



*Dar Si Hmad, Agadir, Morocco*

*Biography of Si-Hmad Derhem*

*1909-1982*

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A native of Taloust, a village in the Aït Baamrane region of the Anti-Atlas Mountains, Si-Hmad Derhem made his fortune in commerce early in his life. By the end of the 1930s, his enterprise and commitment had contributed significantly to the growth of his native region despite a difficult political climate. The founders of Dar Si Hmad took inspiration from the moral principles of Si-Hmad Derhem, a gifted, inquisitive, and self-taught individual. He had a strong sense of solidarity and facilitated access to and diffusion of knowledge among his people. With his force of character, he initiated and developed a system of mutual and communal aid which improved the living conditions for, and with the participation of, the people of Aït Baamrane and the Sahara. Si-Hmad Derhem's successors created the Derhem Foundation, Dar Si Hmad's major trust-fund, in order to promote his values and pass on his precious legacy.

The life of Si-Hmad Derhem was greatly affected by the major events that left their mark on the history of the region. Having actively shaped this history himself, Si-Hmad Derhem and his legacy live on in the memory of the people of southwestern Morocco.

Born in 1909 in the mountains of Aït Baamrane, Si-Hmad was a member of a large household as was typical of the era. His family descended from ancestors affiliated with the Zaouïa of Abdallah Ben Sassi in the Haouz of Marrakech who originally journeyed to Aït Baamrane to combat the Spanish incursions in the 16th Century. Si-Hmad was given a traditional Islamic education, and learned the Qu'ran by heart, earning him the title of Si-Hmad (the "Si" prefix in the Souss region being a distinction traditionally given to literate individuals). Around the age of 16, Si-Hmad migrated to the Spanish-occupied region of Tangier-Tetouan in the north of Morocco. He worked hard for several years and amassed a considerable amount of money which he took back with him, sewn into his clothes, upon returning to his native Aït Baamrane.

In 1932, Si-Hmad relocated to Terfaya where he set up a small business. Terfaya, referred to as Cape Juby at the time, was the experimental testing ground for the Aeropostale Company (the air transport company which would later become Air France); adventurers and visionaries like Saint Exupery and Mermoz were among the pioneering pilots of the day. In the 1880s, Donald MacKenzie had founded the North-West Africa Company (1875-1890) in Cape Juby, modeled after the famous East-India Company, with grand agricultural projects in the Sahara. An entire zeitgeist of adventures and possibilities were present, even if, in the end, none came to fruition.