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**Mohammed AMRAOUI¹, Mohamed EL AMRANI¹,
Dragica MIJANOVIC², Shuraik KADER³, Hasan OUAKHIR⁴**

AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE AIT WERRA TRIBE DURING THE FRENCH COLONIALISM PERIOD AND ITS LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS (1912-1956) WITHIN THE MIDDLE ATLAS REGION OF MOROCCO

SUMMARY

The intertwining of agriculture and economic development during Morocco's period of French colonialism holds a fascinating historical significance. This paper attempts into how this relationship shaped the local characteristics of Morocco's economy, offering insights into the complex dynamics of colonial influence on agricultural practices and their impact on the nation's economic trajectory. This research aims to investigate the agriculture and economic development of the Ait Werra tribe during the French protectorate in Morocco. The French protectorate, established on March 30, 1912, brought about various changes in the agricultural and economic policies of Morocco in the first half of the twentieth century. These changes affected both urban and rural areas, but the tribal economy experienced the most significant impact. While the cities had already opened up to European countries and welcomed their traders, the Moroccan villages remained isolated from the outside world, and the authority of the Makhzen was not prevalent in many mountain tribes. Thus, colonization was a massive shock that transformed all aspects of life, especially for tribes like Ait Werra, which is a part of the Berber confederation and situated in the Middle Atlas Mountain range near to El Kssiba. This article will explore the fixations and transformations of the Ait Werra tribe's economy as it transitioned from the pre-Makhzen to post-colonial era in Morocco.

Keywords: agriculture; economic development; Ait Werra tribe; Atlas region; Morocco

¹Mohammed Amraoui, Mohamed El Amrani; Laboratory of History Legal sciences and languages, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Saïs, MOROCCO;

²Dragica Mijanovic, Faculty of Philosophy, Geography, University of Montenegro, D. Bojovica, 81400 Niksic, MONTENEGRO;

³Shuraik Kader, School of Engineering and Built Environment, Griffith University, Nathan, QLD 4111, AUSTRALIA; Green Infrastructure Research Labs (GIRLS), Cities Research Institute, Griffith University, Gold Coast, QLD 4215, AUSTRALIA;

⁴Hasan Ouakhir, Faculty of Letters And Human Sciences, University of Sultan Moulay Slimane, Beni Mellal & Laboratory Dynamic Of Landscapes, Risks And Heritage, MOROCCO.

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INTRODUCTION

Morocco, officially known as the Kingdom of Morocco, is situated in the north-western part of Africa within the historically significant Maghreb region. Spain is north of Morocco across the Gibraltar, and Algeria is on Morocco's eastern border (Petrovic and Reed, 2023; Muller *et al.*, 2022). The history of Morocco during the French colonialism period is marked by a complex interplay of agricultural transformations, economic development, and the emergence of distinct local characteristics (Simonnet, 2007). This paper emphasis into the multifaceted relationship between agriculture, economic dynamics, and unique regional traits within the context of Morocco's colonial past (Pennell, 2000). By examining insights from scholarly works and historical records, this study aims to illuminate the ways in which French colonial policies influenced agricultural practices, shaped economic trajectories, and contributed to the nuanced social and economic fabric of local communities (Charis, 2012).

The Mediterranean region has been a pivotal cradle for the development of agriculture, showcasing a rich historical evolution from ancient times to the present day. The early agrarian practices of this region are notably highlighted by the emergence of the Neolithic period, around 10,000 BCE, witnessed through archaeological evidence such as the cultivation of cereals like wheat and barley, as well as the domestication of animals like sheep and goats (Zohary *et al.*, 2012; Luković, 2016; Gogić, 2023). This region's distinctive climate and geography played a significant role in shaping its agricultural trajectory, with the coalescence of innovative techniques like terracing and irrigation to counteract the region's aridity (Tainter, 2013). The Mediterranean's agrarian history is also closely linked to the diffusion of crops and ideas across civilizations, facilitated by the maritime networks that fostered exchange between ancient cultures like the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans (Bowman, 2000). Contemporary agriculture in the Mediterranean region is marked by a blend of traditional methods and modern technologies, adapting to challenges such as water scarcity and climate change while preserving its deep-rooted agricultural heritage (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019). This enduring narrative of agricultural development in the Mediterranean underscores its pivotal role in shaping human civilization.

Agricultural policies under colonial rule had a profound impact on Morocco's economic landscape, shaping production systems, land distribution, and trade patterns. This influence extended to various regions and was often tailored to accommodate both French interests and local dynamics (Mundy, 2015). The tensions and negotiations surrounding these policies played a role in shaping the socio-economic dynamics of the time (Burke, 2017). This research aims to examine the economic transformations of the Ait Werra tribe during the French protectorate period (1912-1956) and highlighting the actual development of agriculture and economic policies. The case of the Ait Ouirra tribe provides an illustrative example of how the French colonial agenda transformed the tribe's spaces and built environment (Mhenna, 1991). However, in much regions of Morocco and particularly in the Middle Atlas, each tribe had to be conquered for as general Guillaume said no tribe ever came in to French without its first having

been beaten by force of arms. Lyautey, the first French Resident-General in Morocco from 1912 to 1925, aimed to conquer and make peace. One of them Bassou, was ruling the Ait Werra thirty years later with an influence extending far beyond his borders (Bidwell, 2012).

The objective of this study is to understand the impact of colonialism on local perceptions of Ait Werra's economic and cultural heritage. The imposition of French protection on Morocco on March 30, 1912, brought about significant economic developments during the first half of the twentieth century. France aimed to make Morocco an economic market and achieve this goal by controlling its economic mechanisms and modernizing its structures to meet the requirements of the capitalist regime. The economic development affected both Moroccan cities and villages, but the tribal economy experienced the most significant impact (El Bachir Bousslame, 1991). Unlike the cities, which had already opened up to European countries and welcomed their merchants, Moroccan villages remained isolated from the outside world, including the authority of the Makhzen, which was not prevalent in many mountain tribes (Gershovich, 2012). Therefore, colonialism was a shock that transformed all aspects of life, particularly for tribes like Ait Werra, whose economy was heavily affected. The significant research gap in post colonisation era focusing on agricultural sustainability has implicated the scientific and commercial growth in the study area. This article aims to analyze the constants and variables of the Moroccan tribal economy as a whole, between the pre-Makhzen and post-colonial eras basing on agriculture and economic activities, by studying the case of the Ait Ouira tribe, which located in the Middle Atlas of Morocco.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Presentation of study area

Morocco is a country of the Maghreb located on the extreme North-West of the African continent and only 14 kilometres away from Spain (Bilgili and Weyel, 2009) along the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Position of this area is strategic with the location along Strait of Gibraltar; and it is the only African country to have both Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines (Sabri *et al.*, 2019). The northern region of Morocco features mountainous terrain, including the Rif Mountains and the Atlas Mountains, alongside expansive plateaus interspersed with fertile valleys and coastal plains. In contrast, the southern part of the country is characterized by vast flat deserts, predominantly composed of rocky or sandy surfaces. The highest point is Jebel Toubkal 4,165 m, lowest point: Sebkhah Tah -59 m; with mean elevation of 909 m. The main natural resources are phosphates, iron ore, manganese, lead, zinc, and fish, salt. Agricultural land is about 67.5%, arable land, 17.5%; permanent crops, 2.9%; permanent pasture, 47.1%; forest, 11.5%; other: 21%. The most significant population density in Morocco is concentrated along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, with numerous densely populated urban areas dispersed across the Atlas Mountains (Moukhliiss *et al.*, 2022; Elfanne *et al.*, 2022; Sabri *et al.*, 2022; Abubakar, 2016; Abubakar, 2008).

Demographic profile

Morocco is experiencing a demographic transition characterized by a slower population growth rate, attributed to increased life expectancy and reduced birth rates among women. Enhanced healthcare, improved nutrition, better hygiene, and wider vaccination coverage have contributed to the decline in infant, child, and maternal mortality rates. Nevertheless, disparities persist, particularly between urban and rural areas as well as among households with varying levels of wealth. The decrease in Morocco's child population is a consequence of several factors, notably the decline in its total fertility rate, which has dropped from 5 in the mid-1980s to 2.2 by 2010. This reduction can be attributed to the rise in female educational attainment, increased contraceptive usage, delayed marriage, and a growing preference for smaller family sizes. A substantial portion of Morocco's population, nearly 26%, comprises young adults aged 15-29, presenting a significant potential economic workforce if gainfully employed. Nevertheless, the current reality shows that many of these youths face unemployment due to a disparity in job creation, which has not kept pace with the expanding working-age population. Those who do find employment are often engaged in the informal sector, where job security and benefits are typically limited (Moukhliiss *et al.*, 2022; Elfanne *et al.*, 2022; Abubakar, 2016; Abubakar, 2008).

In the second part of the 20th century, Morocco emerged as one of the leading countries in terms of emigration, resulting in the establishment of extensive and geographically diverse migrant communities in Western Europe. The Moroccan government has actively promoted emigration since gaining independence in 1956, for two key reasons: to secure remittances that can be used to support national development initiatives and to provide an outlet for preventing potential unrest in regions, often populated by Berber communities, with a history of rebellious tendencies. While Moroccan labour migrants had initially focused on destinations such as Algeria and France, a significant shift occurred from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s when Moroccan "guest workers" dispersed extensively across north-western Europe. Both host societies and the Moroccan migrants themselves initially anticipated that this migration would be temporary. However, due to worsening economic conditions in Morocco linked to the 1973 oil crisis and the implementation of stricter European immigration policies, these temporary stays evolved into permanent settlement.

A subsequent wave of family migration unfolded during the 1970s and 1980s, marked by a rising number of second-generation Moroccans choosing to pursue naturalized citizenship in their host countries. In the mid-1980s, Spain and Italy emerged as new destinations for Moroccan migrants. However, the early 1990s saw both countries imposing visa restrictions, prompting Moroccans to increasingly migrate through legal means by marrying individuals of Moroccan descent already residing in Europe or resorting to illegal channels to engage in underground economy activities. Notably, there was a growing representation of women among these labour migrants. Simultaneously, some highly skilled Moroccans sought opportunities in the United States and Quebec, Canada.

During the mid-1990s, Morocco evolved into a transit hub for asylum seekers originating from Sub-Saharan Africa and undocumented labour migrants hailing from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. They aimed to reach Europe, primarily by crossing into southern Spain, the Spanish Canary Islands, or Spain's North African enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla. Despite instances of forceful expulsions by Moroccan and Spanish security forces, these illegal migrants have persisted in their attempts, and concerns over security in Europe have not been assuaged. Rabat remains reluctant to endorse a European Union agreement to repatriate third-country nationals who have entered the EU illegally via Morocco. Meanwhile, many other undocumented migrants have opted to remain in Morocco either temporarily, while they accumulate sufficient funds for onward travel, or as a "second-best" permanent choice. The initiation of a regularization program in 2014 conferred legal status upon some migrants, granting them equal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

Age structure

Based on the reports available at the national statistics, but also to the publications of various authors (Moukhliiss *et al.*, 2022; Elfanne *et al.*, 2022; Abubakar, 2016; Abubakar, 2008), population with the age of 0-14 years is 26.01% (male 4,919,266/female 4,722,463); 15-64 years: 65.92% (male 12,124,939/female 12,311,552); 65 years and over: 8.06% (2023 est.) (male 1,455,355/female 1,533,845).

Total dependency ratio is 52.2; youth dependency ratio: 40.9; elderly dependency ratio: 11.3; potential support ratio: 8.9. Median age total is 29.1 years; where male are 28.7 years, female is 29.6 years; and population growth rate is 0.88%; Birth rate, 17.1 births/1,000 population; 6.61 deaths/1,000 population.

Major urban areas are located with 3.893 million in Casablanca, 1.959 million RABAT (capital), 1.290 million Fes, 1.314 million, Tangier, 1.050 million Marrakech, and 979,000 Agadir. Sex ratio at birth is 1.05 male(s)/female, having the following structure for the age of 0-14 years: 1.04 male(s)/female; 15-64 years: 0.98 male(s)/female; 65 years and over: 0.95 male(s)/female; total population: 1 male(s)/female (2023 est.). Maternal mortality ratio is 72 deaths/100,000 live births; and total: 18.73 deaths/1,000 live births: male: 20.94 deaths/1,000 live births; female: 16.41 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth for the total population is 73.95 years with male: 72.26 years and female: 75.72. Total fertility rate is 2.27 children born/woman.

Natural hazards

In the northern region, the mountains exhibit geological instability, making them susceptible to earthquakes. This area also experiences periodic droughts, windstorms, flash floods, and landslides (Bammou *et al.*, 2023). The prolonged existence of natural hazards could inflict the soil quality in terms of loss in NPK (Kader *et al.*, 2022a; Kader *et al.*, 2022b), mechanical strength of soil, stormwater retention capacity (Kader *et al.*, 2023a), and it necessitates the additional investments to investigate alternate materials such as animal digestates in terms

of their viability to become sustainable fertilisers for agricultural crops (Chozhavendhan *et al.*, 2023; Kader *et al.*, 2022). In the southern part, the winter and spring seasons may bring hot, dry sirocco winds laden with dust and sand. Furthermore, approximately 60% of the time, a persistent harmattan haze can severely limit visibility, creating challenging atmospheric conditions (Ouallali *et al.*, 2020).

The Aït Ouirra tribe

The Aït Ouirra, a Berber tribe, occupy an area at the heart of Morocco that is approximately 17 km in width and 35 km in depth, stretching from the crests of the northern slopes of the Oued El Abid to the Oum Err Bia rivers (Ennaji *et al.*, 2022). The total area of this territory is about 600 km². The tribe is belonging to Beni Mellal Khenifera region.

The Aït Ouirra tribe is a significant and representative faction of the Aït Seri bled, situated at the centre of the Middle Atlas in Morocco, equidistant from major cities (Vaugien, 1951). The region's specific traits, such as its climate and location, historically made it ideal for livestock operations, and double transhumance was a traditional practice. However, the French intervention during the colonial period had a strong impact on this phenomenon. On the other hand, Ait Ouirra tribe inhabit a zone that serves as a contact and transition point between Arab and Berber regions, as they reside in a Berber area while also being influenced by the neighbouring Arab plain (Figure.1). Throughout its history, the significance of this tribe has been reinforced by its geographic location, and our aim is to document its development in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of its evolution. The tribe was based on agriculture especially grazing, exploiting the large forest area of the Middle Atlas (Ouakhir *et al.*, 2020). According to the legend reported by Berber scholars of the Great Atlas, the Aït Ouirra originated from a poorly defined country neighbouring Tafilalet (A.D.N 1926 et 1953), Figure 1.

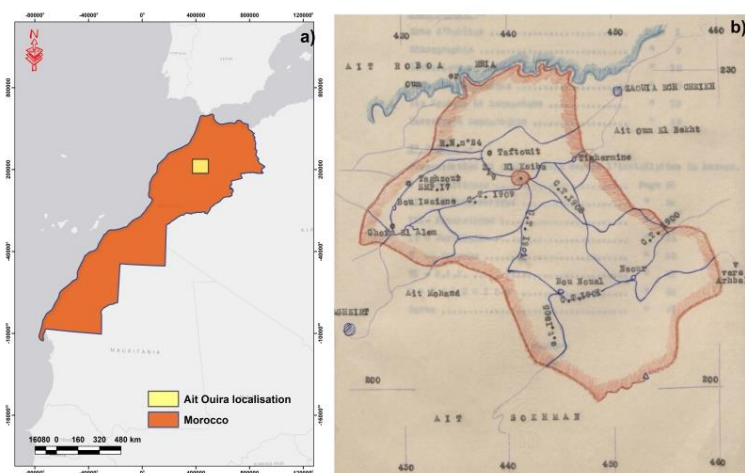


Figure 1: The location of Ait Werra in the Middle Atlas of Morocco and the study area of the Ait Werra tribe (A.D.N, 1953)

Methodology and data

The adopted methodology in this article employs multiple approaches to address the research issue and analyse the obtained data from the French Archives in Nantes. The first approach is the historical method, which involves three crucial elements for studying any historical subject: time, space, and event. The second approach relates to the French Annals School, whose pioneers, led by Fernand Braudel, advocate asking contemporary questions on old issues, as the present and past can shed light on each other. Additionally, the third method is the economic approach, which combines history and economics. This approach was necessary to digitize and analyse data in a manner that suits the economic understanding of the period being studied. Furthermore, the fourth approach focuses on the anthropological method, which seeks to understand a society that largely preserved many primitive customs and traditions.

In order to comprehensively understand the subject, various historical archives were consulted at both national and international scales. The most notable archives used in this research include:

–The unclassified archive of the tribe, containing historical documents from the French protectorate period in Morocco. This archive was studied for a period of three months and is stored in the court, municipality, and community of El Kssiba (Morocco).

–The French National Diplomatic Archive in Nantes, which houses documents from the French colonies, including a dedicated section for Moroccan tribes. I visited this archive in January and February of 2021 and used the source material obtained from it to complete and finalize this article (Table.1).

Table 1: Presentation of the used archive and data in this study (1912-1956)

Archive name	Date	Source of archive
French diplomatic archive in Nantes (A.D.N)	1934- 1953	https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/
Archive of El Kssiba Municipality	1924-1656	El Kssiba (Morocco)
Archive of El Kssiba Tribunal	1929-1956	El Kssiba (Morocco)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Climatic context of the studied area

The climate of Morocco is Mediterranean in the north, becoming more extreme in the interior; in the south, hot, dry desert; rain is rare; cold offshore air currents produce fog and heavy dew (Moukhliiss *et al*, 2022; Elfanne *et al.*, 2022). The climate of El Kssiba is temperate and rainy, with some years receiving more than 1000 mm of rainfall. This weather is ideal for growing fruit trees, such as olive and orange trees, which thrive in these conditions (Bouet 1938). In addition, the water that flows down the mountain slopes enables high-yield irrigated crops

like wheat, barley, corn, and pepper, as well as supporting a thriving livestock industry (Figure.2).

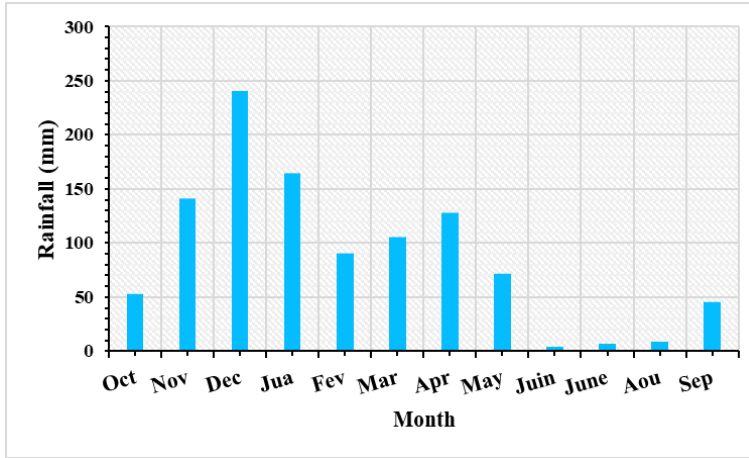


Figure 2: Monthly rainfall during the studied period (1942- 1952)

Source: Ibid 1948

The piedmont (Dir) is a part of the Oum Er Bia basin, which receives water from the northern slopes of the Middle Atlas, particularly during the rainy season, including the Chef n Goub, the oued Bou Zabel, and the oued Zemkil (Ouakhir and El Ghachi, 2023). However, these streams cannot be replenished by the springs whose water is used entirely for irrigation, despite the abundance of water (Mengaud 1932; Kader *et al.*, 2023), illustrated by Figure 3.

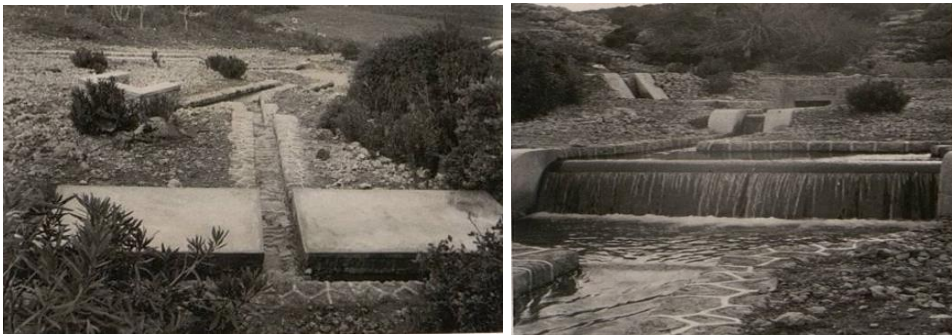


Figure 3: Water resources situation in Ait Werra tribe, 1952 (A.D.N, 1953)

Ait Werra tribe between agriculture and grazing activities

Agriculture

The Ait Werra tribe is known for its agricultural estates that cultivate various types of utility trees, such as olive, orange, cherry, and almond trees. Although these crops are mainly for subsistence purposes, they are also sold in local markets in the Ait Werra, Takezirt, and Fashtala areas since the 9th century

(R.M.E.P 1920, 1924 et 1926), Figure 4. Additionally, the area has irrigated agriculture, with some types of cereals still grown for local consumption. The reason for the locals' attachment to agriculture despite Ait Werra's primarily pastoral nature is the abundance of water resources from the surrounding mountains (Archive of El Kssiba Municipality 1933).

A SWOT analysis for the agriculture in the Ait Werra tribe can be summarized as follows:

Strengths:

Abundance of Water Resources: The region's access to abundant water resources from the surrounding mountains is a significant strength. This enables irrigation and sustains agricultural activities even in areas where agriculture might not be traditionally viable.

Historical Agricultural Tradition: A long history of agricultural cultivation, dating back to the 9th century, signifies a deep-rooted tradition of farming in the Ait Werra tribe. This tradition provides valuable knowledge and experience in crop cultivation.

Variety of Utility Trees: The cultivation of various types of utility trees, including olive, orange, cherry, and almond trees, diversifies the agricultural production and potentially provides multiple sources of income.

Weaknesses:

Subsistence Focus: While agriculture is a part of the local economy, the primary focus is on subsistence farming. This may limit the potential for income generation and economic growth from agricultural activities.

Limited Market Access: Selling crops mainly in local markets may limit revenue opportunities. Expanding access to broader markets could potentially increase profits.

Opportunities:

Diversification of Income: The cultivation of a variety of utility trees offers an opportunity to diversify income sources, especially if there is a focus on enhancing production and marketing strategies.

Value Addition: Processing and adding value to agricultural products, such as producing olive oil or preserves from fruits, can create higher-value products for sale, increasing revenue.

Agricultural Education and Modernization: Investing in agricultural education and modern farming techniques could lead to increased productivity and income potential.

Threats:

Climate Change and Environmental Risks: Climate change and related environmental risks, such as droughts or pests, can have a significant impact on crop yields and agricultural sustainability.

Market Fluctuations: Dependency on local markets exposes the agricultural sector to fluctuations in demand and prices, making income unstable.

Competition: Increased competition from other regions or agricultural producers could threaten the viability of local agriculture, especially if they have access to more advanced farming practices and markets.

The agriculture in the Ait Werra tribe has strengths in terms of water resources, historical tradition, and crop diversity. However, there are weaknesses related to subsistence focus regarding the influential parameters to enhance the soil quality and limited market access. Opportunities exist in income diversification, value addition, and modernization, but the sector faces threats from climate change, market fluctuations, and competition. Successful development of agriculture in the region will depend on efforts to mitigate weaknesses and capitalize on opportunities while addressing potential threats.

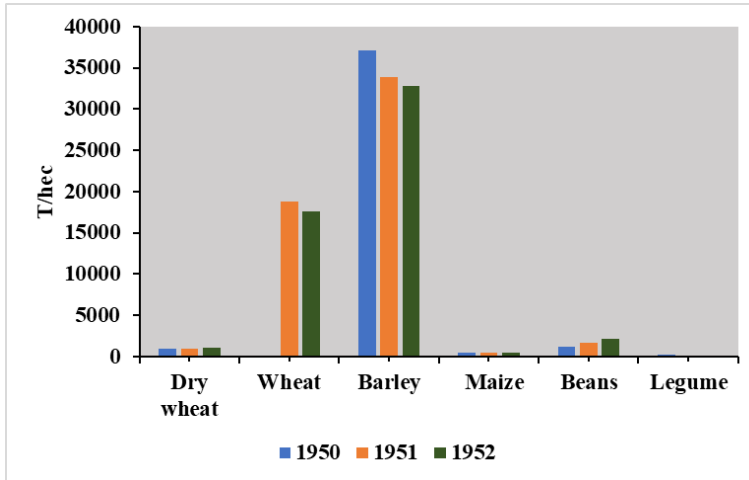


Figure 4: The amount distribution of the cultivated species during the period of 1950, 1952 and 1952. (A.D.N, 1953)

Livestock

Caid Moha Ou Said played a crucial role in securing the extraction of Ait Werra and Umm Al-Bakhth by negotiating agreements with the tribes of the Tadla plains and Beni Mellal prior to the French protection of Morocco in 1912. However, after the imposition of colonial control over the region, pro-colonial rulers exploited pastoral lands by preventing nomads from accessing them (A.D.N 1926), Figure 5.



Figure 5: Overgrazing and traditional labour in the Middle Atlas of Morocco (Photo: Amraoui)

This caused the nomads of Ait Werra and neighbouring tribes to seek permission from landowners and influential figures to access the areas they previously benefited from under comprehensive agreements for all tribes of the Dir and Mountainous areas. The colonial administration aimed to maintain the nomadic movement and win them over through civil policies. Additionally, the administration released the hands of influential figures to expand their possessions in exchange for their support in eliminating rebellious tribes and penetrating the mountains. The subjugated factions were also permitted to rebuild their herds of livestock after opening markets in the Tadla region (Guennoun 2014). Due to the fact that Ait Werra does not produce fodder and instead relies on grazing, their livestock is highly susceptible to climatic conditions, particularly rainfall. The recent drought has had a significant impact on the tribe, leading to a drastic decrease in the number of livestock from 13,000 in 1942 to only 6,355 in 1952 AD. Additionally, horse breeding is limited in this area, and mules and donkeys are often used as a replacement (Eyraud 1934) (Figure.6).

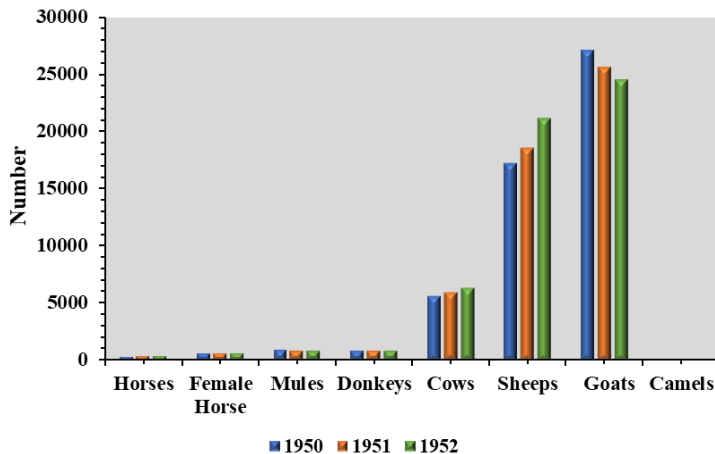


Figure 6: Distribution of the number of livestock during the studied period (A.D.N, 1953)



Figure 7: Place for feeding livestock in 1952 and 2022

A SWOT analysis for the livestock situation in the Ait Werra tribe can be summarized as follows:

STRENGTHS:

Historical Agreements: Historical agreements secured by figures like Caid Moha Ou Said allowed the Ait Werra tribe access to pastoral lands, providing a foundation for their livestock-related activities.

Colonial Policies: The colonial administration's policies aimed at maintaining nomadic movement and supporting livestock herders by allowing them to rebuild their herds after opening markets in the Tadla region contributed to the recovery of livestock numbers.

Traditional Knowledge: The Ait Werra tribe has traditional knowledge and experience in livestock management and pastoral practices.

WEAKNESSES:

Dependency on Rainfall: The tribe's reliance on grazing, rather than fodder production, makes their livestock highly susceptible to climatic conditions, particularly rainfall. Droughts, like the recent one mentioned, can have a severe negative impact on livestock numbers.

Limited Horse Breeding: Limited horse breeding in the area can be a weakness, especially if horses are needed for specific agricultural or transportation purposes.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Diversification of Livestock: Exploring the possibility of diversifying the types of livestock rose, such as exploring alternative breeds that are more resilient to local conditions, could be an opportunity for the tribe.

Fodder Production: Developing methods for fodder production, even in arid conditions, could help mitigate the vulnerability of livestock to climatic fluctuations.

Market Access: Leveraging market access in the Tadla region can present opportunities for trade and income generation through livestock sales.

THREATS:

Climate Change and Drought: Climate change-related challenges, including increased drought frequency and severity, pose a significant threat to the tribe's livestock herds.

Limited Access to Resources: Ongoing challenges related to access to pastoral lands, especially if influenced by external factors or policies, could threaten the tribe's ability to sustain its livestock practices.

Competition: Competition from other livestock producers, especially those with more diversified herds or access to better resources, may pose a threat to the tribe's livestock industry.

The livestock situation in the Ait Werra tribe has historical strengths and policy support that have helped sustain their livestock herds. However, weaknesses include vulnerability to climatic conditions and limited horse breeding. Opportunities lie in diversifying livestock and improving fodder production, while threats include climate change, resource access issues, and competition from other producers. Adaptation and resilience-building strategies

are essential to address these challenges and ensure the sustainability of livestock-related activities in the region.

Crafts and traditional industry

Handicrafts in the region of Ait Werra, located in El Kessiba, are concentrated in the urban areas which have a high population of 2045 inhabitants. The tribe is well-known for its diverse range of crafts, with some of the most prominent ones being tanning, manufacturing of soles and leather bags, and pottery (R.M.E.P 1924).

(i) Tanning, which involves providing ready-made leather, has been a major source of prosperity for the tribe, particularly during the Second World War. However, this craft has faced a significant decline in recent times. It mainly supplies leather to Naali, a maker of Al-Balagha babouchiers in El Kessiba and Beni Mellal, as well as to leather bag makers.

(ii) The manufacturing of soles and leather bags involves thirteen makers and eight apprentices in El Kssiba. They produce around 4,000 soles and 1,600 leather bags annually. However, this craft faces high production costs due to the use of materials brought from outside the tribe. Additionally, the local demand for their products is low, except for women's slippers which are mostly sold in the local market.

(iii) Potters in the region are also abundant, with ten located in El Kessiba, two in Taftiout, two in Aghram Al-Alam, and one in Al-Jabal. The craft has flourished greatly due to the abundance of raw materials available. They produce an estimated 3600 cooking cookers (service), 1500 couscous, 3000 Farah (a large bowl for bread), 6000 milkmaids (a bowl of water), 1800 charcoal heaters per month (majmar), and 5,000 small stoves for heating annually (A.D.N 1953).

Trade and Markets

In August 1924, immediately after tightening control over the area of Ait Werra, the French authorities took the initiative to organize a weekly market in Al-Kosiba on Sundays. This was the first time such an event had been held since the French occupation of the region. Military reports suggest that this step was successful, and it attracted many residents from the surrounding mountain areas (Marché Lainier d'El Kessiba 1939).

The population responded positively to the organization of the weekly market, as it provided them with the opportunity to sell their goods and purchase commodities and agricultural products. The French authorities allowed residents to use their plots of land for the market facilities. In 1936, the people of El Kssiba donated a land area of 3465 square meters to expand the weekly market.

The market is divided into several sections, each dedicated to selling specific products, and each section is called *Al-Rahba*. These sections are as follows:

-The Wool Market showcases various types of wool for sale, with a total of about thirty tons sold in 1939 AD, mostly by the sheep, goat, and cow breeding cooperative that holds a monopoly. The wool is sold by the "*Telest*" unit.

-The Grain market is dedicated to selling wheat, barley, maize, and beans, and is usually located on the side of the market. The selling unit is known as the Abra.

-Livestock market is a place where traders gather to sell cows, sheep, and goats. It is located adjacent to the market's slaughterhouse and the place where families grill meat during their visit to the market.

-The markets in the Tadla region are organized on different days of the week in various locations. Kasbah Tadla, Foum El-Anr, and Foum El-Juma'a are held on Mondays. Tanougha and Wauzegat are held on Tuesdays. Aghbala, Zawiya of Sheikh Weinerki, and Iqbali and Atab are held on Wednesdays. Tagezirt, Azilal, and Bezo are held on Thursdays. Tadla, Beni Mellal, Beni El Ouidane, and Ait M'hamed are held on Fridays. Lastly, Welad Said El-Wad is held on Saturdays, while El Kessiba, Ben El Ouidane, Takleft, Afourar, and Zawayat Ahansal are held on Sundays (Bulletin de la Chambre d'agriculture de Casablanca 1950).

A study in attempts to modernize the economy of Ait Werra ***Associations and cooperatives***

The French authorities have encouraged the formation of agricultural associations and cooperatives in the Ait Werra tribe, which represents a significant change in the region. Prior to this, the region had not experienced the creation of such associations or cooperatives. Below are some examples of such cooperatives and associations (Vaugien, 2014):

-An agricultural production cooperative was created in 1937 in the presence of the chief of the Ait Werra community. Its president was a person from the Ait Hadidou tribe who was committed, according to the minutes of the cooperative, to provide all the necessary necessities to the owners of the land belonging to the cooperative, such as seeds, machinery, and medicines.

-The Water Mill Association was registered in 1939 in partnership between Maymoon, Zain, and Yamna Ahadah. The association's internal regulations defined all production operations from the mill stage to the production stage, followed by the profit division stage.

-There were two livestock breeding cooperatives that had been established. The first one was founded on June 4, 1951, and its members were two people from Ait Werra: Saeed Umimon, Khalaf, and Ali. The first provided the second with thirty heads of sheep for their care. After two years, the two parties would sell their products and share the profits after deducting the expenses. The second Livestock Breeding Cooperative was registered on August 13, 1951, at the Martial Court of Ait Werra, between an investor from Kasbah Tadla and a sheriff from Ait Werra. The first party bought six cows from the second for 20,500 francs to be cared for over a year, with a fifty-fifty share in the profits (Tribunal coutumier des Ait Werra 1951). A SWOT analysis for the study in attempts to modernize the economy of Ait Werra through the formation of associations and cooperatives can be summarized as follows:

STRENGTHS:

Economic Modernization: A positive step towards modernizing the economy by introducing new practices, and potentially improving stability.

Resource Provision: The agricultural production cooperative's commitment to providing necessities like seeds, machinery, and medicines to landowners is strength, as it supports local farmers and enhances agricultural productivity.

Collaborative Efforts: The formation of the Water Mill Association and livestock breeding cooperatives highlights collaborative efforts, which lead to resource & knowledge exchange.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Economic Diversification: The creation of these associations and cooperatives presents an opportunity for diversifying the local economy beyond traditional agricultural practices, potentially leading to increased income and economic resilience.

Capacity Building: With time and experience, members of these associations and cooperatives can develop skills and knowledge in modern agricultural and business practices, enhancing their ability to manage and operate such entities effectively.

WEAKNESSES:

Limited Historical Experience: The region had no prior experience with such associations or cooperatives, which could lead to challenges in terms of knowledge and capacity for effective management and operation.

Profit Division Complexity: The complex profit division process within the Water Mill Association and the livestock breeding cooperatives may lead to disputes or misunderstandings among members, potentially undermining their effectiveness.

THREATS:

Resistance to Change: May face resistance from traditionalists or those who are sceptical of such changes, which could hinder their success.

Lack of Legal Framework: May not have been well-defined, which could pose legal and regulatory risks.

Market and Environmental Risks: Market fluctuations and environmental challenges can pose threats to the success of these cooperatives.

The efforts to modernize the economy of Ait Werra through the formation of associations and cooperatives have the potential to bring about economic benefits and collaborative opportunities. However, they also face challenges related to limited historical experience, profit division complexity, resistance to change, legal issues, and external market and environmental risks. Successful implementation and long-term sustainability will depend on effective management, capacity building, and adaptation to changing conditions.

Agriculture Directorate (Agricultural Modernization Sector)

France established the Directorate of Agriculture in the Ait Werra tribe with the aim of controlling the agricultural sector in the region and making it a tool to bring the people closer to the colonial administration (Tribunal coutumier des Ait Werra 1954).

The local authorities submitted a request to establish it in 1946, and the responsibility for its construction in Taghazout in August 1946 was assumed by its first director, Vincent, who officially completed it on 16 April, 1947 (Tribunal coutumier des Ait Werra (1937).

It had several appendices in the field of El Kssiba Department, namely:

- In the thigh of Ait Hussein on the communal land N° 17.027/c
- In the thigh of Ait Hussein or Yacoub on communal land N° 23.120/c

- In the thigh of Ait Hami on the communal land N° 17.025/c
Extensions in Aghbala and Zawiyat E-Sheikh (A.D.N 1953).

Colonial private companies

Colonial company

The National Reserve Company was established in El Kssiba on 25 July 1927 AD as an alternative to the company that was dissolved in Abi Al-Jaad in the same year. This trend is evident in the number of times in which the composition of this company was amended, especially during 1930 and 1936 (Arrêté ministériel 1937).

The company continued to play large economic and social roles, and its value increased until it became eight branches with its headquarters in El Kssiba, Ait Sakhman Oriental branch, and Ait Hadidou branch. In the year 1941 AD, El Kssiba Company was reduced to six branches by deleting the branches of Ait Dawood o Ali and Ait Hadidou (Arrêté ministériel 1941).

El Kssiba metal company

This company was established in El Kessiba in the forties of the last century after the discovery of large quantities of lead metal in the Ait Werra Mountains, where the colonial authorities began paving the roads leading to this mineral, and the people called this area Bo Al-Maadin. The colonial administration exploited this mineral by transporting it to the coasts as a raw material and exporting it to France. The Ouirauian Labor force was also exploited at very low prices in what is known as rock work (Arrêté ministériel 1955). After that, the company expanded its activities, as it submitted a request to the French authorities in December 1954 to grant it the right to benefit from the benefits of licenses granted to various investors in the mineral field (The oral narration, 2021).

Table 2: Distribution of Some reforms were done by colonial authorities

The budget cover (<i>Franc</i>)	Reforms
50000	Water fountain
75000	Repair of the water system
850000	Additional shower and toilet
20000	Repair of a bridge on the valley of Taghbalot
300000	Building 2 showers near the toilets of Taghbalot
55000	Repair of clothing warehouses for bathrooms and swimming pools
330000	Repairing some wooden houses
20000	Transformations of the water direction of Tagbalut sources
50000	Building a water sink
180000	Painting some wooden houses and restoring them

Encouraging mountain tourism in the area of Ait Werra

The colonial authorities attended to the tourism aspect of El Kessiba and its surroundings by:

-Establishing the Tagbalout Resort in the 1940s, positioned between Tizi Nigh Ouerra and El Kessiba, and outfitting it with hotels and wooden rental houses.

-Releasing a decree on December 24, 1939, which mandated the acquisition of written authorization from regional authorities for reserving accommodations at the El Kessiba Hotel or a wooden dwelling in Tagbalout?

-This measure aimed to bolster protective measures for the frontier in the Ait Werra Mountains, prompted by the security deterioration experienced by the region towards the late 1930s. It was applied even to French families who travelled to Kessiba for weekends from nearby areas like Tadla and Beni Mellal.

-In 1943, El-Kessiba received funding for summer camps and resorts, with the allocated credit amounting to 500,000 francs.

-In view of the success achieved by Taghbalut Resort and the increase in its annual income, the colonial authorities decided in 1955 AD to rehabilitate it and allocated the following budget for it.

-A SWOT analysis for the colonial authorities' actions related to tourism in El Kessiba and its surroundings can be broken down as follows:

STRENGTHS:

Strategic Location: El Kessiba and its surroundings were strategically located, making it an attractive destination for colonial authorities to invest in tourism development.

Establishment of Tagbalout Resort: The creation of the Tagbalout Resort in the 1940s with hotels and wooden rental houses showcased a commitment to developing tourism infrastructure in the region.

Security Measures: The decree mandating written authorization for accommodations demonstrated a commitment to security and control in the area, which was important during a period of security deterioration.

Allocation of Funding: The allocation of 500,000 francs in 1943 for summer camps and resorts in El-Kessiba indicated financial support for the development of tourism facilities.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Economic Growth: The success of the Tagbalout Resort and the increase in annual income suggests the potential for economic growth through tourism in the region.

Rehabilitation of Tagbalout Resort: The decision to rehabilitate the resort in 1955 indicates ongoing commitment to tourism development, potentially attracting more visitors and revenue.

WEAKNESSES:

Colonial Exploitation: The colonial authorities' actions may be seen as exploiting the region for their own benefit, primarily as a means to secure the frontier and maintain control rather than for the well-being of the local population.

Limited Local

Engagement: There is no mention of involvement or consultation with the local population in the development of tourism infrastructure, which could lead to potential conflicts or resentment.

THREATS:

Environmental Concerns: There is no mention of environmental considerations in the development of tourism infrastructure, which could lead to long-term ecological issues if not addressed.

The colonial authorities' actions in developing tourism in El Kessiba and its surroundings had strengths in terms of strategic location and initial investment. However, they also had weaknesses in terms of potential exploitation and limited local engagement. The opportunities included economic growth and the rehabilitation of existing facilities, while threats encompassed political and social unrest, changing politics, and environmental concerns.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article unveils the intricate interplay between agriculture, economic development, and local distinctiveness within the context of Morocco's colonial history under French rule. Through a focused exploration of the Ait Werra tribe in the Middle Atlas Mountains, the study elucidates the profound influence of French colonial policies on agricultural practices and economic trajectories. The establishment of the French protectorate in 1912 ushered in substantial changes to Morocco's economic and agricultural landscapes, particularly impacting tribal economies. While urban centres absorbed European influences, the villages, notably those belonging to mountain tribes like Ait Werra, grappled with transformative disruptions resulting from colonization.

By dissecting the evolution of Ait Werra's economy from the pre-Makhzen era to the post-colonial period, encompassing elements such as agriculture, livestock, crafts, and trade, this research effectively employs historical records, archives, and rigorous economic analysis. As a result, it sheds crucial light on how colonial interventions intricately moulded not only the economic fabric but also the cultural heritage of Ait Werra and akin communities during this pivotal transformative phase. In sum, the article underscores how the historical synergy between colonial policies and local responses indelibly shaped the trajectory of Ait Werra's economy and culture. This nuanced exploration serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of colonialism, illustrating how its echoes continue to reverberate through economic structures and cultural identity in contemporary times. These developments impacted both Moroccan cities and villages, although the tribal economy felt the most significant impact. Unlike the cities, which had already embraced European traders and experienced an opening towards European countries, Moroccan villages remained isolated from the outside world, including the authority of the warehouse, which was not widespread in many mountain tribes. Colonialism, therefore, was a shock to them that altered all aspects of their lives.

This article examines the constant and variable elements of the Moroccan tribal economy as a whole between the past Makhzen and the present colonial era, focusing on the Ait Werra tribe of the Middle Atlas.

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