nature and complexity, such as the rules to access other natural resources (forests, fruit trees, arable fields) or graveyards (Dominguez 2007).

Thus, in the context of the Oukaïmeden Valley, “*agdal*” refers to a set of rules and rites arising from an agreement between two parties in conflict to enjoy the use of limited community resources. The validity of this agreement depends essentially upon the acceptance and knowledge of both parties, that is, the shepherds from the *Rheraya* and *Ourika* valleys. (Mahdi 1999:182)

Access to Oukaïmeden grasslands is banned every year from March, 15th to August 10th. With the first light of this last day, the prohibition ends with an opening rite and livestock enter the valley from the mountain passes. The shepherds and their families settle in the *azib*, made up of simple stone houses fixed to a walled enclosure that houses the livestock (Mahdi 1999:183). Similar restrictions exist for the use of other High Atlas grasslands, always aiming to protect the natural resources (Dominguez 2007) but they have their own seasonal rules. In Oukaïmeden, the date to access the valley always remains the same, while the livestock departure date can change depending on the arrival of the cold weather and the snow, and it can be spread out over many days. However, in the *Ikiss yagour*-a pasture reservation located in the north of the Oukaïmeden Valley- the access date depends on the annual precipitation levels and takes place between June 15th and July 10th. The date to return to their original lands is September 28th, which is also the traditional walnut gathering day (Dominguez 2007: 14 and ff).

Although the borders for the use of pastures by the *Rheraya* and *Ourika* tribes are not marked, the shepherds know and respect them. Historically, an imaginary line separated the valley in two parts in the *Tizi n'Aouttou* which means, literally, “border mountain pass” (Mahdi 1999). No important modification of this border took place with the construction of an artificial dam in the *Assif n'Ait Irini*, the river crossing the valley. The division of the territory -whether the limits are natural or artificial- exists

and is still in force, although these rules are applied much more thoroughly to the temporary access prohibition.

The origins of the collective use of the land are found in traditions previous to the Atlas's conversion to Islam. Probably, the carvings on the rocks throughout the valley -primarily around boundaries such as fords, access routes or high visibility areas- have their origins in a conflict over the use of limited resources. In societies with oral traditions, reality is metonymically represented by symbols belonging to the same reality, and there is no discontinuity between these and the concept represented (Olson 1998; Hernando 2000 and 2012). This is why we need to understand these carvings as *places*, and not as a disconnected representation of the territory and the landscape. In this context, and in accordance with symbolic or post-processual archaeology, the geographical features of the landscape -such as mountain passes or fords- acquire a new meaning. The integration of the carvings in this human landscape -“human”, because it is interpreted and modified by man - changes our perspective about the places where they were made. The meaning of this place is not just another geographical coordinate, but a symbol that has to be interpreted along with other variables such as its visibility or orientation.

Among the current groups of shepherds, where the metonymical representation system is undermined by modernity, the general social structure determines who has the authority to solve conflicts. These are always elderly individuals, sometimes belonging to a lineage that justifies their control on the grounds of a singular ancestor, either real or mythological. Among some shepherd groups from East Africa, old men have a double role as spiritual and social leaders (Osamba 2008) sometimes mediating between the people and their divinity. Their decisions also have a double dimension, being compulsory both in legal and religious terms. These elders decide in any problem between shepherds -either about livestock or control over resources- following certain rites of legitimation. Thus, they play an important role in the solution of conflicts. Contrary to this hierarchical system, other shepherd groups as the Pashtuns living at both sides of the border marked by the Khyber Pass - solve their conflicts using traditional institutions such as the *jirga*, where decisions are taken in an assembly and accepted and enforced as a matter of honour. As in other traditional groups, family bonds are strengthened with marriage bonds between different clan members. This practice reduces the number, duration and effects of possible conflicts, although they do not cease to exist. We must highlight the fact that these conflicts between shepherds -over what

they consider their rights- are common all over the world, and their degeneration has been the cause of terrible slaughters in Eastern Africa (Krätli and Swift 1999). These conflicts have a common origin: a fight between marginal -in most cases- groups of shepherds over the use of grasslands, but not as a mechanism to obtain power or control over the land. There is also an implicit agreement for solving these incidents within the community itself, without any interference from the state (Bouh and Mammo 2008; Kreuer 2011).

In this context, the ancient agreement between *Rheraya* and *Ourika* shepherds over grazings management would have represented a first step towards the resolution of the conflicts generated by limited resources, and the origin of an exploitation regime. This regime would develop a set of rules that, over time, would be accepted and assimilated by both parties. The progressive addition and practice of rites would strengthen the agreement as much as its subsequent justification by a higher belief, in this case related to *Marabout* pre-Islamic traditions from southern Morocco, partly opposed to Islam. The belief in the High Atlas *Sidis* is a powerful mechanism to build and control the real world. This mythical world gives purpose to a certain regulation of the space. Also, its efficacy depends on the sacralisation of this place as unique and arranged by a Supreme Being, whose favour is obtained by repeating the rites (Hernando 2000: 94). This feedback between rites and legends is revealed in the Oukaïmeden *agdal*: several chapters of the *Sidi*

Fars Poem evoke these rites (Mahdi 1999: 149). The sacralisation of the land by associating it with a real or legendary character -though chosen by the divinity- is particularly clear for the *Marabout*. This is the name of the character, but also his grave or the location he chose for his religious retirement, both considered to be sacred places.

The Muslim influence in the religious practices of High Atlas Berbers has been interpreted as a syncretisation of the Quran with pre-Islamic beliefs, although it appears to be a forced coexistence, nowadays at least. In the high grasslands and in the *azib*, religious Islamic practices are limited by the lack of mosques which, on the other hand, are present in every village of the Maghreb. The seasonal nature of the settlement and the small size of the *azib* could justify the lack of religious temples for the community. According to Mahdi (1999:185), there is only one mosque in the valley, in *Tacheddirt*. Oukaïmeden also lacks another traditionally sacred place: the graveyard. People who pass away there or in the *azib* are buried in the villages located below where they were born. Islam has contributed to the disappearance of popular rites and beliefs, since they do not concur with the current interpretation of the Quran. Since the late twentieth century, young religious volunteers have visited the High Atlas villages, indoctrinating the inhabitants in the aforementioned interpretation and condemning traditional practices as pagan beliefs. Faith in the Atlas saints has diminished and the traditional respect for the legends that legit-



Fig. 1. Tradition and Modernity in the Oukaïmeden Valley.

imise traditional practices has become mockery (Dominguez 2007).

The communal ownership of the grasslands predates the Muslim occupation of the Maghreb, and the new colonisers tolerated and assimilated that system. The arrival of the French Protectorate respected local traditions, including them in the new legislation by a Decree issued on April 27th 1919, in force until 1979 (Decroux 1979 in Mahdi 1999: 220), in which many legislative, jurisdictional and executive powers were held by the representative assemblies of the villages. In other High Atlas locations, such as the *Zaouiat Ahansal* commune, the traditional practices were collected in a Transhumance Bill (1941) during colonial times. This Bill was a set of detailed rights and territorial limits for the three tribes in conflict regarding access to the grasslands. However, the Bill has been highly criticized because of the lack of agreement and consultation with the tribes, the excessive powers held by the protectorate authorities over the conflicts and the existence of a dramatic inaccuracy in the topographic delimitation of the territory (Bourbouze 1982). In the Oukaïmeden *agdal* such a collection was never performed, and the only precise regulation under the French Protectorate was the Decree of July 30th 1949, declaring all the pastures to be of public use. The immediate project to develop a ski resort resulted in the expropriation of part of the grassland, but the authorities legally recognised the representative nature of the *Sidi Fars*' official descendants to negotiate the terms of expropriation, which entailed accepting the traditional rights of the inheritors over the *agdal* (fig.1).

Oukaïmeden grew as a touristic centre associated with the ski resort, which entailed the loss of communal property to the benefit of private property as required by the construction of *chalets*, hotels and other facilities. The old *azib* literally disappeared, as the stones from the enclosures were used to build the new buildings, which also entailed the loss of many petroglyphs. At the end of the French Protectorate, a road was built on a previous non paved one made by the army, joining Oukaïmeden with Marrakesh, which had great economic impact over the people from the neighbouring valleys. Traditional shepherding was replaced by tourism-related jobs in restaurants and hotels, and the shepherds became tourist guides, ski instructors or porters in mountain activities. However, the seasonal nature of summer shepherding activities and other winter activities in the ski resort have prevented a bigger cultural shock in Oukaïmeden. Other shepherd communities were less fortunate and had dramatic problems of survival once exposed to the changes brought by modernity, as is the case of the Gujars, buffalo shepherds

in the Himalaya (Dangwal 2009). Other shepherds, such as the Changpa pastoral nomads from Ladhak (Goodall 2004), were forced to adapt to a sedentary way of life.

Spatial -not seasonal- coexistence of Berber shepherds and skiers has relatively modified the landscape and the perception of the *agdal* system. Nevertheless, a new project endangers the current balance in the valley: a business group from the United Arab Emirates is planning to create a large tourist resort. These new facilities would occupy a surface ten times bigger than the current ski resort and would hold ten new ski slopes, a golf course, athletic tracks for high-altitude training of elite athletes and eleven hotels (Mitrarte forthcoming, cited in Mahdi and Dominguez 2009). However, no environmental impact assessment was carried out until 2009, within the framework of a national tourism development strategy, which was planned to start in 2010. This project was reported in April 2008 to the United Nations by the Association for the Protection of Moroccan Rock Art and the World *Amazigh* Congress. To date, it has not been developed. Nevertheless, the protection of the archaeological and environmental heritage of the Oukaïmeden Valley should become an urgent and priority objective to the relevant cultural authorities to prevent similar risks in the future, as it is already a national park and thus, a protected natural area.

Traditions in the Oukaïmeden Grassland Reserve

As mentioned above, the traditions described in this paper refer to the set of symbolic or religious practices and beliefs that characterize the communal exploitation system in the *agdal* of Oukaïmeden. This system regulates not only the reserved area, but also when, how and by whom it is used. All these decisions are connected to the existence of a *patron saint* in the *agdal*, and the sacred nature of the pastures. Knowledge about these traditions has been transmitted orally until the late twentieth century, when they were documented thanks to several research projects in the Moroccan Atlas. These projects were generally linked to the importance of the archaeological sites or the high-altitude pastures. Projects in XXI century were mainly related to the environmental monitoring of the impact of community institutions.

To study the Atlas shepherds' traditions from an anthropological perspective we followed the seminal work of Mahdi, who documented several versions of the legendary tales of the *Rheraya* tribe between 1983 and 1985. He also witnessed the tra-

ditional rites to access the pastures reserve every year between August 9th and 26th.

Mahdi (1999: 223-238) offers two very similar versions of the traditional tale *Sidi Fars Poem*, and they both prove the legendary vision of the environment of the Berber tribes. In the first version, *Sidi Fars* is a leader born in *Aït Oumghar*. After a period of study with many *mullahs*, he leaves *Tamasloht* when his master, *Mulay Brahim*, tells him that he is no longer a student and that he should find the place that God assigned for him and gives him a mule for his journey. Every time the mule stops to sleep, *Sidi Fars* prays in the very same place, revealing his *Baraka*, or the favour of the Gods. When *Sidi Fars* chooses Oukaïmeden as the final place to pray, his saintliness becomes evident in his control over water and fire and the key element of the poem, the persecution he suffers by evil forces. Some tales represent these as the unbelievers, others as the water that, having inundated the grasslands, retires suddenly after a knock of his crook. In both cases, the results are miraculous: *Sidi Fars* escapes his pursuers leaning on a large vertical rock: when he touches it, the rock opens allowing *Sidi Fars* to hide inside, evading his enemies. The rock is still called *Taount Issaoualan*, “the talking stone”. This rock is located at the limit of the Oukaïmeden Valley, in the mountain pass from the *Rheraya* valley. In Mahdi’s transcript (*ibidem* 1999), the rock marks a celebration place for the ritual ceremonies honouring the patron saint of the *agdal*, to which women would come praying to cure their infertility by putting small stones at the base of the rock. The second poem identifies the prosecutors as Portuguese, which brings an element of war against the invaders into the poem. The Portuguese then became “The Other”. Curiously, this fits the results of the inquiry, in which Berber shepherds identify the Portuguese as the authors of the petroglyphs, or those buried into the tumuli. In either case, the legendary origins of the *agdal* are based on the holiness of *Sidi Fars*: his founding myth of *Sidi Fars* is at the basis of the pastoral system in Oukaïmeden. This has an organizational advantage: *Sidi Fars* himself demarcates the grazing territory and the shepherding limits of the *Rheraya* and *Ourika* tribes by means of a stone circle. Then, he dictates the rules for using the grasslands and the closed season until summer. In practice, *Sidi Fars* has the role of a judge or a territorial manager. In the legend, he is the founding hero. The poem also pervades the valley with a religious value: Oukaïmeden becomes a place of worship, as he chooses to end his journey there. The location of this rock is not fortuitous: it is the highest habitable place of the Atlas Mountains, the final stage of the *Sidi Fars* ‘holy journey.

Other authors add more details to this foundational tale: Garrigues-Cresswell, (1985:7) identifies *Sidi Fars* with a Berber leader from the XVIth century, whose descendants -the *sûrfa*- would be the owners of the Oukaïmeden lands, over which other tribes would only hold the right to use the pastures. Other legends mention a different rock (possibly a petroglyph) that holds the footprints of *Sidi Fars* when he knelt to pray. There are also legends describing a fountain from which the *Rheraya* and *Ourika* women come to drink and to bathe and ensure their fertility on the day they access the pastures again.

Mahdi (1999: 253 and ff) describes the ritualized access to the grasslands on August 10th, the closed season from March 15th until they are open again, and the misfortunes, illnesses and curses that, according to the law established by the leader, will fall upon those who break the rules and enter the pastures reserve during the closed season. Mahdi identifies four consecutive access rites:

1°. The shepherds and their livestock stay at the entrance of the *agdal* the day before the access to the pastures is allowed: an augur (called *inflas*) pronounces a good omen for the season. On August 10th, at the break of dawn, they enter the grasslands following a strict order, in which women lead the cows and men lead the sheep and goats.

2°. The *Isgar* rite, i.e. the passage of the pastures at first, and then the enclosures is reserved to Berber shepherds. According to one of the individuals surveyed, the aim of this rite is to bless the shepherd’s supplies and expel the bad spirits from the place.

3°. The *Arkoukou* rite is a meal shared by the women of several villages. Each group celebrates it on a certain day in places related to the *Sidi Fars* Poem. This rite includes animal sacrifices for consumption and a recital of the *fatiha* and other religious prayers.

4°. Celebrations at the *Sidi Fars* fountain always open and close the ritual cycle of Oukaïmeden; the first one takes place on the day after the pastures are available. Men, women and children gather together in a collective dance, which is also an opportunity for young people of different groups to meet. The second one takes place in the same location, on the third Friday after the entrance into the *agdal*. Two collections are carried out in both celebrations. In the first one, money is collected to buy a cattle that will be sacrificed the day after. In the second one, women must offer the butter lumps

they made on the 15th day since the arrival to the *agdal*. The purpose of both collections is to ask *Sidi Fars* for protection for the shepherds and their livestock.

These rites have gender-based distinctions. The meals are collective and depend upon women, who prepare the food, hoping to bring fertility and protection for the livestock. Masculine rites are usually celebrated individually with no meal involved, and are held outside the *azib* limits, in an open landscape. They aim to protect their properties and the respect for the grasslands limits (Mahdi 1999: chapter 7). Some edible products are also gender-related. A ritual association exists, on one hand between women and cattle, and on the other hand between men and sheep/goats. Thus, women offer the butter lumps they prepared previously and men do the same with milk from their livestock.

All these rites work as a coherent and specialised system where the territory and the seasonal migration acquire a sacred dimension.

The *Azib* and Shepherding in the Valley during the Pasture Season

The tribes that use the Oukaïmeden Valley seasonally follow the classical patterns of this activity, a common Mediterranean *transterminance* model (Ruiz-Gálvez 1998; Yakar 2000 cited in Gonzalez Ruibal, 2003). Shepherds live on lower lands and migrate to higher lands during the summer. Due to the short distance between the villages and the *azib* (less than a day to lead the livestock), it is reasonable to use the Spanish word "*transterminance*".¹ The climatic conditions in these high mountain pastures -mild summer temperatures and fresh pastures- allow the Oukaïmeden shepherds to combine different livestock (cattle, sheep and goats).

The study of the *agdal* system from an ethnoarchaeological perspective requires an analysis of the seasonal *azibs* of Berber shepherds and their families during the grazing period, as well as the foraging and shepherding techniques and their possible specialization by gender. Along with the study of the material culture, we tried to verify the survival of documented traditions, especially of those related to sacred places and the many rites described by Mahdi (1999). An in-depth study of an *azib* could not be carried out due to the anthropological and ethnoarchaeological limitations of the project. Nevertheless, in 2009 a planimetry was made of the *Imnwagens azib* chief's house. We also witnessed the entry to the valley in August 2010. Other ethnoarchaeological matters, such as the current *transterminance* paths, have only been analyzed by the

inquiry carried out by Ruiz-Gálvez as part of the ARPA's project, among the shepherds and the observation of livestock leaving and arriving to the mountain passes every year during the archaeological campaigns.

Each *azib* in the Oukaïmeden Valley has a similar structure: small groups of stone houses, usually consisting of one room and a small annexed enclosure to keep the livestock. Bigger houses usually give shelter to several kinship-related families, with a different room for each family. Rooms have no lighting and are normally used as living-room, kitchen and shared bedrooms. Some of the houses have a small room used for storage. Obviously, the kind, size and solidity of the constructions depend on how long a group will be staying in the summer pastures, but they usually follow a similar pattern: the only differences are not based upon social conditions, but upon the size of a family. The shepherds' settlements are spread out to facilitate mobility and fencing of the livestock. This prevents concentration of houses or the building of several floors. Despite this layout, the area of an *azib* where the houses are grouped usually does not exceed one or two hectares. However, other cases -such as the *Imnwagens azib*- present a scattered distribution between both catchment areas of a tributary of the *Irini* River. Some houses are located on the mountain slope, clearly away from the *azib* centre. In any case, the simplicity and integration in the landscape -into which they merge- are common features of all the constructions.

We chose to perform an ethnoarchaeological study of one of the houses and one of the inquires in the *Imnwagens azib*, because it remained still occupied in late October, shortly before the weather becomes cold, but also because of its dimensions. *Imnwagens* is one of the larger *azibs* in the valley and the layout of the houses is possibly the most scattered. There are also small orchards and plantations. The size and number of floors of some of the houses are very variable, non-existent in other *azibs* and could be a sign of social differences. The inhabitants belong to the *Ourika* tribe, and the *azib* is located approximately 7 km. away from the Oukaïmeden's village heading north-east.

Curiously enough, *Imnwagens*, whose people belong to the *Ourika* tribe, was one of the few *azibs* that still remained occupied at such a late date. Since, according to Mahdi (1999: 239), although the exploitation of the pastures is free and egalitarian, the duration of the stay and the rights of using the better pastures of the valley are determined by the degree of descent of *Sidi Fars*.

Thus, people belonging to the *azibs* located along the *Irini* River are allowed to use the pastures only

during the fifteen days that follow their entrance into the valley, which affects all shepherds from the *Ourika* valley, and many from the *Rheraya* valley, as only those who are considered as *Sidi Fars*' servers -that is, their direct descendants- can stay in the *agdal* during the whole open season. Thus, the presence of *Ourika* shepherds in the valley two months after their entrance proves a certain laxity in the application of customary practices.

The village chief, *Ibrahim Hazzyn*, lives in the largest house of the *azib*, a building with three two-story living areas divided by stone walls, reinforced with sun-dried bricks. *Ibrahim Hazzyn* lives there with his married brothers (*Hussein*, *Muhammat* and *Omar*) and their families. Each living area houses one nuclear family but all them under the same roof and under the authority of the elder son. The rooms used by the family are in the upper floor: this space, with an earthen floor partially covered by carpets, is used as a dining room during the day and as a bedroom at night. Several hollows have been set in the stone walls, used as closets to keep the bedspreads and blankets. The roof is made of wooden beams intertwined with hemp. Unlike other houses of the *azib*, the chief's house has an area separated from the other rooms and beyond the first enclosure. This room contains a western gas stove with a butane cylinder and a traditional oven to bake bread and *tajine*. The few objects brought to the *azib* are stored in cardboard boxes or plastic bags in the rooms or the kitchen/larder, and most are western products (household items and some toys) made of plastic or other materials (sneakers). In the village chief's house there was no television, in contrast to some other houses of the Oukaïmeden *azib* (figs. 3a and 3b).

Ibrahim's role is not only to represent the community and to be the village chief: he acts as its religious leader and reads the Quran, a legitimate role because he descends from the previous chiefs. Thus, he holds this position by inheritance. The right is transferred from parents to children -always male- of the same family. The future position of the chief's son determines his education. He is the only person in the village that can read and write in his generation. However, there were quite a lot of textbooks at *Ibrahim*'s house, more than those needed to extend this exclusive tradition. The education promoted by Moroccan authorities among the High Atlas population is likely to end this discrimination in the future.

The lower floor of the house consists of a cowshed for the cattle and a small orchard. In this *azib* -as in all others- women tend the cows daily, while men herd the sheep and goats. This difference is conditioned by childcare and other housework

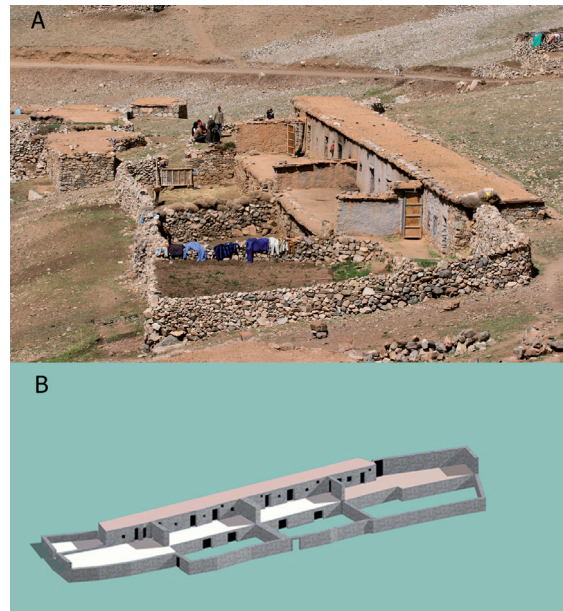


Fig. 2. A *Ibrahim Hazzyn*'s house in *Imnwagens azib*. B and its planimetry.

traditionally held by women, which forces them to remain close to their homes. Even small girls perform cattle-related tasks, such as milking the cows, preparing the cowshed and leading the cattle to the pastures. Cows graze within a limited area. While men can walk several kilometres daily with the sheep and goats, cattle routes do not usually exceed a few hundred meters. Thus, mobility patterns are one of the most significant distinguishing features. These patterns are not random, but related to maternity. The fragility and dependence of new-borns compel mothers to engage in safer and low mobility activities -risk is associated with mobility- as required by childcare. This difference also underlies gender-based specialized activities (Hernando, 2012, 59).

Unlike nomad shepherds, *transterminant* movements require a thorough knowledge of the territory, which implies better use of the natural resources due to the combination of two diverse niches. The seasonal -but regular- practices of complementary cultivation, hunting or fishing of different species, and the gathering of fruit and medicinal herb, make these shepherd communities a hybrid between nomad and sedentary societies, closer to the latter. People of origin at *Rheraya* and *Ourika* valleys, have an economy of horticulture terraces combined in recent years with arboriculture: olive trees, walnut trees and apple trees. The last two are found especially in the *Ourika* valley, which is a more open area. During their stay in the summer pastures, they collect high mountain medici-



Fig. 3. Foraging in the valley, Opposite to the Slope of *Jbel Oukaïmeden*.

nal herbs and hunt small animals, such as hares or partridges.

No changes were verified in the shepherds' traditional foraging activities. The shepherds herd their sheep and goat herds at dawn, and the women spend the first days of the open season to forage, prepare grass bundles to feed the cattle and fit out the rooms of the house. The construction of the road to the *Ourika* valley entailed a modernization process that made it easier for people, livestock and supplies to move. Shepherds follow the traditional paths -which became roads- but they use short cuts to reduce distances, although this also entails steeper slopes. They even prefer to move their flocks by transporting them in motor vehicles, according to one shepherds' testimony. However, all the movements documented during the archaeological campaigns were made on foot. Nevertheless, transportation of forage in trucks -driven by men- was documented. These men also help women to load the grass bundles (fig.3).

The first day of the open season in 2010 we witnessed the beginning of the foraging activity and the preparation of the *azib* for its seasonal use. We could not verify the rites described by Mahdi, since that year the open season coincided with the beginning of the Ramadan fasting, but there was a bazaar for the newcomers. Western influence has produced an acculturation process resulting in a hybrid culture, even in the most remote places, as proved by the objects sold in the bazaar. Next to the traditional stalls selling pottery to replace *azib* dishware- many others were selling the same clothes and plastic

cooking utensils found in most of the markets in the world. Next to the aforesaid pottery stalls, there were also several stalls selling Moroccan clothes and a horse shoeing tent. No other craftworks were recognized because it is not easy to identify the origin of the fossils, necklaces, rings and earrings offered by the hawkers as typical Berber products, at the door of the only tourist hotel in Oukaïmeden opened during the low season. The bazaar also contained several stalls selling nuts, dried fruits and sweets and one that offered *sfnanes*, a fried dough similar to a fritter (fig.4).

On August 10th, at midday, the same day of the beginning of the open season, a feast was held by all the inhabitants of the *Imnwagens azib*, where we had conducted the survey the year before. The first couple of hours were spent cooking and preparing a tent with approximately fifty chairs inside, while



Fig. 4. Pottery Stalls in the First day of the open Season.

a band consisting of several drums (the traditional North African *banadir*) played Berber music inside the tent. In the afternoon, the music stopped and the people gathered to eat *tajine* and fruit, avoiding formalities, following the traditional separation between tables of men and women. Once the meal was over, the band kept on playing, but in the open air and accompanied by female dancers, dancing one by one around the musicians. Two hours later the people gathered under the tent and listened to several Moroccan government representatives who, after a Muslim prayer, presented a health campaign to prevent goitre, hypothyroidism and stunted physical growth in children due to iodine deficiency, a problem endemic to the High Atlas region. The celebration ended at sunset, with the distribution of salt packages to the shepherds' families.

This celebration is a clear example of the symbiosis between simplified rites and government intervention for positive purposes. There were no special ceremonies or rituals in the dance or the meal that could be identified with the ones mentioned above. In fact, the *tajine* was made of chicken, so it could not be a ritual sacrifice. Also, although the dancers were dressed in blue -as in the Tuareg *guedra*- their lacklustre movements could not be identified as belonging to any Berber dance (fig.5).

Government intervention in Oukaïmeden goes further than the schooling process and has resulted in the rise of tourism in the area: visitors seek beautiful landscapes and the presence of *Jbel Toubkal* (4.167 m.a.s.l.), North Africa's highest mountain is

a lure. The Oukaïmeden Valley is located inside the *Jebel Toubkal* National Park, created in 1942. The construction of the road that allows access to the valley and the ski resort began shortly afterwards. The installation of a signal repeater was a key element in the modernization of the valley, providing it with coverage and the Internet. This repeater has been working for at least a decade. Before that, the permanent or seasonal inhabitants of the valley had to use private telephone lines or the only telephone booth in the village, which still exists, since many inhabitants do not have a cell phone yet. During the archaeological campaigns we verified that the revolution in communications has also changed how the people from the valley interact with each other. In this regard, some of the traditions documented by Mahdi have already disappeared, or will do so soon. Maybe the most significant tradition was the reunion around the *Sidi Fars* fountain, a celebration held by newcomers to fraternize. Historically, this was also an opportunity for the youngsters to meet or even to arrange marriages. However, the day after the open season began, no celebration was held around that sacred place, although some of the villagers of Oukaïmeden confirmed that it was the custom many years ago. Although most of the shepherds know the tradition and the location of the fountain, during the traditional day of the ritual it remained unvisited and neglected. Youngsters came across it but had a different destination: the benches located near the ski slope lifts -closed at the time- two hundred meters away from the abandoned fountain (fig.6).



Fig. 5. Musicians in the Feast day at *Imnwagens Azib*.



Fig. 6. Sidi Fars' Fountain.

Evolution of the Perception of the *Agdal* System

One of the anthropological goals ARPA's project was to study the knowledge and perception of the current Berber groups entering the Oukaïmeden *agdal* regarding their past, the entry rites and their legendary origins. The analysis of this past included, of course, their knowledge about the existence, meaning and authorship of the petroglyphs, but we also needed to verify the oral transmission of the *Sidi Fars* Poem and the current situation of their beliefs.

For this purpose an inquiry was conducted in French, as the shepherds only speak Berber/*Tamazight* and the use of an interpreter from this language into French was needed. It is therefore necessary to consider the possibility of interpretation mistakes or loss of information. We also have to assume that the sample is not representative enough, partly because questionnaire was conducted as a preliminary inquiry to gather information complementary to the archaeological record and because it was designed to judge the viability of a possible parallel ethnoarchaeological project focused on the activities of the *Rheraya* and *Ourika* shepherds, besides their stay in the Oukaïmeden *agdal*. Under the aforesaid circumstances, the results show the facts and opinions of the *agdal* inhabitants about *transterminance*, their life in the *azib*, their rites and their beliefs.

The questionnaire had 83 questions, clustered around four basic themes: a) Personal data and about their stay in the *agdal*; b) *Transterminance* details; c) Information about the *azibs* and about the *azibs'* structures and; d) The extent of their knowledge about the archaeological sites. For each group, the inquiry focused both on quantifiable data of their stay, size and type of livestock, distances travelled and pastures areas used and on ideas and beliefs (such as the origin of the *agdal*, or the meaning of the petroglyphs). While performing the inquiry, the questionnaire was modified according to the answers were receiving and unforeseen questions were added.

The inquiry was conducted during the 2009 campaign, between October 6th and 12th 2009. Its goal was to interview the village chiefs who moved to the summer *azibs* as well other shepherds, that used to participate in *transterminance* and now living in Oukaïmeden, who, due to their age and personal circumstances, could be rigorous and direct information sources. However, all the traditional *azibs* of the valley were already empty during that week, and the Oukaïmeden *azib* is not a representative sample because of its integration with the modern Oukaïmeden village. This is why we chose the *Imnwagens azib*, whose inhabitants come from the *Agouns douar*, in the *Ourika* Valley. Despite the limited size the sample, there was an advantage while conducting this survey: practically all the members of the *azib* were there, separated by gender, which allowed us to obtain information from both men and women, rather than having to depend only on the information from the *azib* chief. This provided us with a broader vision. The inhabitants of the *Imnwagens agdal* were not the only people who answered the inquiry. We also counted on the testimonies of several shepherds, two of them retired, another living permanently in the village, another one self-employed and two more who were communal shepherds.

Maybe the most interesting result of the inquiry from a Landscape Archaeology viewpoint was the delimitation of a frontier between territories. People from *Agouns* indicated *Talat Igitim* as a border, but it is hard to identify in this area due to the lack of accurate cartography and toponyms. Nevertheless, the oldest person to answer the survey indicated the same imaginary line in the current location of the dam.

The *Agouns* shepherds believe they have rights over the grasslands, according to the *Sidi Fars* Law on usage of the pastures, and because they descend from the *Ourika* warriors. The legitimization of the *Rheraya* tribe to use the pastures has also a legendary kinship explanation related to *Sidi Fars*: forty days after a child of this lineage is born, a lock of his hair is offered to the *Marabout* as a reminder of his relationship with the leader. The pastures limits were explained by a story similar to those describe by Mahdi: long ago, the fights between the *Rheraya* and *Ourika* tribes over the grasslands were continual. Then, the *Marabout* decided to mediate and dictated that, after the first morning prayer in their mosques, a member of each tribe should begin a journey towards each other's territory. The border would be placed at the exact point where they met. The representative of the *Rheraya* devised a cunning ploy: he took some dirt from the mosque's floor, hid it inside the hood of his *djellaba*, and



Fig. 7. Inquiry at the *Imnwagens azib*.

started his journey. When the representative of the *Ourika* tribe begin his own journey he met the member of the *Rheraya* tribe, who had conducted his morning prayer at dawn over the dirt he took from the Mosque, thus obtaining more grasslands for his tribe.

Another legend about the borders mixes the problems between both tribes with gender-related issues. This story is especially interesting for us -despite the subjectivity or bias of the testimony- as it was narrated by a shepherd who witnessed some of the facts he narrated us. According to *Muhamat Umlil*, only men were allowed to enter the *azib Timinkar*, as they were only interested in pastures for their sheep and goat herds. Men from the neighbouring *azib Aït Akar* warned them not to settle near them if they were not coming with their wives, to prevent the foreigners from courting theirs. *Timinkar* shepherds complained to the *qadi* and he changed the location of the borders between both *azibs*. This informer added that until 1992, they all belonged to the same commune (*Ourika*) but, after the dispute, the *qadi* divided it in two. People from *Timinkar azib* were punished for not wanting to bring their wives, and became dependent on the *Setti Fatma* commune².

These stories -whatever their degree of historic accuracy- all point to one fact: the rivalry between both *azibs* over the use of the grasslands, either because of their scarcity or because of their interest in accessing the best pastures. Yet, taking into account that they are the women, the ones in charge of the cattle in the summer *azibs*, one could suspect that *Timinkar's* flocks consisted only of goats and sheep

and not cows, and these people were considered not as well-off as their *Aït Akar* neighbours (fig.7).

Other participants were less aware of the spatial and temporal borders and the legendary or real origin of the rights over the grasslands. One of the shepherds living in Oukaïmeden was not aware of any prohibition to access the pastures, neither did he remember any stories related to rocks, mountains or landmarks used for orientation. He did not know about the borders between *Rheraya* and *Ourika*, although his grandfather told him that long ago both tribes had fought over the trespassing of the pastures, and that people were killed in those fights.

The shepherds unanimously agreed that the access routes to the valley had not changed, probably because the main roads have been in use for more than sixty years. One of the shepherds of the *Imnwagens azib* admitted to carrying his flock by truck -using the road- if he had the chance. The fact is that the days that followed the *agdal* opening, the scattered shepherds arriving to the valley followed the small short cuts from the two main Oukaïmeden roads: the paved road leading to Marrakesh and the -for now- unpaved road to *Imlil* both for *Ourika's* tribe members.

Quite on the contrary, those shepherd families entering the Oukaïmeden *agdal* from the western *douars*, either have to walk with all their belongings, or use mules to transport people and burdens as in past times. Since the *Rerhaya* valley is narrow and steep and there exist only a meandering earth track built recently by the Moroccan authorities (fig.8).



Fig. 8. Short cut in the Entrance to the Valley from *Rheraya* by *Tizi n'Addi*.

There are several well-known reasons that justify the closed season. The prohibition of using the grasslands between the end of March and August 10th is explained by its use as a stock to feed the animals when pastures become scarce in lower lands. Also, the date of departure from the *agdal* is logically explained by the arrival of the first snowfall and the lack of pastures after a two-month use of the grasslands. However, other Muslim shepherds explained that the closed season was due to religious reasons arising from Islam, quoting a Quranic *Shura* that mentions the respect for other people's rights.

The people who knew about the borders and their locations confirmed the existence of penalties for both tribes in the event of trespassing and use of the other tribe's pastures. The penalties differ: from amounts of money that have varied over time (i.e. 1000 Moroccan *dirhams* nowadays, but 100 *dirhams* long ago) to payments in kind (a lamb, a goat or a cow). Other people specified that the penalty was only effective if the trespasser was guilty. If trespassing was unintentional, the penalty had no effect. When asked about fights resulting from border trespassing, the elderly told us that "before the French people came" there were fights over the grasslands, even deaths. In fact, they link the existence of the burial mounds to these disputes, assuming that the people killed in these fights are buried there.

The inhabitants of the *Imnwagens azib* believe that lost travellers are buried in the tumuli and told us an interesting variation of this story. Regarding the mountain pass they cross to enter the Oukaïmeden pastures, the *Tizi Atar*. According to the story, a hawker was walking through the mountain pass when the weather changed suddenly, a storm broke out, and he passed away. His name was *Atar*, and the mountain pass was named after him. The *azib* inhabitants believe that he could be buried in one

of the burial mounds. This story - not documented by Mahdi- could be an oral reminder of the punishments and curses that *Sidi Fars* put on those who broke the law and trespassed the grasslands during the closed season.

The perception that inhabitants of the valley have of the prehistoric engravings are also interesting for our project. It is significant but natural that none of the women interviewed knew about the existence of these carvings, since they are located beyond the area frequented by women. However, it is important to highlight that only the women from the *Imnwagens azib*, which is located far away from the engravings, answered our survey. Thus, all the interpretations we collected came from the men. These, in turn, showed significant differences depending on their age, with regard to their location, depth of knowledge and interpretation. Older men proved a deeper knowledge about the petroglyphs, and thought, either that the authors were the Portuguese or the ancient Berbers or the French, what should be understood in terms of Otherness. These beliefs are determined by the antiquity of the petroglyphs. The older ones, representing animals, were ascribed to nomadic and prehistoric people, or to ancient Berber tribes. The most recent ones, which are more abstract, are linked to the French. According to one of the communal shepherds, the animal-shaped petroglyphs were made by Berber shepherds before the development of agricultural practices. The origin of the most recent petroglyphs was unknown to him, but he associated them with the pastures' limits.

Most of the shepherds have no explanation about their meaning, but did not appear to care: they knew that the petroglyphs must be important, because people come to visit and tourists pay a tip to see them. Some shepherds identified elephants, mouflons, lions or hyenas, and linked the engravings to the animals that once existed in the valley. Some of the *Imnwagens* shepherds recognized depictions of weapons among the petroglyphs, but of an unfamiliar kind. This led them to conclude that the authors were not from the *Ourika* valley. One of the communal shepherds interviewed knew about the petroglyphs and thought they were made by Portuguese people or "other Berber people". He could not answer any questions regarding their meaning, especially regarding the presence of weapons among the petroglyphs, but he stated that the "ancient Berber people" had engraved what they saw back then. He could identify some wild animals from the High Atlas he had never seen (such as hyenas, lions and foxes) because he had heard his elders' stories. According to his story, lions could be seen in the Oukaïmeden Valley until 1950.

Current Berber shepherds have a poorer understanding of the engravings. A 39 year-old shepherd who enters the pastures following the *Irini* River, admitted to have seen the petroglyphs, although he could not distinguish any animals or weapons. In his own words, "I just see things". He did not explain their existence or meaning, indicating that he had not even considered the question. Nor did he know of the existence of the burial mounds or connect the engravings with the pastures; however, he did remember his grandfather attributing the engravings to the old Berber people. He also referred to one of the stories collected by Mahdi about the butter lumps the shepherds offer to *Sidi Fars* during the entrance to the pastures, to ask him to protect the livestock.

Thus, certain elements concerning the origin of the engravings are common to all the stories. Once the *agdal* system was regulated and accepted, the metonymic representation of reality disappeared progressively. In this context, the petroglyphs could represent a link with the past of each tribe of shepherds, but they do not feel that way. For them, their ancestors are neither behind the petroglyphs nor inside the burial mounds. Thus, the original perception of the engravings as key elements of the landscape or as reminders of certain rules or threats has become an external interest in the petroglyphs: expectations of profit from tourist inflow, although this is currently scarce.

Besides the territorial limits and the petroglyphs, three features were shared by all the interviewees: the proximity of their home villages (*douars*) to the Oukaïmeden *agdal*, the survival of age and gender division of labour, and the functional distribution of the *azib*.

When asked about the time expended in the journey to the summer *agdal*, the answers varied, depending on the kind of animal involved in the seasonal migration, but it was never longer than one day march. Travel is usually by foot and takes a few hours. Also, the proximity between the villages of origin and the summer pastures is consistent with the location of the engravings at the entrance of the grasslands, and no further. The survival of the traditions concerning labour specialization is especially strong. As mentioned above, the interviewees' answers confirmed that they perceive their shepherding activity to be determined by gender. Women take care of the cows, cowsheds and cattle foraging, and all the domestic activities, specially cooking and childcare, while men herd the goats and sheep. Among the tasks allocated to women were traditional activities, such as collecting medicinal herbs or rug weaving and other activities directly related with offering rites, such as butter production.

The stay in the *azib* also depends on the division of labour: everybody celebrates the open season in the high grasslands, but some come back home when the celebration is over to take care of the house and crops. If the high-mountain stay is shorter, sometimes the communal shepherd stays until the arrival of the first snowfall.

When asked about the location of the *azibs*, everybody replied that they were located on mountain slopes that provided the best shelter and as close as possible to a water course. They also confirmed that nothing is cultivated in the *azib*. They carry as many things as possible with them from their home villages along with the herds, and they buy the rest in the weekly bazaar or -more recently- in Oukaïmeden markets and stores. Also, once or twice a month the hawker's van visits *Imnwagens*. During the *transterminance*, the main products they carry are obviously edible: oil, flour, lentils and corn. The reluctance of people belonging to the household of the *Imnwagens azib* chief to admit the existence of several crops is hard to interpret. When asked about a sunflower field, they first said that they were decorative. To explain other crops they said that they were used to feed the cows. Only after we insisted, did they admit to cultivating beans in the high grasslands, which they abandon when they return to their home villages. Other houses in *Imnwagens* had an orchard as well. In this regard, we could not find out why some houses of the *azib Imnwagens* were located clearly and unnecessarily far from the water and the centre of the village, and scattered on the mountain slope. Despite our questions, no explanation clarified whether differences in social kinship justified that distance.

The oldest interviewees all agreed that small game (hares, partridges or squirrels) and the collection of roots and herbs were long ago a complement to their staple diet, until it was forbidden during the French Protectorate. Nowadays, this has been replaced with market products, or products carried from their home villages. They also strongly confirmed that nothing is cultivated in the mountain during the open season.

The celebrations held during two weeks after the entrance to the pastures are also considered as opportunities to socialize. They are perfect to strengthen a friendship or to arrange marriages between both groups, although the references we have from the past indicate that marriage between members of different tribes was not allowed.

Several questions in the survey aimed to obtain information about religious practices, diseases and death among the shepherds during their stay in the valley. Neither Oukaïmeden nor the *azibs* have religious public places, but many Berber shepherds



Fig. 9. Women of *Imnwagens azib* during the Inquiry.

living close to Oukaïmeden confirmed that they respond to the call to worship in the open area of the village. The shepherds also denied the presence of cemeteries in the valley: if someone dies during the journey or the stay in the *azib*, he/she is buried in his home village, or *douar*. If a woman goes into labour or somebody gets sick or has an accident, they are cared for in their home village, if it is close enough. Otherwise, they are cared for in the *azib*. The interviewees also confirmed that medicinal herbs are still widely used, while access to medicines is practically non-existent during their stay in the *azib*.

The survey not only provided significant data and ideas to understand the evolution of the Berber shepherds' perception of tradition. While the men answered individually, the women from Agouns answered collectively: even when asked individually, they tended to consult with each other and participated collectively in the answer they gave. Observing their reaction it was difficult not to think of the different meaning that individuality and personal relationships have for women in oral societies. This assembly of women could identify the existence of the border and its name (*Talat Igitim*) the same as the men. Nevertheless, the meaning of this border or even the existence of

the carvings or the burial mounds was unknown to them, and they showed a total indifference towards the world beyond their *azib* (fig.9).

The women confirmed the information that the men gave us about several complementary traditional activities among Berber women, such as weaving flax or carpets, and the preparation of dairy products. However, we found no proof of any of these activities in the *azib*, so this might refer to activities fallen into disuse. These might be winter activities carried out in their home villages, or products bought in Oukaïmeden or at other weekly bazaars.

Conclusions

As mentioned in the introduction, the main goal of this paper is to establish a relationship between tradition and modernity in the Oukaïmeden Valley by comparing its historical evolution -its use as an *agdal*- with the current situation from an ethnoarchaeological point of view. On the other hand, we also performed research on the current shepherds' perception of that situation and the traditions supporting it. All these goals were intertwined in a project aiming to integrate field archaeology with settle-

ment patterns and landscape archaeology. Assuming, as we did in the introduction, the limitations of our ethnoarchaeological fieldwork, the following conclusions try to sum up some reflections arisen from our target: the integration of several fields of study applied to the analysis of a changing world such as the *transterminance* of the Berber shepherds in the Moroccan High Atlas.

The *agdal* system contains a set of rites and rules that have regulated the use of Oukaïmeden pastures in recent centuries, a collection that contains lay and religious aspects, the origins of which are lost in non-historical times. Before or during a dispute resolution process to control the access of the Berber tribes to limited resources, the Oukaïmeden Valley became a *liminal* place, whose borders matched with natural boundaries as run-off water or other water courses coming down from the mountain slopes and became natural borders to the *Irini* River.

The areas with the highest concentration of petroglyphs are located around these natural borders. Thus, if we accept the link between the engravings and the prehistoric seasonal use of the valley, as confirmed by 14C dating and the rest of the information gathered by the ARPA project, it would be reasonable to interpret the engravings as a prehistoric proto-law. This set of rules -understood in a broad sense- would have regulated the rights over the use of the grasslands, acting as a mixture of indicators and warnings, a nomenclature yet to be deciphered. Should this be the case, it would explain why there are much fewer modern-time engravings than ancient ones. In times of widespread legislation, there is no need for petroglyphs. Certain rules would have been adopted by the tribes in conflict, in the form of rites of access and the consolidation of a mythical tale internalized by all.

This interpretation assumes a metonymic connection in oral societies between reality and the symbols representing that reality. This represents a greater integration of the engravings and the territory, which became a lived landscape for the shepherds that created them.

Once the communal use of pastures was approved by Islam and the *agdal* was settled, the rites confirm an adherence to the system. They also strengthen the relationships between the valley villages after the open season. Their assimilation and acceptance by the *agdal* Berber tribes is an effective requisite of their existence.

Myths are understood as timeless, sacred and spatial-related (Hernando, 2000). Thus, repetition of the rites is essential to ensure the favour of a major being such as *Sidi Fars*, whose *Baraka* provides balance against the main enemy of traditional

societies: change. This is not by accident, that as much in oral tales as in daily life, the stones play a significant role. They are landmarks in the landscape, and on whose surface the prehistoric shepherds inscribed messages. In traditional tales, *Sidi Fars* hid in a stone... and there he remained. There is another with his footsteps engraved on it, as well as a talking stone. And a further tale according to which, *Sidi Fars*, in what constitutes a foundation myth, delimited the grazing area with a stones circle and took possession of the area won to Nature (Mahdi 1999:228 and ff). This is when metaphors and mythical reality mingle, because the main goal of archaeological research is precisely to make stones talk. That is why the stones symbolize the steadiness of a way of life facing the uncertainty of the future.

Shepherding continues to be the traditional lifestyle, and the relationship of the shepherds with the territory is still closer to their prehistoric ancestors than to modern society. *Transterminance* nowadays follows similar patterns to those documented by several authors (Atlas (Bourbouze 1982; Garrigues-Cresswell 1985; Mahdi and Dominguez 2009). Modifications in the routes or the seasonal *azibs* could not be verified. The opening date for pastures remains the same, but the shepherding periods -established according to the proximity of kinship with *Sidi Fars*- change, as shown by the presence of *Ourika* shepherds in the valley two months after the opening. This exceeds the time authorised by the *agdal* rules by more than two weeks. *Azibs* are defined by stable rules on location, construction, space and function. This will continue if the essence of shepherding -the pastures reserve- is not affected by future expropriations in order to promote the touristic development of the valley. Labour specialization and gender division of herding activities also seems stable. Women are in charge of those tasks that need a certain proximity to the house (foraging, the cattle and housework) following a traditional mobility pattern. However, the situation has been affected by the changes that modernity has introduced into the rites, and also regarding the perception of their own past and of their own landscape by people in Oukaïmeden. Both facts were clearly confirmed during the field campaigns in the valley, and also through the analysis of the interviews in our questionnaire. The decline of collective rituals affects both the content and the execution of those rites in sacred places, which redounds in a progressive loss of knowledge about them. The most representative example may be the abandoned *Sidi Fars* fountain, but it is not the only one. Feasts and ritual dances seem to have partially lost their symbolic

meaning. In some cases this is due to inconsistencies during their performance. In other cases they have been simply abandoned.

Some people have a deeper perception of the past. Their answers to the questionnaire show that they still have certain knowledge about traditions and about the myth of origin, the *Sidi Fars* Tale, or at least know of its existence. This perception also applies to the petroglyphs. The engravings are thought to be depictions of High Atlas extinct animals. This identification is widespread, as well as the belief that the petroglyphs were made by foreigners from a distant time or place -ancient Berber people, not related to them or the French or Portuguese. The belief linking the unknown with the image of the Other is also confirmed by the answers referring to those buried in the burial mounds, identified as foreigners, travellers or other Berbers, i.e. the non Muslims or pagans.

The youngest interviewees gave less information. They showed a significant lack of interest about some of the questions in the inquiry, such as the identification, location and meaning of the petroglyphs. Instead, they were appreciated for their chrematistic value, derived from the cultural and touristic interest they evoke, but never as a link with their past. This progressive loss also affects their knowledge of the *agdal* traditions, which is probably another consequence of the change in socialization patterns. Information is no longer transmitted orally from parents to children, but using methods more closely related to modernity.

Anyway, none of the interviewees -old or young- felt related to the archaeological elements of the landscape -engravings and burial mounds- or felt a relationship of these elements with their own past. Beyond the possible causes, such as overcoming or abandoning the model of metonymic representation of reality, or a greater influence of Islam after the fall of the French Protectorate, the truth is that the archaeological remains are associated with a mythical time, old enough to be considered unrelated to their own culture.

The tradition vs. modernity duality is a contest with a foretold winner. That has been the case at any time in the history of humanity, characterized by constant development with exponential acceleration. But those historians feeling that the multiple and rich traditions are now -at the beginning are actually announcing the decline of the system.

of the XXIst century- about to be absorbed by a unifying and impoverishing modernity or reduced to a tourist consumer item, are facing at least two problems. Firstly, the urge to rescue what is still left -even if it is a hybrid- for the sake of future memory. This is a common -but still relevant- desire of many authors (i.e. Gonzalez Ruibal, 2000).

The second one is more serious, if possible. Contrary to what we might assume, this XXIst century modernity that is destroying cultural differences is not doing so while improving economical conditions. Not only are they statistically present, but also the perception of these differences remains untouched. Oukaïmeden Valley preserves a reasonable balance between the traditional shepherding lifestyle and tourism focused on skiing, an activity that is less popular in Morocco than in Europe.

This is due to three favourable circumstances: a) seasonal compatibility between the use of this land as pastures in summer and tourism in winter; b) compatibility of both niches: sport (vertical use) and shepherding (horizontal use) c)and, the limited use of the ski resort, mainly restricted to a small number of Moroccans who practice this sport. Europeans have access to an overwhelmingly superior quality of ski runs, hotels and other services. In Oukaïmeden, all these factors combine to hide the apocalyptic, but real perception of other places where the circumstances were randomly unfavourable, as any viewer of *Darwin's Nightmare* film directed by Hubert Sauper, can confirm.

The fact is that Oukaïmeden preserves some traditional, pre-modern aspects. For the moment, traditional shepherding practices coexist with modernity, represented by a ski resort, a road crossing the valley and a signal repeater. Here we tried to prove that the Oukaïmeden *agdal* is a complete organizational system, a whole made up of several entry rites, rules of usage and an oral tradition justified and strengthened by a religious component. Nevertheless, we have to admit that this institution is being weakened by modernity. The erosion of this tradition is at the same time cause and condition for the changes in the perception that the current *agdal* inhabitants have of their environment. This is mainly due to two different causes: new technologies and Islam. That is why the loss of traditional beliefs and the abandonment of the rites that justify them

NOTES

1. The Spanish word *transterminance* refers to short movements, usually between two neighbouring parishes located at different height, what affords profiting of complementary climate conditions and vegetative growth between lowland and upland. It entails shorter distances than transhumance.
2. Village located 67 km far from Marrakesh and 30 from Oukaïmeden.