The political institutions of Moroccan tribes are closely intertwined with the central state. By aligning with state officials, tribe members actively contribute to state administration. The state has gone to the extent that neither the rural council nor the customary village council offers positions for representation of the tribal population. However, the recent government of alternance of Prime Minister Youssoufi and King Mohammed VI have both declared the introduction of a local government intended to serve the population, instead of controlling it through village representation. Nonetheless, in view of Morocco's political culture, it can be argued that this will be a long-term affair.

Since the independence, the political system of Morocco can be described as based on patrimonial relations. For example, in November 1988, King Hassan II visited Azrou, the most important market place of the Beni Mguild. The king sent tribute to state authoritarianism. The state has seen closely intertwined with the central state. By aligning with the central state, all governors on 31 December 1999 and appointed (and Morocco in general) and this becomes the source of livelihood is sheep farming on the collectively owned pastures. It is the governor, following the instructions of the Ministry of the Interior, who ultimately decides on the criteria of access. According to the governor, people having recently settled in the area may herd on these pastures as well - a move deeply resented by several autocratic sheep farmers.

At the province level, one can meet the emirs of the province and how they can fit into the national plan are decided upon. Informally, the general secretary has meetings with the chairmen of the district councils, informing them on how to make their local plans coincide with those of the province. Once these men agree, the plan is elaborated. The population is well aware of the decision-making power of the province. The sheep farmers converse with the governor by regularly sending him letters, asking him to redress certain decisions taken by other authorities which they resent. Secret information about countrymen who were their adversaries in disputes often accompany these letters, enforcing the key position of the emir.

What is happening at the level of the province is replicated at the district level. The main function of the caid is to maintain law and order in his district. However, many disputes about access to the pastures and other conflicts are directly put forward to him. Especially on market days, his office is crowded with people. Most caids find great difficulties in the straightforward handling of affairs as they are confronted with people who opt for other avenues to solve their problems.

The sheikhs and moppadins are the mediators between the caid and the population. The former represents a clan, while the latter represents a lineage. Both are recruited from among the local population. Despite not receiving any compensation, many compete for these positions because they feel they can influence the decisions made at this level.

The decision may be contested, the caid that they will be frequently invoked by the court if they have a dispute. The caid receives no compensation for their troubles. It is thus that the Beni Mguild no longer have an agdal, and the conse- quences have, among other things, grave ecological implications.

Regional Issues

**Autochthonous institutions: an alternative?**

The Beni Mguild society is segmentary, the minimal lineage being the smallest unit. Formerly, this was in condition for that would trek to summer camps. The maximal lineage often coincides with a village at winter sites. Several lineages comprise a clan, the members of which defend their interests in larger pastures. Clans make up a tribe, coinciding with larger tribal areas.

Actually, now that the Beni Mguild have sedentarized, the jemma (village council) has become the most influential local power centre. Within the jemaa are the influential elders who have the reputation of being wise. Those known as religious men will be invested as members too. The jemaa still runs internal village affairs such as mosque maintenance and the payment of local irrigation watchmen, and helps in organizing marriages and funerals. One very important task of the council is to elect naibs. The task of echahid worth for pastoral and to maintain the rest period (agdal).

At a higher level, there were tribal councils composed of representatives from the maximal lineages, which would elect a leader by rotating among the lineages. No longer operational, this council has the function of distributing land and water amongst the lineages. Now sheikhs and caids, appointed by the government, decide on most matters.

Although the jemaa is still operative, several factors have undermined its functions. In the first place, there is the introduction of party politics. Because a lineage generally acts as a voter’s bloc, a village cannot nominate one candidate for different lineages. In such cases, the affair generally ends with one part of the village feeling underrepresented and acting accordingly.

Second, people tend to go to the caid if they feel the village council has not done justice. Members of the jemaa frequently go to the caid to look for help with a dispute. The Berber brotherhood of the hunters (mou’a) is still important among the Beni Mguild. Mou’a groups organize the overall visits to Berber and Arab saints’ shrines and the tribal offerings in spring and in autumn. Only men considered religious and honest are asked to become members. Because the mou’a members are highly respected, they are important men in the jemaa. But nowa- days their importance is waning as they are no longer respected by educated people. The caid go directly to the caid or to the court if they have a dispute.

Next to the jemaa and the mou’a, the posi- tion of the naib is weakening. People are now very reluctant to accept a request of the jemaa to take up this post. They know that they will be frequently invoked by the caid to help in sorting out access problems, and while the latter ultimately decides, this decision may be contested, the naib receiving his share of resentment. In addition, they receive no compensation for their troubles. It is thus that the Beni Mguild no longer have an agdal, and the conse- quences have, among other things, grave ecological implications.

**Note**

Hammouz, A. (1997),Blazer and Chepika