

# *Unequal Times*

Rural Moroccan Households in the  
World Economy



David Lindsay Crawford

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## Chapter 1: Timeful Lives

“Every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time.”

Franz Fanon

This ethnography is about the changing lives of Berber speaking farmers in the mountains of Morocco --the way people living in one village organize themselves to meet the challenges of changing times. This kind of inquiry in a place like highland Morocco necessarily invokes our own (non-villager) understandings of our era, especially the crude dualism “tradition and modernity,” along with a raft of other much-freighted terminology: globalization and Islam, capitalism and the subsistence economy, wage labor and tribal affinities, development, poverty, patriarchy, inequality, culture. Such terms are vital to contemporary, Western thinking about our time --and what it is not; they are central to how we (non-poor, non-farmers) make sense of how rural Moroccan *Imazighen* experience our shared epoch.<sup>1</sup> A study of rural Moroccan Berbers is thus necessarily also a study of “ourselves,” a means of assessing the breadth and diversity of our complicatedly interwoven “world-economy” (Smith and Wallerstein 1992).

But if terms like “traditional” facilitate some sorts of thinking, they also constrain and canalize it. Contemporary writing on out-of-the-way places, and, in particular, anthropological writing, has a tendency towards what Fabian calls a “denial of coevalness” (1983) or, as Eric Wolf would put it, conceptualizing other cultures as lacking “history” (1982). There is thus some confusion built in to examining a culture many would consider “traditional” because its opposition to “modern” implies that the lives of subsistence farmers are static, while “we” (modern folks who read books) are new, evolving, contemporary, and dynamic. Since farmers in the village of Tadrar<sup>2</sup> and stockbrokers in Manhattan are both living at the same historical moment, the *now* that we all share, terms like “traditional” impute a false rural atavism, a dull timelessness.

This dualistic way of categorizing the “First” and “Third” worlds is similarly problematic at a smaller scale too, within Morocco itself. Ahmed Lagnaoui writes that Morocco has two separable cultures, “traditional and modern,” with the traditional, rural, patriarchal culture characterized as “stagnant” and “lacking a spirit of initiative” (1999). National Geographic magazine refers to Morocco as “a timeless Mosaic” (Zwingle 1996), though the “timeless” bit of the mosaic is not Casablanca --the main commercial center--but the older parts of venerable cities like Fes, and most especially rural areas. In other words, the contours of rural life in Morocco are read by urbanites within and outside of the country to mean the countryside is “behind” the *timeful* world of people who read English and French, the literate consumers who are “ahead” in a progression towards a future defined as what the West is now. In these terms, “traditional” amounts to a fantasy rearview mirror, a staid and dusty past strategically juxtaposed to the dynamic present and the postmodern future. This is one way the self-consciously modern world understand itself: by constructing rural life as what the “modern” world is not, and especially by constructing it as part of a time that is *not anymore*.

Thus, examining social transformation in a High Atlas village requires us to think seriously about time, to examine how we in wealthier social positions think about stability and change, how we understand our collective lives in time, and how we comprehend the globally interconnected era we live in. If we want to move beyond seeing rural Others as a lagging shadow of ourselves, it makes sense to engage the way rural people actually think and behave,

the differences with urban life, but also the similarities and the shared dynamics. Put another way, if we want to understand the dynamics of “globalization,” we need to assess places that evince signs of being newly globalized. A village ethnography is one good way to fathom what has changed in our world, what has not, and why. The village of Tadrar is one place to begin such a project.

My way of looking at the processes through which the people of Tadrar integrate themselves with the larger world economy will be somewhat eclectic and determinedly micro-social, linking household economies to local kinship dynamics and the larger political economy, and putting interpretive anthropology to work on the exigencies of material poverty, development, and wage labor. I will disagree with writers on globalization who contend that “the world is flat” (Friedman 2005), that the dominant economic processes of the West transfer largely uninflected to other contexts, that the world is coalescing under a single, transparent, competitive logic through the decentralization of skills and the compression of time and space. But I also disagree in some ways with critics of this Liberal vision, scholars and activists like Vandana Shiva who criticize the glorification of “the global” over the local, but still credit corporate capital with a totalizing power I do not believe it has.<sup>3</sup> In my account of very poor Berber farmers I mean to add a richer, more intimate, if less conclusive, picture to these sorts of grand analyses; the welter of everyday life will serve here to leaven more general studies that summarize rural household organization as “income pooling units” alternately “resisting” the global economy and being shaped by it (Smith and Wallerstein 1992). I will show how some poor Berbers endure the exigencies of their economic position and the depredations of political states in which they live, how they make what they can of their world, by demonstrating how poor farmers *engage* their political economic reality –culturally, to be sure, but actively and intelligently.

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I made my first brief visit to the village of Tadrar in 1994. I went back to do research and stayed off and on from 1998 through 1999, and then returned several more times through the summer of 2004. My main interest during this period has involved the way villagers organize the labor necessary for the difficult, life-sustaining task of farming barley. Farming in Tadrar is hard. It involves drawing water from a plunging river of snowmelt, channeling it hundreds of meters across precipitous mountainside, and portioning it out to over 1,100 tiny plots. Especially in drought years, there is little to waste and ensuring each field gets what it needs, when it needs it, requires a symphonic synchronization of rock, mud and water by teams of carefully coordinated men. Once grown, the barley has to be cut, dried, and transported back to the village on women’s backs, threshed by teams of mules, winnowed, stored, then ground into flour, kneaded into bread, and baked in wood fired ovens --ovens that require women to cut, gather, and haul wood down from distant forests along dangerously steep, sometimes nearly invisible, trails. Only then, circled on the floor around the common family bowl, the warm bread can be torn into pieces, apportioned by need, and eaten. In Tadrar bread, and by extension life, does not come from a store.

Or at least it has not. A dirt road was built to Tadrar in 1996. Now more people move more frequently because truck service means the 17 rocky kilometers down to the paved road are not the barrier they used to be. In 1998 villagers received a government school for the first time, and while the Arabic taught at the school has yet to take hold among these Berber speakers, children are now being consistently exposed to the national language for the first time. In 1998 the US Peace Corps contributed the materials to install a potable water system, and a World

Bank-funded development project brought cement for one of the canals by 2003. By 2004 there was a diesel powered grain mill, also courtesy of the Peace Corps, a mill that replaced the ancient, defunct watermill beside the river. By my most recent visit in late 2004 some families had solar power panels, televisions, indoor plumbing, and even video disk players and satellite dishes. Television reception is limited to four stations, all in Arabic, one each from Morocco, Libya, Algeria and Egypt, but recorded disks of Berber language comedies, music videos, and tapes of the singing and dancing at weddings have become a popular new kind of entertainment.

We might surmise, then, that this “traditional” village is becoming “modern,” more like or at least on the road to being like the rest of Morocco, like the cool, clean, electrified mosques of the old city in Fez, the bars and cafes of the seaside *corniche* in Casablanca, or the kite-surfing, Mercedes-driving Moroccan families vacationing in Essaouira. Urban Moroccans themselves often make a distinction between the modern and traditional parts of their country, and assume (like many other people around the world) that their rural brethren represent a kind of contemporary past: living folklore clinging stubbornly to the mountain valleys, partly enviable (for piety and presumed social cohesion) but also pitiable (for being backwards, stubborn, impoverished, ignorant). In this view, the villagers of Tadrar are on the “frontiers of the modern” (Lagnaoui 1999), the interface between a kin-built social world of subsistence agriculture and a febrile global economy organized through individualism, anonymity, mass media, and wage labor.

I will argue that Tadrar illustrates not a holdover from a different era, but the way a continuously reconstituted traditional order meshes with the (also continuously reconstituted) world of state power and capitalist wage labor. In this confrontation the rural social order is sometimes fragmented, absorbed, or undermined, but it is also sometimes structurally durable, only superficially transformed by larger social dynamics. It is not the case that migration and money lead simply to “a changing culture” (Petrzelka and Bell 2000:348).<sup>4</sup> Instead, as I will show, different villagers put development efforts and the wage labor economy to work for different purposes, and these different purposes influence how the interaction takes place, how the participants make out, and ultimately how the village is transformed. Merely observing satellite dishes and cellular phones tells us little about how such technologies are incorporated into a local social, political, and cultural order, or how that order is changing.

In this book I will consider “modern time” not as a historical period, but a modality -- a complex of trajectories and periodicities within the broader arch normally subsumed under “history.” My point is that all lives are *timeful* lives, and the issue is what sorts of time we are talking about. I will borrow from Jonathon Friedman, Katherine Verdery, and others the idea that economic modes have distinct temporal complexes, specific rhythms and periodicities by which they operate, and I want to show how different temporal orders are integrated. In the way I am using the terms, “traditional” and “modern” specify different ways of organizing time, not different times in which people are organizing. I hope this becomes clearer throughout the book.

Returning to Tadrar, and relying on the changes I observed in this village between 1994 and 2004, I will examine some of the assumptions that underpin a variety of explanations for how the global order is thought to expand, how the economic system called capitalism is seen to penetrate, poison, and overwhelm the traditional social world. To do this I will eschew the typical metropolitan view and begin instead with the dynamics of Tadrar itself –the way villagers sustain themselves through households they cleverly stitch into larger forms of community. My supposition is that unless we understand how people collectively stay alive and reproduce themselves, we will have great difficulty understanding how they find meaning in their lives. In

the words of Clifford Geertz, “The danger that cultural analysis, in search of all-too-deep-lying turtles, will lose touch with the hard surfaces of life –with the political, economic, stratificatory realities within which men [sic] are everywhere contained –and with the biological and physical necessities on which those surfaces rest, is an ever-present one. The only defense against it, and against, thus, turning cultural analysis into a kind of sociological aestheticism, is to train such analysis on such realities and such necessities in the first place” (1973:30). This is my intention. The daunting precariousness of rural life in Morocco is well documented, longstanding, and pervasive (Rosenberger 2001). The energetic creativity employed by rural farmers to deal with this precariousness, with the “hard surfaces” of their lives, forms the core of this book.

However, fickle weather and ruthless national politics are only part of the conditions farmers engage. The arrival of the global economic order is arguably a tectonic shift, substantively new ground families can or in some cases must work to sustain themselves. Grappling with this requires us to examine where, when and how local social dynamics articulate with much broader social processes. This is not simple or singular; it is not that all villagers work the same way or have the same intentions or capabilities. There is no generic villager waiting to be probed for insight into what “they” all are up to. I will ask why some of my neighbors in Tadrar welcomed exogenously funded development and some did not; why some individuals and families abandon the village to work in the cities and some do not; why some work outside of the village but return resources to it; and why some prefer to stay resolutely in place and have as little to do with outsiders as possible.

In other words, rather than view globalization from the perspective of urban migrants, people who have opted out of, or been driven from, their mountain mode of production, I want to get the view from the highlands, the perspective of people at the interface between local, longstanding forms of social organization and the “new world order” about which so much is written. Through this I hope to illuminate a wide field of contemporary social transformations through a very narrow, specific focus, though I should admit that I am nervous about what general insights we might take from such a restricted case. I am, after all, writing about an encounter and not a microcosm. My hope is that readers see in Tadrar some of the intriguing, and to most of us quite alien, ways that our poorer contemporaries are coping with the agony and exhilaration of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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After this introduction the remainder of the book is divided into seven chapters meant first to elicit a visceral sense of life in Tadrar, and then to make a set of arguments about how and why it is changing. I begin impressionistically then become more analytical and theoretical along the way, until the last chapter when I return to some of my early observations and sentiments, where I try to sum up some of what I have been trying to say. I will try to capture both the ugliness of poverty and the beauty of the people dealing with it.

“Chapter 2: A Place in Time” introduces the village from its regional context to specific houses, paths, and rooms. Some contemporary ethnographies pass too quickly over the actual places under discussion, or at least students complain to me that they have a hard time getting a “sense of place,” a feeling for what life is like in a world that seems so different. This chapter begins the process of drawing out what it is like to pass time in the Moroccan mountains, what it is like to eat and work, live and love in a mud walled village, and something of the specific individuals who become the sources of my understanding. I want to start with this, to evoke a sense of daily life in Tadrar and set the village in a spatial context, in order give some idea how I came to know the place. This requires me to describe the particular spaces that I moved through,

the houses and rooms where I did my work, the places that allowed me to understand how villagers do their work. How I came to know Tadrar has much to do with what I claim to know, so my description of space and movement through it is also a kind of methodological statement.

For readers who do not know, I should say that contemporary anthropology has moved away from the “village study” approach I adopt here, and there are some good reasons for this.<sup>5</sup> Still, I contend that Tadrar is worth treating as an entity because it is both a complex, physical place and a locus of identity. It is not that Tadrar is sealed off from other villages (quite the contrary) or that its boundaries are in all cases firm and uncontested. But the village *qua* village does play an important role in local self-identification; it is an important legal entity in terms of rights to pastures and obligations for the upkeep of communal property ranging from trails and irrigation canals, to the mosque and its attendant rituals. In other words, Tadrar is an identifiable place (a cluster of buildings, fields, canals and pastures), a place that comes with rights and obligations, but also a place specific people identify as being their own. My aim is to make the relationship between these physical, emotional, and conceptual phenomena clear, and to set this complex, physical and notional “village” in a broader social, political, and economic context.

The spaces of Tadrar feel quite stable, or felt stable during my initial fieldwork. The village appears in my older photographs to be from another time, frozen. However, exposure over a number of years has shown this to be quite wrong. Tadrar now seems to me remarkably fluid, with rock, dirt, water, animals, and humans flowing through it, coming into this world and leaving it, being pushed up and pulled down, reconfigured, undulating in rhythms and transformed across slow pathways beyond the limits of immediate perception. Understanding how spaces are physically reproduced (fields and canals rebuilt, houses shored up) and transformed (old trails abandoned, new houses built, infrastructure improved) is one way to begin thinking about social transformation. Change is nowhere singular or simple, unidirectional or predetermined. Transformation and reproduction of the physical spaces of Tadrar can help us to think about kinds of change generally, and thus the kinds of change that are, and are not, wrought by the larger set of forces glossed as “globalization.”

“Chapter 3: Intimate Matrices” moves from the fundamental spaces of Tadrar to the fundamental social unit, the household. Other parts of the world have enjoyed intense academic interest in the household; Morocco has not. Classic scholarly writing about the social world of the Moroccan mountains has focused on tribes and moieties, religious organizations, powerful warlords, and village assemblies. These are all interesting modalities of social organization and, in various ways in different times and places they are all important, but I believe they are better understood if we begin with the dynamics of household production. Recent scholarship has moved away from these older fixations and has tended to focus on “the state” and issues of power (Bourqia and Gilson Miller 1999, Slyomovics 2005a). Here too, however, I think a household perspective similar to that adopted by Martha Mundy in Yemen (1995) deepens our understanding not only of quotidian life, but of larger processes up to and beyond the machinations of the state.

In Tadrar the elemental form of labor organization is the household, or *takat*. This is where a villager’s activities over a day are coordinated, as well as many of the most important decisions of her or his lifetime. The particular villagers with whom you eat, work, and sleep are your household members; households care for the young and old, they produce the workers who sustain the household, the village, and indeed the world economy; households are the preeminent locus of both production and consumption. Households are built of people –the people with whom you share love, labor, warmth, shelter, and food over many years, people with whom you

share *life*. Like the humans who constitute them, households have a lifecycle; every villager's mortal existence is embedded in the lifecycle of one or a sequence of households.

A *takat* is not the same as "family," though family ties (and the profound emotional resonance of the concept of family) are important to the economic constitution of households. Some scholars discuss households in terms of "family," the "conjugal family," or the "nuclear family," and this can be misleading (Berque 1955: 40, Michel 1997:244, Pascon 1979:109). Households are *economic* organizations and family members, even very emotionally close family members, may or may not belong to the same *takat*. Everyone belongs to some *takat*, however, and everyone knows who belongs to which.

Households are not generic. Labor is divided principally by sex and age, such that boys and girls travel distinct routes over the course of their lives. Households are not isomorphic, and while they move through identifiable "stages," no two household histories are exactly alike --an important point about households generally (Conley 2004, Robertson 1991). I will try to give some sense of these trajectories and histories, the way actual people manage the exigencies of biology and political economy with what strategies can be made culturally sensible. I will also try to capture the subtle power dynamics of the patriarchal household, where older people rule over younger, and men over women, though not in the crude and obvious way that bosses rule over laborers in the city.

One main theme of the book is that the temporality of households --the way household members manage daily labor through the slow unfolding of human life--is fundamental to all larger social processes, including our question of global integration. Women's labor in particular has been relatively understudied in Morocco, and is especially important to the constitution of households. Understanding women's labor behind the scenes is crucial to understanding the more visible masculine forms of political and social labor discussed in subsequent chapters.

All enduring societies must reproduce themselves, and households are typically the way they do so. Placing households at the base of our analysis helps us to make sense of the differences and commonalities between the social orders of the cities and the mountains, and the expansion of the global economy in novel social and cultural environments.

"Chapter 4: Household Inequality" examines the economic differences between households, and specifically how property devolves to create very different capacities for political action. The inequalities between households are hard to assess; Berbers are famously "egalitarian," and villagers do not typically display their economic status in the same way that urbanites might; there is little conspicuous consumption in Tadrar, or at least there has not been until recently. Nonetheless, inequality here is well-understood by villagers themselves, and is important; it is impossible to make sense of larger, village wide political dynamics (much less state-sanctioned development projects, or migration for wage labor) without accounting for the inequalities amongst households. We have to transcend the notion of a generic poor villager.

Much of this chapter deals with methodology --how to gauge economic differentiation in an interdependent economic system. In Tadrar property is diffuse and widely distributed, with fields ranging from the size of a closet to something closer to forty meters across, with trees of all sizes, from saplings to four story high walnuts, and herd sizes ranging from zero to several hundred. "Owners" of property can be individual persons embedded in households, but owners are sometimes lineage groups, sharecropping partners, absentee migrants, distant religious lodges, the Moroccan government's department of religious affairs, or "public" property that all field owners can use, that all men in Tadrar can use, or that all residents of the whole valley can use. Sometimes some of these rights can be transferred, further complicating the picture. The



irreducible particularity of property, the complexity of ownership, and the complicated agreements about who labors for whom (and when, where, and why) all converge to make assessing something as seemingly straightforward as “wealth” a deeply confounding exercise. I try to show why such an exercise is necessary for comprehending social change.

“Chapter 5: Arranging the Bones” moves from household property to household labor, and examines how household labor reserves are tapped for village wide projects. In Tadrar there is a tradition of dividing labor responsibilities for village-level projects into five work groups. These groups are in some sense based on agnatic “tribal” affiliations or lineages, that is, kin relations through the male line. These are the *ighsan* (sing. *ighs*), or “bones,” of the village. Public work groups are built from --but are not the same as-- the bones, and these groups have traditionally been used to build dams during summer droughts, for repairs on the village mosque, or to construct trails up the steep cliff faces to higher pastures and fields. More recently these groups have been employed for various development projects, from installing a potable water system to rebuilding one of the rock and mud canals using cement. The importance of this kind of “traditional” communal labor is thus *increasing* due to sponsorship by the Moroccan state and international NGOs..

There are a number of points to make about how work groups are formed and how the process of formation is altered in new political and economic conditions. The key element is that the constitution of the groups is based not only on specific kin relations, but also on a cultural understanding of “fairness,” one that is interestingly tied to the long term rhythms of village life. As households are born, expand, wither, and die, the labor responsibilities of households are adjusted, seemingly to ensure a balance among the bones. In this way the temporalities of household labor are important to extra-household community organization, an organization that is not a simple manifestation of a cultural script, but a negotiation between contradictory cultural principles and the exigencies of demography.<sup>6</sup>

Presently World Bank projects are invigorating the use of the *ighsan* and expanding their salience, benefits, and social costs beyond “traditional” domains. Here we see one way that global processes reinvigorate particular local social dynamics rather than eradicating or absorbing them; we see how local social forms shape why and how global forces impact the village.

“Chapter 6: Being Seen by the State”<sup>7</sup> extends this treatment of how the village as a whole is changing through interactions with “the outside.” Here I will agree with scholars that have shown how villages have always been connected to various kinds of “outsides” (Braudel et al. 2001, Mojuetan 1995, Wallerstein 2004). If Tadrar is out-of-the-way, it has never been isolated. To establish this point I outline some very local history and sketch some of the ways that people in Tadrar have used resources from beyond their village and valley.

Now, however, the national government is taking far more sustained interest in its hinterlands than ever before, and state and international development agencies are keen to transform the nature of village life (making it more healthful, less poor, and affording formalized educational opportunities). But if state-sanctioned development has necessitated a more intimate relationship with the central government, this has not always been welcomed locally, nor is it easy to understand. Anthropological writing on state power in Morocco has been oddly divided between rural work on lineages and tribes (where the state is absent or thought to be unimportant) and urban work where the state is thought to be all-powerful. The cultural morays associated with each political mode are likewise polarized in the literature, with “egalitarianism” reigning amongst the mountain tribes (c.f. Gellner 1969, Kraus 1998), and “authoritarianism”

infusing all social relationships in the plains (Hammoudi 1997, Bourqia and Gilson Miller 1999). As the state comes to take a more active role in rural affairs, making sense of how the Moroccan state works --and how local people understand it to work-- becomes important to explaining the contemporary dynamics of village life.

I will suggest that in Tadrar the way that “development” has progressed illustrates how two distinct modalities of power in highland Morocco (egalitarianism and authoritarianism) are part of a single cultural system. The egalitarian genealogical order of the mountains (what has been called “tribal” organization) is egalitarian among brothers and cousins, but depends on a deep authoritarianism between fathers and sons. Households are internally hierarchical, not egalitarian, it is household heads –patriarchs—who are equal to one another in the village council. When “tribes” or social groups are calculated by patrilineal reference to shared dead ancestors, the people remaining (and doing the calculating) are necessarily “equal,” that is, sublineage groups are all descended from and would owe fealty to a patriarch, but he is dead. These groups are all nominally equal to one another –like brothers or cousins rather than like fathers to sons. From a local perspective state power is conceived much like this, with chains of men linked up one above the next in a hierarchy that leads to the King. The difference, of course, is that the state hierarchy exists in the present; it is not calculated through ancestors. State officials are thus like ancestors come alive, and obeisance to state agents is analogous to obeisance to ancestors, at least ideally. Men from the government cannot be dealt with as equals; they are, as people say, *imqor*. In the *Tashelhit* (Berber) of this region *imqor* means to be big (like an adult), to be powerful (like a government agent), and to be old (like a venerable patriarch). It is not arbitrary that this word serves such related meanings.

I will not suggest that the Moroccan state draws its power simply from these cultural understandings. Secret prisons, torture, the use of the military power against civilians, and a persistent problem with corruption, means that from the perspective of the poor the state has power because it has the power to punish, to take things away, to imprison, to kill. It is not that the state has no legitimacy, but in development work, as in other domains, people render their actions sensible in particular cultural contexts. In the village what is important is the way men interact to get things done, the “how of power” rather than the fact of it (Foucault 1983). In rural Morocco interactions between men take the form of haughty domination over those “below,” exaggerated servility to those “above,” and fierce maintenance of parity among “equals.” Cultural modalities necessarily inflect how local development gets done, and what gets done with it. Again, local understandings shape larger processes as much as the other way around.

“Chapter 7: Globalization Begins at Home”<sup>8</sup> ties the local dynamics of households, lineages, and village-level labor groups and development into an argument about globalization. By this I do not mean a macroeconomic and broadly political argument, the way that globalization is typically discussed. The general terms of our global age are clear enough: increasing freedom of capital, rising and ever more desperate labor migration, technological innovation, especially in communications and transport, the decline of state-controlled economic ideologies, and a swelling faith in the transcendental wisdom of markets. I will not challenge this as a kind of summation from above, a catholic portrait of our time. But analysis at this resolution tells us little about how people, especially poor farmers, experience this global age, much less why and how they involve themselves with it.

We see in Tadrar that participation in the wage labor economy is the main way that poor people become part of “the global.” Jobs at clothing factories in Casablanca, orange picking in the Sous Valley, or construction of tourist hotels in Marrakech mean that certain villagers are

contributing their labor to the production of things that will travel far, and benefit variously fortunate middlemen. Many of these middlemen will never meet or even conceive of the lives villagers contribute to the commodity chain, nor, of course, will the ultimate consumers have any idea who has had a hand in their orange juice or the walls of their vacation bungalow.

But who does these jobs and why? What are the effects of their decisions? Most analyses of why globalization happens have focused either on the desirability of the wage labor economy (so that people choose to participate in it for sensible material reasons) or on the implementation of the capitalist system against the wishes of everyday people (so that they have no choice but to participate in it). What these positions share is the assumption that individuals are the unit of analysis. As I argue throughout this book, however, in rural Morocco the fundamental social unit is the household, not the autonomous individual. In Tadrar some people are indeed choosing to be involved in the wage labor economy, but the people doing the choosing are usually not the ones doing the laboring. Fathers *send* children to work in the city, and children's wages support the rural, patriarchal household. The wage labor economy and the rural patriarchal household are not antithetical, are not counterpoised to one another as "modern" to "traditional," but are instead mutually sustaining. The rural household provides very cheap labor for the global economy, and the global economy leaks small amounts of cash that find their way up to the mountains.

But this is not uniform. Different villagers end up in the city for different, and sometimes contradictory, reasons. Sometimes people are abandoning their patriarchal household, sometimes hoping to start one, sometimes marrying from one to another, and sometimes seeking to tap the urban economy to consolidate the power of the rural patriarch. There are thus many different reasons villagers are busy developing new sorts of skills and bending older social connections to new ends, and this works in tandem with new sorts of self-understanding. Villagers are now much more consciously Muslim than ever before because they interact with some non-Muslims; they are conscious of being Berber speakers because they interact with more Arabic speakers; and they are more aware than ever before that they are poor because nearly everyone who arrives from the outside is very apparently better off than any villager. Now one of the main ways that villagers describe themselves to outsiders is as *miskin*, poor.

That fathers send children out to support the household is related to material poverty, surely, but poverty in a rural form that city dwellers do not always recognize as such. Poverty is always a question of proportion—too much of one thing and too little of another. In urban Morocco, there is too little work and what work there is pays too little, and thus there is too much time. Armies of men sit sullenly in cafes day after day nursing cups of tea, sharing newspapers, bumming cigarettes from friends who are slightly less unlucky. The *bidonvilles* of Casablanca are swollen with a small nation of the desperate. Women dwell at home wondering if they will ever marry, if they can find a husband with the meager enough resources to support children, or if they can find work at one of the sweatshops that specialize in the exploitation of women. The shantytowns stew with men and women unable to form households, unable, in other words, to become fully adult members of Moroccan society, where producing children is a cultural ideal—even in the city where bearing young workers is not an economic incentive.

In the mountains the dilemma is in some respects similar, but here there is *too much* work rather than too little, too little time rather than too much, and children are a net economic asset from very young age. Young village men and women are pressed into labor from predawn until after dark. There is little time to socialize, little time to play, and while they might be able to marry, the decision is entirely up to the fathers, the patriarchs, who control all the land and thus

the ability of young people to become adults, to have sex, to bear children. It is not surprising that for young village women the city almost always looks desirable. They dream of indoor plumbing, a gas stove as opposed to a wood oven, indoor rather than outdoor work, a cement roof and a room with furniture rather than a leaky mud roof in a room bare except for some old carpets to sit on. For young men the decision is tougher. The mountains guarantee some security (they will inherit land once their fathers die), but this often entails a very long wait.

This is not to say that urban labor is anything like ideal. There is growing recognition of the appalling conditions under which young men and women work in urban Morocco.<sup>9</sup> Activists, NGOs, and scholars are right to criticize the way rural children are treated in the urban economy, but here I am interested in how those children end up in the cities in the first place, and how they continue to impact the rural, household-based social order. We cannot understand the reasons rural people come to the city for wages (which is to say we cannot understand a central dynamic of global capital expansion) without understanding the rural economy, and particularly its fundamentally household organization.

“Chapter 8: The Market Has No Memory”<sup>10</sup> extends this discussion to consider the deeper, more abstract implications of the preceding chapters. It also returns to some of the first interviews I did in Tadrar and some of my initial notes with an aim to leaving readers with my own ambivalent feelings about the beauty and the drudgery involved in contemporary rural life in Morocco. If Chapters 2 through 7 made the case for why and how globalization operates on one of its frontiers, Chapter 8 asks what larger lessons this holds for us. To my mind this begins with the temporal dynamics of society, the importance of differently empowered social actors, and cultural values that cannot be reduced to instrumental economic rationality. In this final section I make explicit why I think the temporality of inequality is a useful framework for examining society, why it helps us to more clearly see the potential and peril of our global age.

To begin such an argument I assert that all societies are structured of inequality. The set of processes we call “globalization” are thus usefully understood as a transformation of inequality, and especially the temporalities or timeframes by which inequality is expressed. The wage labor economy relies upon a social unit (the individual) selling her labor for immediate return. It makes no promise for the future and expects none in return. The individual is expected to provide for herself, for sickness or physical disability, and certainly for the infirmities of old age. Sometimes larger social collectives we call “governments” step in to assist here, but not normally in poor countries like Morocco. Thus the wage labor economy is made up of very short term relationships (hourly wages, immediate sales) between anonymous actors (workers identified by a number, customers who are categorically “sir” or “madam”) who are differently empowered (the owner of capital or a commodity, laborer or customer). This stunning simplicity is part of what gives capitalism its expansive power and its explosive fecundity. It is relatively easy to make a farmer a worker, and very difficult to make a worker a farmer. The difficulty lies partially in the intimate knowledge required to farm in a vertical environment, but also in the deeply complex organization of village labor over time periods that extend from a few hours to multiple generations. Community must be built and maintained along with the land it lives on and through. This is hard work.

In short, Tadrar operates with its own temporalities and inequalities. Relationships are lifelong or even beyond. One *owes* parents and grandparents labor as long as they are alive. One may even owe labor to distant religious lodges or saintly lineages or urban relatives that one has never met; portions of what one produces may be claimed by others because of promises uttered by long dead ancestors. No person can escape these long term dynamics; they are the foundation

of rural society. A young person will only become empowered once she or he becomes old, once children and grandchildren and great grandchildren have been produced to serve. Fertility is thus a main form of wealth --at least as important as productive land.<sup>11</sup> Children are economic necessities *and* a preeminent cultural value.

This is why I argue that globalization --or any transformation of production and reproduction-- is usefully conceived in terms of the types of regnant inequalities and their associated timeframes. Young migrants who leave Tadrar are exchanging one timeframe of inequality (rural, long term) for another (urban, short term), one kind of exploitation (of parents over children) for another (owners over workers). Young women are trading the hard life of the mountains for the physically easier, though more isolated and socially restricted life of the cities. Older men and women are attempting to capture the short-term benefits of exogenous wage labor and integrate it into the longer term dynamics of household cycles, trying to retain and augment their relative security without leaving the mountains. Others are trying to inject capital into the village from the outside in ways other than wage labor, by drawing government or international development efforts. And still others are resisting, holding out, withholding their participation to cling tenaciously to the rhythms and values of an economy based on the durable loyalty of kin rather than money and commodities.<sup>12</sup> Some do reject participation in the economy of flatlands, after all; I have met grown men who claim to have never left the mountains, never seen the ocean or an airport, or even Marrakech only 90 kilometers away. Importantly, in an economy based on the patriarchal household rather than the free individual, the diversity of responses to capitalist opportunity is filtered through the social institution of the household, and only makes sense in reference to it.

To my mind this diversity of integration opens up conceptual possibilities for all of us. Certainly change is inevitable, but perhaps not in the way that we think. Durable traditions are patterns that we identify as “old” being enacted by new people. “Tradition” is thus about faithful reproduction, not stasis, faithful reproduction of some value or element or practice that we value in conditions that have changed.<sup>13</sup> Both reproduction and transformation are common, everyday, inevitable, ubiquitous. The issue is what is changing, what is not, how change happens, why, and how fast --a knotty issue social theorists do not seem close to unraveling.<sup>14</sup> But just because change is fundamental to human experience does not mean that the direction or pace of change is pre-determined. We are not compelled to accept every new technology that is invented, to make every trade that is monetarily profitable, to use any particular resource simply because it exists, or to exterminate every inefficient, but perhaps intriguing, difference between us. We are not compelled to bow to monetary logic as if we lived for the economy rather than making it work for our common needs and desires.

Farmers in Tadrar understand that there are costs to what they seek from the larger world. They are not mystified, they are not blindly accepting of every gadget and gizmo produced by American corporations in Chinese sweatshops, nor are they ignorant of the savagery of an atomized wage labor economy based largely, for the poor, on mindless drudgery. Villagers are, however, fairly desperate, and thus are not so quick as Western progressives to abhor what the cities have to offer. Children in Tadrar die at alarming rates, winters are freezing, clothes are tattered, shoes are second rate plastic slippers that do little to protect anyone from rocks, much less snow. The experience of such a world is certainly, as any anthropologist would contend, “culturally constructed,” but cultural constructions engage a material world. The distinction between an ideal and material world is, of course, itself a cultural construction. Scholars no less

than farmers are struck thinking with the tools available, the ideas they have inherited to think with.

In our own scholastic terms, the bodily experience of a difficult life, the ache of overworked backs, numb feet in cold river water, the pain of dentistry without anesthetic, of childbirth without hospital care, the slow-leaking, ineluctable physicality of our human lives: these cannot be dissolved in pools of pure meaning. To bring the experience of contemporary rural poverty into some focus we must bring our own notions (such as “culture,” “poverty,” and “meaning”) into conversation with important concepts in Tadrar (like *takat*, *ighs*, and *miskin*). One useful way to do this, to try and find a schema that will accommodate rural Berber understandings in contemporary English, is to marry understandings of inequality to temporality. Sometimes this relies more on evocation than explanation, empathy more than intellect. We are all mortal, we live, as one Sufi teacher put it to me, on a narrow bridge of light between two black and fathomless voids –the darkness before birth and the one after death. All of us live in societies that operate in time on this narrow bridge, societies we must reproduce in time as the light pushes back the darkness and the future becomes known; all people, all societies prepare for their future, and do this by synchronizing complicated rhythms of inequality, by organizing undulations of power and weakness, strength and dependency. Approaching social change from the perspective of the temporality of inequality offers a way to grapple with reproduction *and* transformation in both the frenetic world of well-heated houses and in the cold dirt huts of farmers negotiating modern time.

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To sum up the mechanics of this book in a paragraph: I begin Chapter 2 with a portrait of the village, the spaces people live in and through, in order to make a basic but profound point about the relationship between stability and change. Then in Chapter 3 I assert that in Tadrar the fundamental social unit by which these spaces are produced and reproduced is the household. This emphasis on the household stands in some contrast to most scholarly studies on the Moroccan mountains. Households, however, are not equal or isomorphic; they have a lifecycle, and exist in time and by putting productive resources to work, so I attempt to explain how and why some households end up better positioned --in Chapter 4 by outlining household property ownership and in Chapter 5 by illustrating how collective labor is organized. This collective labor (nominally arranged by lineages) illustrates some of the basic values of village life, including the way fairness is guaranteed over time, and the way genealogical relationships are put to work. Once we understand something of this local context, I examine state-sanctioned development efforts (Chapter 6) and wage labor (Chapter 7) and show how local dynamics determine the significance and shape of these larger processes. The final chapter is an attempt to synthesize some of this in more abstract theoretical terms, and to return to both the hardship of rural life and the beauty of this kind of social collective.

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Why Tadrar? It was a question that villagers themselves asked me repeatedly as I came to know them during the course of my PhD fieldwork in cultural anthropology. I am not sure how sensible my explanation was then or is now. As a profession anthropology is quite diverse, but one strand of it has archetypically involved traipsing off to the poorer, less visible regions of the planet to write about what “the natives” are up to. The best way I could think to relate this to the people of Tadrar (who had little idea what a “university” might be, much less anthropology) was that I was going to write a book about life in the mountains. This sounded, in a word, insane. Given the tendency of people who write things down to also be people who take things

away, my plan to write a book did not seem like a good idea to the villagers of Tadrar. So I came to add that 1. the job of a “university” was to write books about every single place in the world, that 2. Tadrar was my assignment, and that 3. the city people who populated universities did not seem to understand the rural world. Given all this I meant, with the help of the people of Tadrar, to set the record straight. The third reason was the only part villagers ever found very convincing; even people not so keen to help me still felt strongly that urbanites had no clue about the rural world. Thus began my collaboration with at least some of the people of Tadrar, and our attempt to explain how their part of the rural world works.

From the beginning of anthropology this sort of collaboration has been a strange way for strange scholars to produce a strange kind of knowledge. As social science this “method” has weathered much abuse in the last few decades, from within and without the guild, but I trust that most readers do not much care about these battles. The strident debates about the politics and morality of studying “Others,” about whether it is reasonable, desirable, or even morally defensible to leave our cozy natal niches and try to understand people elsewhere, are no longer very interesting --even to most of us who *are* anthropologists. There are exceptions, but most of us today would agree that what anthropologists have called “fieldwork” remains important, that you can do it in your own society or elsewhere, and you can try to present what you think you have discovered in a thousand different ways, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, insights and obfuscations. What remains interesting for people who are not anthropologists, I think, and what I hope always remains interesting, are the lives of people who are different in some revealing way. In the case here this means the lives of Berber speaking Muslim farmers in a valley that is a little remote, changing fast, and very poor. The people of Tadrar have a very different kind of day than those of us reading English language books in the warm houses in what we have self-identified as the “first” world. An underlying premise of this book is that such differences can be illuminating, even transformative.

This is partly a matter of faith, an odd faith that it is salutary to try and empathetically engage what seem curious ways of thinking, working, dressing, eating, loving, and fighting, even if our understandings are ineluctably imperfect, idiosyncratic, “biased,” as my students relentlessly opine in their essays. I believe that it is particularly useful to try and understand people who seem the most different and, on the surface at least, most odd. So this is what I am up to: first off, I hope to render a portrait of a few remarkable people I am lucky to know, to add their way of being to the “consultable record” of what we are up to on the planet these days, and then to make the case that we can learn from them.<sup>15</sup> This last bit will be the toughest, and will require that readers follow me across a tightrope between romanticization (happy villagers living sustainably and communally) and condescension (stupid villagers who cannot seem to grasp the lessons of science and progress). Beyond such stereotypes, what can obscure Moroccan farmers offer the rest of us? What can we offer them?

Finally, it is worth specifically addressing the fact that the people portrayed in this book are Muslims, and often pious ones too. In an age when Islam is sometimes asseverated as an enemy of freedom and other times held up as *the* only path to true freedom, when “experts” paint the Qur’an as antithetical to modernity and preachers offer it as a solution to modernity’s ills, when revolutionaries use Islam as an excuse for reactionary politics, while powerful states wield it as thin provocation for imperial slaughter, some readers will find it odd that I do not have a chapter on religion. This is not an accident. I have chosen to include religion when and where it occurs in daily life in the mountains. In Tadrar the practices central to being Muslim are so embedded in daily life that they do not constitute a separable category of experience. I hope that

readers can see this, can see how Islam is a crucial background to rural life without being an extractable “cause” for anything. In the mountains Islam is indeed sometimes put to work for political purposes, but no more than any other religion might be, and almost always in the name of fair play, responsibility, and compassion for the luckless. Islam here is not, as one international “expert” recently intoned, “at a point that Christianity was during medieval times.”<sup>16</sup> Islam in Tadrar is contemporary, like the people who profess it, like the social dynamics it informs and the practices through which it is expressed.

Traditional and modern ways of organizing time are interrelated and interdependent –in Tadrar and everywhere else, and exist contemporaneously to one another. Islam is not on one side or the other, it is not going a different direction than Christianity or Judaism. All societies form households and raise babies; we all hope to protect our babies, nurture them, allow them to stay alive, and to lead meaningful, fulfilling lives. I do not see that Islam is any better or worse at providing the means make a sensible world than Christianity, Judaism, or any other religion. For that matter I am not convinced that religion is necessary to producing meaning at all, but that is not an issue for this book. For my purposes here I will only confess that while I have my own convictions about the surest paths to damnation, I lack the requisite longitudinal data to prove anything, and thus cannot confidently recommend my beliefs. Meanwhile, I hope I can reveal my Muslim friends and neighbors as recognizably sensitive, sane, deeply caring people with reasonable desires and recognizable fears. I do not believe this is at odds with anthropology’s longstanding “passion for difference” (Moore 1994).

The villagers of Tadrar are no threat to anyone’s national security (despite the fact that they are Muslim), they do not have anything valuable to sell (except for their sweat, a few bags of almonds, an occasional goat), and they possess almost no hope of buying any valuables we might (by proxy) produce. Still, despite their failure to be politically intimidating or economically alluring, the people of Tadrar are very much worth knowing. They may help us to better grasp the relationship between individual and collective action (Rachik 1992), and their inventive use of social forms for the collective good offers hope for the future of their country (Berque 1967: 218), and beyond. Not a dying branch of our human family tree, these Moroccans living high in the mountains afford a unique vantage into some dramatic variation in our contemporary world. Understanding the social logics operative in Tadrar can provide a critical counterpoint to our own (non-village) way of doing things, our own pervasive but invisible assumptions about the world, and how such assumptions shape our actions. My hope is that this modest illustration of an obscure place may help us to tread more compassionately through the angry world we have inherited, and allow us to leave it a more humane place for those who follow. In this sense, then, this book is for my children, and the children of Tadrar.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> “Berber,” from the Latin for “barbarian,” is the English word for the majority population of North Africa in historic times and the language they speak, though since the Arab incursions that began in the 8<sup>th</sup> century ever more North Africans consider themselves “Arab” and speak Arabic. Contemporary activists and some scholars use *Imazighen* (singular, *Amazigh*) to refer to the contemporary Berber speaking population, though *Imazighen* is also the name for the particular Berber speaking people of the Middle Atlas. Berber speakers of the High Atlas, where Tadrar is located, are locally referred to as *Ishelhin* and their language as *Tashelhit*.

<sup>2</sup> “Tadrar” is a pseudonym.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.tamilnation.org/oneworld/shiva.htm> I agree with Shiva that “flat vision is a disease,” but I do not find in the Moroccan context that regular farmers are in any way averse to the advantages they might gain from engaging the world beyond the mountains.

<sup>4</sup> See Parry and Bloch (1989) for a set of articles detailing the different ways that money is made sensible in local cultural and social terms.

<sup>5</sup> See Marcus (1995) for an early discussion of “multi-sited” ethnography and the value of working across spatial scales. Goodman (2005) notes that “the village” has long a way of thinking about Berbers, at least in Algeria, and this serves to obscure important larger dynamics. Some very interesting contemporary ethnographies take the constitution of the object of study as central to the study itself (see Hayden 2003), but in the case of Tadrar my interest lies elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> I take this critique of “text” as a metaphor for culture from William Roseberry (1989).

<sup>7</sup> The title of this chapter is taken from James Scott’s “Seeing Like a State” (1999).

<sup>8</sup> I take the title of this chapter from Homi Bhabha (1994:xxv).

<sup>9</sup> A simple Google search on “child labor Morocco” makes this clear.

<sup>10</sup> I take the title of this chapter from Kim Hopper’s “Reckoning Homelessness” (2002:48).

<sup>11</sup> See Donald Donham for a discussion of fertility as the “master symbol of Maale [a society in Ethiopia] political economy” (1999:94). Much of my thinking here on “productive inequalities” also comes from Donham.

<sup>12</sup> For the literature on “resistance” see Scott (1985) and Fletcher (forthcoming, Nova Science Press).

<sup>13</sup> See Graeber (2001) for a sophisticated musing on “value.”

<sup>14</sup> On the anthropology of time see Gell (1992), Gluckman (1968), and Munn (1992) amongst others.

<sup>15</sup> I take this notion of adding others’ behavior, and the meanings that motivate it, to the scholarly or “consultable record” from a classic essay by Clifford Geertz (1973:30).

<sup>16</sup> I heard this on Radio NZ in New Zealand in late 2005, but it has been stated many times by many people. In the case of rural Morocco, Mikesell wrote in 1974 that, “The economic and social environment of tribal Morocco more closely resembles that in northern Europe at the time of earliest Roman conquest. In recent years Morocco has been struggling with problems that were resolved in the West more than a thousand years ago” (1975:415).