

# BASICS OF COMMON RESOURCES' MANAGEMENT BY THE INSTITUTION OF "JMAA" IN THE CENTRAL MIDDLE ATLAS (PROVINCE OF IFRANE). MOROCCO.

\* Mlle. Imane HAMZAOU, Pr. Mohamed QARRO, Pr. Najib GMIRA

National school of forestry (ENFI) (Salé, Morocco); Biodiversity and natural resources lab. Science faculty. Univ. Ibn Tofail (LBRN) (Kénitra, Morocco)

\*corresponding author: imanehamzaoui@live.fr

**Abstract-** *In the Central Middle Atlas, management of pastoral and sylvopastoral resources was the responsibility of the assembly of ethnic community (tribe or fraction). The assembly has to make decisions about the organization of resources' exploitation. The effectiveness of this institution was due to its management rules, how collective decisions were made, the existence of a system of sanctions, etc., but also to the role of the organization "Rma", which has a socio-cultural power and a privileged position within the community. The "Rma" organization invested in resolving social conflicts, strengthening community cohesion and legitimizing rules and decisions.*

**Key-words :** Common resources' management, assembly of "Jmaâ", organization of "Rma", pastoral and sylvopastoral resources, Central Middle Atlas.

## RESUME

*La gestion communautaire des ressources pastorales et sylvopastorales au Moyen Atlas Central se faisait via une assemblée de la collectivité ethnique (tribu ou fraction). Cette dernière était habilitée à prendre les décisions au nom de la communauté, dans l'objectif d'organiser l'exploitation des ressources offertes par les différents terroirs. L'efficacité des rôles de cette institution coutumière avait pour bases les caractéristiques des règles élaborées, le mode de prise des décisions collectives, l'existence d'un mécanisme de surveillance de l'application des décisions collectives, d'un système de sanctions, etc, mais aussi l'appui de l'assemblée de la « Jmaâ » par l'organisation « Rma », ayant un pouvoir socio-culturel et une place privilégiée au sein de la communauté. Cette dernière avait parmi ses attributions la résolution des conflits sociaux, le renforcement de la cohésion communautaire et la légitimation des règles et décisions.*

**Mots-clé :** Gestion communautaire, assemblée de la « Jmaâ », organisation « Rma », ressources pastorales et sylvopastorales, Moyen Atlas Central.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Morocco's mountainous regions, with difficult environmental conditions, pastoral and sylvopastoral resources (PSPR) have always been fundamental for the ethnic communities. Thus, access, management and organization of the exploitation of these resources were the main concerns of the pastors.

In the High and Middle Atlas, ethnic communities have developed operating systems, adjusted to their environment, and for the conservation of pastoral and sylvopastoral resources. Concerning the Central Middle Atlas region, of which this article deals specifically, ethnic communities adopted a transhumant lifestyle, and were implementing a set of practices (Agdal, fallow, etc.), enabling them to adapt the resources' exploitation to the spatial and temporal inequality of pastoral resources distribution.

Ethnic communities (tribes or fractions) rigorously reasoned the exploitation of (PSPR). They respected the principle of altitudinal areas' complementarity.

The assembly of the «Jmaâ» (ethnic community) organized the management of (PSPR). It was in charge to develop the rules for access and use of (PSPR), to ensure the implementation of its decisions, and to afflict penalties for offenders.

This assembly was supported in its duties by the organization of "Rma", having a socio-cultural power on the community. This study aims to explore the basics of pastoral and sylvopastoral management by both "Rma" and "Jmaâ" organizations, this through qualitative empirical study in the province of Ifrane.

## STUDY AREA

### Natural environment

The province of Ifrane is located in the Central Middle Atlas (Figure 1). A mountain relief, with an altitudinal gradient from the foothills of northwest to southeast heights, characterizes it. In terms of geomorphology, the province straddles two orographic areas, which are the central plateau and the Middle Atlas Causse.

The study area has a Mediterranean climate. Bioclimatic environments ranging from temperate semiarid in the central plateau to cold and wet bioclimat (SOGREAH /EACFPCI/R4, 2005).

The diversity of land forms and bioclimatic environments gives rise to a great diversity of vegetation in the province. It is mainly constituted by pure or mixed cedar forest, green oak forests, and vegetation of asylvatic zones (SOGREAH /EACFPCI/R5, 2005).

## Publication History

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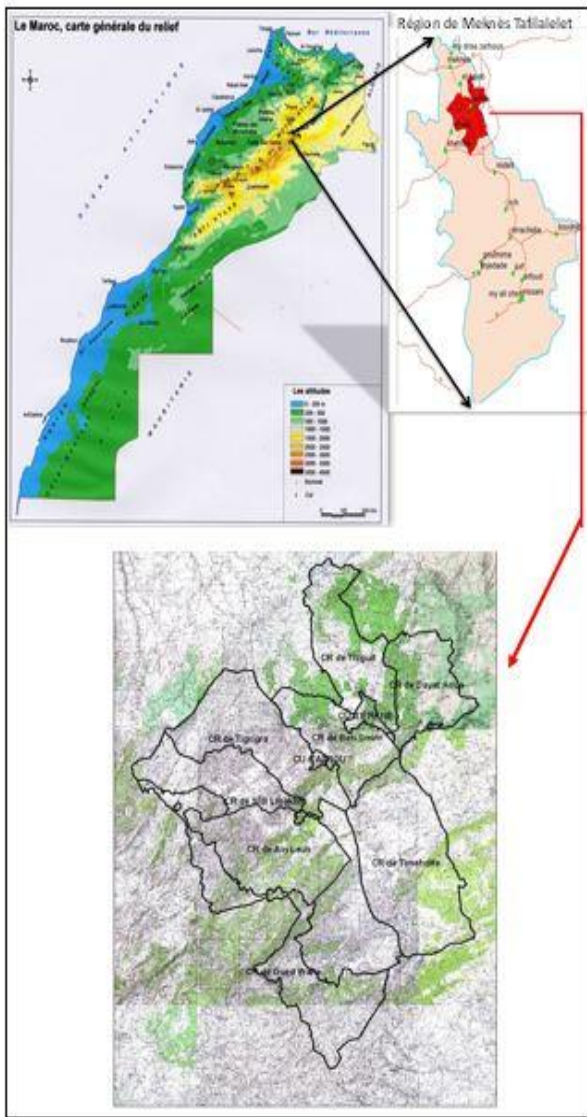


Figure 1. The province of Ifrane

**Spatial organization of (PSPR) management**

In the province of Ifrane, tribes or tribal fractions have for long managed forests, pastoral and agricultural areas as finages, called ethno-spatial units (ESU). These units can be defined as territories managed and exploited by a human group, characterized by ethnic homogeneity (Figure 2).

The use of common resources (pastoral and silvopastoral resources for this study) was done in the "tribal territory". The fractions of tribes, consisting of several lineages (Gellner, 1969), had access to the resources of these territories, which are used according to the principle of (usual places) in forests and pastoral lands. These areas are defined according to their proximity to the camp sites and the transhumance axes of each group. Thus, each ethnic group exploited a known and recognized part of the collective space of the tribe.

This projection of the social organization on the space allowed each tribe or tribal fraction to manage its resources independently, this via an assembly of the ethnic community (Assembly "Jmaa").

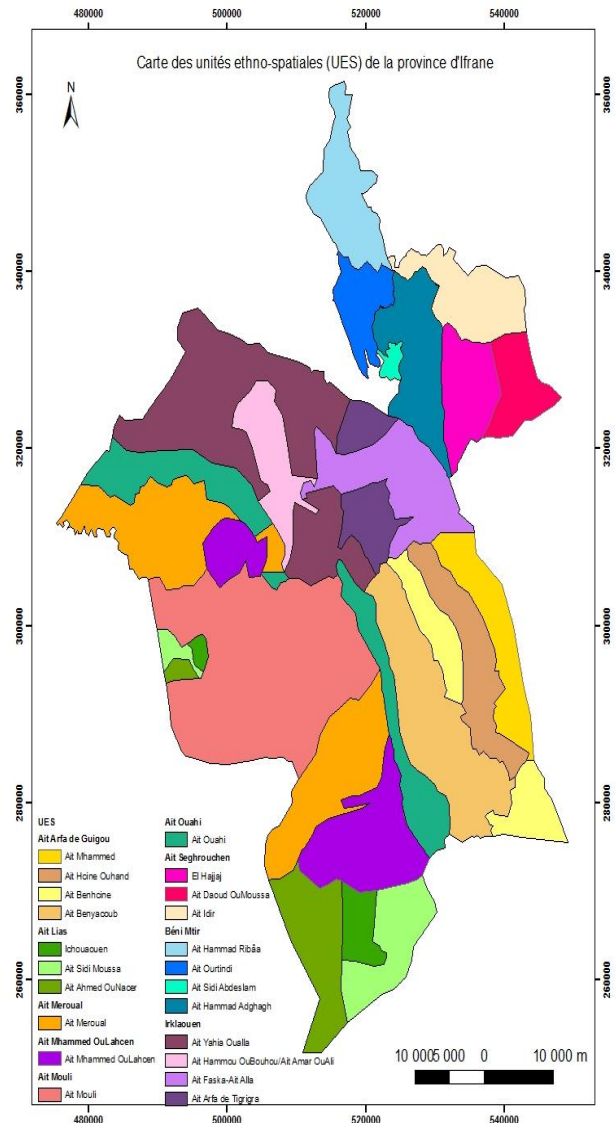


Figure 2. Ethno-spatial units (ESU) of the province of Ifrane

**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Based on an empirical work, this study aims to highlight the roles of the assembly of "Jmaa" and especially the basics of its pastoral and silvopastoral resources' management. It also attempts to show the relationship between this institution and the organization of "Rma", and the importance of this relationship for good governance of (PSPR). The qualitative approach adopted follows an inductive pattern. It is inspired by the methodology of grounded theory (MTE) (Glaser & Strauss, 1996[1967]). The latter's aim is to produce, through successive inductions, a "theory rooted in the facts," or "grounded theory".

Data are collected through semi-structured interviews. This method has the advantage to make easy the understanding of the roles of "Rma" and "Jmaa" organizations and their relation with the management of pastoral and silvopastoral resources. The interview guide used is built in a scalable manner, depending on the need of understanding or the

progressive knowledge of the field, following the principle of the circular interaction between data collection and data analysis of the (MTE).

Interviews were conducted with groups of pastors, seniors, "Chioukhn'Rma" (President of "Rma organization), and other members of this organization, in the different ethno-spatial units (ESU) of the province. The interview guide contained the main following themes:

- ✓ Structure and functioning of the institution "Jmaa";
- ✓ Roles in the management of (PSPR) and the daily affairs of the community;
- ✓ Structure, functioning and powers of the organization "Rma";
- ✓ Relations between the two customary organizations.

Semi structured interviews rather aim varying situations than statistical representativeness (Guillemette F, J & Luckerhoff, 2009). The number of interviews per category of interviewed persons and UES is determined, in the case of this study, by the need for understanding. The end of interviews is marked by the data saturation criterion.

In order to facilitate the analysis, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then the various passages of the discussions were the subject of a first organization following the themes of the interview guide. This step allowed us to obtain an analytical inquiring about items related to the study objectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Management of (PSPR) by territory and ethnic community

For the institution "Jmaa", sharing space by territories and usual spaces (would) facilitated the control of access to resources, limited it to the members of the tribe or fraction, which allowed reducing the pressure on pastoral and silvopastoral resources.

The clear definition of resource limits also define the need for additional resources. Thus, exchange agreements were negotiated and established between ethnic communities. They specified the length of stay and the number of animals to accept. While in the case of composite finages, the passage of cattle across neighboring territories was possible due to passing agreements specifying the duration of the latter. These agreements were a way for the assembly of "Jmaâs" to regulate access and mutual exploitation of pastoral and silvopastoral resources, defining, again, community members allowed to have access to other territories.

### Resource management ensuring the representation of all segments of the ethnic community

In a patriarchal society, as in the tribe, lineage, defined as "a group of agnates dead or alive whose parentfamily can be followed" is the core segment. Pascon(1979). A segment which constitutes the framework for all human economic and social activities, in the territorial space of the tribe.

Members of the Assembly of the "Jmaa" are then selected by lineage. A measure that ensures the representation of all basic segments, enabling them:

- ✓ The ability to participate in decision making and collective agreements;
- ✓ Access to information (decisions of the assembly, change of dates of transhumance, opening and closing "agdals")

(temporarily prohibiting the use of a pastoral resources(Qarroand al., 2010)).

The choice of representatives of lineages called "Imassayn, InBaden, or Ijmmaân" (plural of Amasay, Anbbad and Ajmmaâ respectively) is based on human qualities, and according to the rule of consensus of the members of each lineage (unanimously). This rule allowed the recognition of the assembly by all the lineages, which gives it the legitimacy to make decisions on behalf of the community. Decisions that are engaging members of all lineages.

In addition to these representatives, members of a tribe or fraction also choose, unanimously, a Chief of the Assembly of "Jmaa". This is the "Amghar" (Sheikhin Arabic. A respected and wise person). The latter is chosen among the wealthy members of the community. He must be a charismatic person, belonging to the class of seniors, since the reputation and wisdom are characters that are acquired with age. These properties make the "Amghar" a respected and esteemed person within the ethnic community.

### The rule of consensus for the approval of collective rules. A demonstration of tribal democracy

Defining the rules of access and exploitation of pastoral and silvopastoral resources is the responsibility of the institution "Jmaa". This assembly is the organ of management and decision making. To do this, it applies the rule of consensus of all the representatives of the lineages to decide on the dates of farming, transhumance dates, dates of opening and closing "agdals", distribution of irrigation water etc.

Decisions of the management of pastoral and silvopastoral resources are taken collectively at meetings of the Assembly of "Jmaa".

For ethnic communities studied, democracy means listening to the proposals, suggestions and opinions of all representatives of the community, negotiate to make a decision collectively as an entity. A decision that is in the collective interest of all. The consensus as a way of decisions' approval may be regarded, in itself, as a guarantee of the engagement of community members to respect the rules decided by the assembly.

### Rules that are adapted to the ecological and social contexts

The set of rules related to traditional practices of the management of (PSPR) were adapted to the physical context. The dates of transhumance, opening and closing "agdals" etc. followed the rhythm of the seasons and the vegetation cycles of both altitudinal terroirs.

The elaboration of natural resource management rules were also adapted to the socio-cultural context. It was based on social norms, shared by members of the same ethnic community. These standards define what is right and accepted in a community (Y. Ben Hounet, 2009). Indeed, these standards are one of the factors ensuring social cohesion and helping to make decisions of the assembly of the "Jmaa" which are understandable and acceptable to all.

Respect for elders, solidarity between rich and poor, respect for the given word are examples of social norms governing social life, but also the process of designing common resource management rules.

Thus, social capital recognized, shared and mastered by all, allowed :

- sharing the same goals and vision by members of the community and thus easier the process of decision making;
- Understanding and acceptance of elaborate rules, which is in favor of compliance and enforcement.

### Modifiable and adjustable rules

The rules elaborated by ethnic communities are not only adapted to the environmental context (respecting altitudinal complementary between terroirs, complementarity of forest, pastoral and agricultural resources), social context (the rules conform to the traditions, social and cultural capital) and economic conditions (rules in favor of the economic interests of all community members). These rules are also flexible. A flexibility allowing an adaptation to:

- ✓ Variability of production conditions: in particular dry years, opening dates of "agdals" can be advanced on the request of members of the ethnic community. Transhumance to the summer course is also exceptionally advanced;
- ✓ Variability of the human context: breaking relations of alliance or cooperation between ethnic communities.

As emphasized Martine Garrigues-Cresswell and Beatrice Lecestre-Rollier (2002), the hazard is a permanent feature, always present in the mountain regions of Morocco. The whole society is organized to face this data. These authors define "hazard" as a setback, feared but expected. They distinguish two types of hazards:

- ✓ Climatic hazards: snow, drought, etc;
- ✓ Uncertainties of socio-political circumstance: the suspension of alliance relationships, exceptional population movements caused by extreme weather conditions or diseases, etc.

However, plasticity of the rules implemented by the assembly of the "Jmaa" may be driven by other imperatives, this time in conjunction with social traditions and religion. Indeed, the notion of "hchouma" related to the honor of a person and through it, its family, or more generally, its group, prohibits persons from committing actions and behavior not accepted by the community. The teachings of the religion also encourage the mutual aid and solidarity between rich and poor, strong and weak.

Thus, rules or decisions of the assembly are open to other situations related to "social solidarity", which can also be classified as hazards or exception (likely because they are predictable and unpredictable in detail). Collective rules may be modified in some cases:

- ✓ Penalties for violations of the rules or social conflicts: a punishment (sacrifice of a sheep and preparing a collective meal, for example) can be all eviated or even canceled if the offender can not afford to implement it. Recognizing his act, apologizing can suffice in this case.
- ✓ Droughts or exceptional cold: neighboring ethnic communities, related or not, by a course of exchange pact may be allowed to transhume earlier or extend

the duration of their stay in the host tribe, in case of excessive cold and snow.

### Existence of a mechanism of watching the application of rules and a system of sanctions for infringements

Among ethnic communities in the study area, the rules of management and exploitation of common resources are all supported by two complementary systems. It is:

- ✓ Rules applying control system;
- ✓ system of penalties for infringement of collective rules.

The integration of these systems in the management of the various resources of space emanates from the consciousness of "Jmaa" of their importance for the conservation of resources, and fairness of the profit from their exploitation. This is consistent with the findings of E. Ostrom (1990). Indeed, making rules cannot be enough to conserve common resources. These rules have to be applied by all the members of the community. They then require rigorous monitoring and sanctions mechanism.

Thus, the assembly of the "Jmaa" as a legitimate body, accountable to the community and charged by the latter of the management of its affairs, shall enforce its decisions. To do this, it does not need physical strength, it relies on "the socio-cultural power" and "punishment".

A number of persons to which the assembly of "Jmaa" delegates some of its responsibilities facilitate controlling the application of the rules and decisions of «Jmaa». It is, for the studied resources:

- ✓ "Agdals" guardians: Selected members of the community. They should be young and bold. They keep "agdals" during the spring to early summer. Their presence allowed to deter fraud attempts, but in case of violation, their responsibility is to report offenses to the representatives of lineages.

In case of violation of the rules, representatives of the lineages are responsible for applying the sanctions established and defined by custom. This responsibility aims to maintain discipline, essential to community life.

### Solving social conflicts

Solving social conflicts is a prerequisite for common resources management (Ostrom, 1990). Social cohesion is the guarantor of the effectiveness of the organization of the exploitation of these resources by the assembly of the "Jmaa". According to many researchers, solving social conflicts is an integral part of resource management "conflicts are normal social processes and social order does not depend on their absence but the ability of the community to manage them" (Leroy, 1991). "Solving social conflicts is a very important element in the success of the use of land and natural resources." (Bruce and Mearns, 2002: 33).

Over the years, ethnic communities in the province of Ifrane have developed many strategies and management techniques of conflict resolution. Negotiation, mediation and arbitration practices were common, as coercive measures such as pressure and ostracism.

The success of these customary strategies was possible because they were adapted to traditions, and given the

capacity of traditional authorities to enforce decisions and enforce cultural norms in citing solidarity and brotherhood within the group. This ability came from the privileged position of the institution "Jmaa" within the community, but also the support of the organization of "Rma".

### "Rma" and "Jmaa" a necessary interdependence for resolving conflicts and legitimization collective decisions

The organization "Rma" is "an assembly or college formed by representatives of the fractions at the rate of one to three per fraction, chosen for their good character" (Mahdi 2012).

According to the same author, it is a hierarchical organization. At the top of the sheikh "Rma" helped by *ymoqaddems*, each has representatives *Louchil* (*Wakil*, Arabic) and finally *Abidats* (followers). The assembly has legal and social competence.

"In cultural matters, the "Rma" are ritual officiants. They are responsible for the organization of all sacrificial rituals called *Lamma*, etc." (Mahdi 2012). While on the social level, "Rma" play the role of mediator to resolve conflicts.

Indeed, the assembly of "Rma" was an organization invested in conflict resolution, the establishment of community discipline and the spirit of solidarity and tolerance within the community. Any social problems within or between communities were solved by the assembly of the "Jmaa".

Integrating the sheikh "Rma" of each community (tribe or fraction). The intervention of the "Sheikh n'Rma" as pious, wise and respected person aims to avoid feelings of hatred and revenge, and their transmission to future generations.

It should be noted that the organization "Rma" was also a guarantor in legitimizing agreements and settlements by the community. The presence of the "Sheikh 'Rma" at the meetings of the "Jmaa" as witnesses, was a means of ensuring compliance with the decisions and commitments made by the ethnic community.

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