

A PLACE IN TIME

From the air, Marrakech seems to throb in the summer haze of the brown Haouz Plain like an agitated neuron, thin asphalt tendrils winding out from it. Oddly shaped turquoise splotches ring the better suburbs of the city: the swimming pools of the rich and fortified tourist resorts hemmed in by high walls, palm trees, bougainvillea, and armed guards. Thin sheep graze outside the walls in dirt lots strewn with wisps of plastic bags. The streets are wide here, smooth black asphalt quiet but for the few hours a day when the commuters leave and return, or when busloads of sunburned tourists rumble past on the way to their compounds. Other suburbs are less elegant: mile after mile of rickety cement-block apartments, with rows of stores on the ground floor.

Folded within these suburbs is the medina, the old city center. It remains the core of Marrakech, with imposing red walls erected a thousand years ago and the venerable Koutoubia minaret rising as a sad reminder of spent imperial glory. In the poorer quarters of the medina laundry dries on every rooftop, stirring like Buddhist prayer flags when a breeze wends through the city. Below the jumble of roofs, in the raucous streets of the old urban center, smoke-spewing buses jostle with bicycles and trucks, cars and horse-drawn cabs, donkey carts, pushcarts, pedestrians, and swarms of whining, careening, soot-belching mopeds. At its core Marrakech is a city alive, one of the fastest growing in Morocco, popular with tourists from Kansas to Korea who come seeking heat, sun, and a dose of exotic, “timeless” culture.

The city is particularly popular with Europeans, and an international airport pipes great floods of them in for holidays. The rich retreat to their fortresses while the middle class sprawls into the streets to gorge on the cheap wares produced for them: carpets, scarves, brass bowls, pottery, T-shirts, turbans, thuya wood carvings, lamps, argan oil, ancient doors (and

doors weathered to look ancient), and pot after pot of sweet mint tea. Marrakech is professionally exotic now. Tourism is big business, and the stalls of the famous outdoor carnival at Djeema El Fna have been numbered, electrified, and aligned on a grid. Since the end of the French protectorate in 1956, the city's estimated twenty-seven thousand colonial-era prostitutes have been dispersed or driven underground. The medina is now half living city and half folklore-for-sale, a slick and sometimes sad parody of itself. Marrakech remains alluring even in her dotage, however: a busy hive of humanity on a sweltering plain.

South of the city the massive Atlas Mountains stand silent against the sky. Snowcapped from November through July, the core of the range is anchored by a cluster of peaks over four thousand meters (thirteen thousand feet) high. Rivers of snowmelt plunge out of steep valleys, dissipating on their way down until they flow thinly on to the plains. To the north these waters slake Marrakech's growing thirst for daily showers and swimming pools. To the south, what streams escape the mountains are captured in cement dams, or seep into rocky alluvial fans that lose themselves in the desert. Beyond the Atlas is the immense expanse of the Sahara, and beyond that the rest of Africa.

From the perspective of Marrakech, the Atlas Mountains stand as solemn, unfriendly guardians between the modern, civilized world—anchored by the city—and the great desert beyond. The mountains are a place of the past, where cultural practices survive not because they are for sale, but because people evidently cannot, or do not want to, escape, because people labor hard to reproduce themselves and their way of being. Many urbanites are recent migrants themselves, but the children and grandchildren of mountain people do not dwell on this past, do not usually romanticize it. Most urban young people think of the mountains as dirty, old-fashioned, ignorant, laborious, forgettable. This is perhaps changing as the government begins to promote (rather than repress) the Berber heritage of the nation, but the stereotypical picture of a mountain Berber is still a bumpkin.

Marrakech is a city of migrants, a city built of migrant labor that flows out of the mountains like the melting snow. Some migrants stay and become urban. Some are here to seek their fortune and return to their mountain homes. Some have only physically left the mountains—they remain socially ensconced in their rural households and are still working for and within those households. From the perspective of the people who retain their links to the highlands, the forbidding Atlas look very different. There are no

for the river, no electricity, solar or otherwise, no toilets. Indeed, there was no road. The only way into the upper Agoundis Valley, and to Tadrar, was a series of narrow mule paths chiseled into the hillsides.

From the main path, looking down, you would see massive walnut trees crowding the boulders of the riverbed. Fields of maize (in late summer) and barley (in spring) grow in carefully built terraces above the spring flood level. Almonds are planted throughout the fields and even higher, on ledges beyond irrigation where they grow thin and dry in hopes of rain. Rock and mud houses are terraced above the trees, clustered together in places that least frequently suffer rock slides. Grapes, pomegranates, figs, blackberries, squash, mint, potatoes, and tomatoes grow where space can be found in the dizzying patchwork of fields, trails, mud dams, and irrigation ditches. Olives, carob trees, and prickly pear cactus are scattered around the lower elevations. On the highest slopes above the village there are a few remaining Atlas cedar, some juniper and oak trees that the women use for firewood, and clumps of overeaten grass for the herds of goats and sheep. These public resources are ever scarcer, however, and are protected by sporadically enforced government laws.

The fields in the valley bottom are watered year-round by the ever-melting snow of the great Ouanoukrim Massif. Water is captured in temporary dams in the river that feed seven main *targas*, or canals, and many hundreds of minor channels and ditches. Each of these waterways has a particular name, as does each of the 1,411 fields of Tadrar, and so people are able to discuss space and movement through space at a level of detail sure to baffle any outsider. The *targas* are operated in rotation by the twenty-eight households of the village, and each canal has either a nine-day or ten-day cycle, with different households owning different sections of the days. Sometimes a wealthier household will own a whole day's worth of irrigation water on a given canal, or even two days in a ten-day cycle. Poorer families can sometimes lay claim to no more than a few hours every ten days, and for them it is a long wait until they again have access to the precious water. The order of the rotations is decided by lottery at the beginning of the dry season, but the quantity of time is determined by inheritance, by the quantity of land owned.

The majority of the land in Tadrar is given over to grain, though some fields are too shady, especially those deep in the canyon beneath the walnut trees. These fields are used to grow *tooga*, fodder for the animals. The trails are too steep and narrow to drive the cows to the *tooga*, however, so the

women bring the fodder to the cows. They cut it down near the riverbed until it runs out. When this is gone (as it is all winter long) women harvest bushes and shrubs from the mountains above the village and haul loads larger than themselves back to the lowing cows invisible in dark pens under the houses. The songs of the young women and girls echo through the valley as they carry fodder and water, collect wood for the bread ovens, or wash clothes, milk cows, and lug babies around in slings on their backs. Men and older boys work the irrigation system, plow, plant, and care for the sheep and goats in pastures both near and far. Younger boys mostly throw rocks at each other.

For those lucky enough to own flocks, there are more fertile, distant pastures, a day's strenuous hike up at nearly three thousand meters above sea level, beneath the ridges of the Ouanoukrim Massif, a cluster of peaks at the center of what tourists know as the Jebel Toubkal National Park. These pastures are comparatively lush, but terribly cold and wind-swept. They can only be used during a few months of summer. The shepherds bring the animals down to their winter grazing area just above the village in October, before the heavy snows. Other less hardy animals, especially sheep, are kept in these local winter pastures year-round.

Partly because of the availability of these extensive pastures above the villages, partly because of the availability of water combined with the scarcity of flat land, this is one of the most densely populated areas of Morocco in terms of people per arable land unit (Bencherifa 1983, 274). In other words, these Berbers make more human bodies out of less dirt than almost anyone. This is part of the reason that the mountains function as a demographic pump—constantly generating surplus bodies that seep into the larger economy. Bodies are necessary for the intense labor needs of highland farming, but these bodies can only be built slowly, over time, and it is hard to plan well in a constantly changing world. Babies are insurance for the parents, but babies, too, must grow up and find a place in the crowded fields of the village. With a finite land base, there is always emigration. The intensive productivity of its mountain agro-pastoral system gives Tadrar a lush, Shangri-La feel: it is a dense thicket of green bursting from the crevasses of dry, impossibly rugged mountains. But it is a hard place, no paradise. There is little to sell, and thus no cash for doctors or dentists, books, paper, medicine, or, sometimes, even shoes. "*Ishqa*," people said to me again and again, "*toudert n'idrarn ishqa*." Life in the mountains is hard.



The body of Tadrar, the village itself, appears as a single mud and rock structure, a tumble of uneven blocks piled up the side of a steep ravine, or *talat*, that slices down the cliff face and empties into the river. Strewn with massive boulders and usually dry, this streambed plunges from a fracture in the rock wall above the village and falls through a progressively greener, thicker cover of walnuts, figs, and almonds. Tadrar is stacked up just outside the trees, above the irrigated terraces next to the *talat*. The village is a jumble of roofs and walls, a seemingly ad hoc set of straight lines that somehow form the right angles and odd rectangles that make buildings and indicate “home.” Some houses stand apart from the main village—solitary, squat, earthen structures with flat rooftop patios and small windows inset with metal screens and wooden shutters. But most of the village houses are wound together into a central knot that rises precipitously fifty meters above the road in a three-dimensional labyrinth of packed earth and precariously balanced rock. Invisible from outside the village, there is a cramped plaza open to the sky at the core of Tadrar, an *assarag*. Three dark passageways provide access to it, and go out from it on to the trails that lead to the surrounding animal pens, fields, orchards, storehouses, streams, and pastures.

On one side of the *assarag*, with a view out of the village over the road and river, is the mosque. It is indistinguishable from any other building. No plaque, special entrance, inscription, or directions tell you that this is the religious heart of the community. Inside the low door is a small antechamber: a bench runs along one wall along with an open window giving out on a view of the river; the wooden bier for the dead is propped in the corner. Just beyond this room is a long, narrow chamber with a series of taps running along the wall and another bench. Here the village men wash before praying and also do their more thorough bathing. The water is heated by a wood furnace invisible beyond the walls, or was until solar hot water was installed in 2004. Past this room is the actual mosque where men pray, a room empty but for reed mats on the floor, one high window, and a niche in the wall facing east.

The village is not set in two-dimensional space, and few visitors will be able to ignore what scholar Jacques Berque called the “audacious verticality” of the region (1955, 29). One never moves simply in or out from the village core, but always up or down, usually up *and* down along with much winding and turning. On the ground nothing is straight, nothing flat. Movement can be a general vector, but progress is a sensuously uneven route

inscribed in the dirt, with a named destination at the end of it; destinations always involve travel past named places, around places and through them, and always moving up or down in addition to out or back. The paths unwind from the core of the buildings along the contours of the mountains like nerves to the extremities of the body. In one sense Tadrar, the mud and rock of the village, the physical structure itself, appears part of the land, a convoluted reconfiguration of the mountains themselves. But it *is* reconfigured. The ragged peaks seem to have been coaxed into recognizable order only in this one unusual spot. The stately, upright mien of the village states emphatically that here, within precisely built walls and perfectly smooth roofs, live *people*. Consistent angles and straight lines exist nowhere else in the mountains but for the tightly structured enclaves where people labor to set things straight. As in other areas of Morocco, the common word here for trustworthy, honest, or reliable is *nishan*, straight. To be *nishan* is to be—notably and in the best sense—human; it is to behave humanely.

This overview might give the reader some sense of how it feels to dwell in Tadrar, but is not, of course, how a villager comes to know her place. Imagine a baby born here. She enters the social world as she did the biological: through her mother. Babies come first to a small, dark room, maybe near the kitchen, certainly away from the door. From the world outside this room there are sounds—lowing cattle, chickens clucking, barking dogs, a crackling radio, the gentle rhythm of the call to prayer. Babies are born in the darkness on the carpets they will live on for years to come, blankets hand woven by mothers and grandmothers from wool sheared from sheep raised on the mountainsides above them, blankets that growing children will sleep under, fold, wash, stack, and shake out for themselves or guests countless times. But at first the world will be dark, the window, if there is one, shuttered. Neighbors and family visit, voices in the gloom. There will be eating and talking, the smell of mint tea and henna, wood smoke, women's sweat, warm bread and boiled eggs, women's voices mostly, and whispered prayers rolling from individuals and small clusters of the pious, submitting themselves to the will of God in the lambent poetry destined to form the soundtrack of every major life transition to come. As the week progresses more light is let in, and after seven days, if the child has survived, groups of women will come with gifts of food or firewood and the new villager will receive a name. Blessings given, blessings received, the new baby will be

strapped with a shawl to her mother's back and venture out from the room where she entered this world. The mother returns to work, and the child comes to sense the places that matter to women's work.

Preeminent among these is the kitchen, the *anwal*. These exist in all sorts of formations, but most are simply an empty room with two or more conical ovens built into the floor, the *tikatin* (singular, *takat*)—the hearth of the home. It is constructed of mud packed around a specially designed clay pot, set upright and scored such that one longitudinal section can be taken out. Daily fires harden the mud to what feels like concrete. The slit up one side allows for kindling the fire and adding wood. They are open on the top, where pots of soup may be set to boil. *Takat* means “oven,” “hearth,” and also “household.” This hearth is the heart of the home, the primordial origin of all new villagers. Here, warm against mother's back, eyes closed against the acrid smoke, babies are bathed in the scent of women, spiced coffee, boiling barley, and bread baking slowly in the ovens.

Most families eat on the roof in summer, or in an open terrace called a *bneet*, where they gather around the *tajine*. *Tajine* is the word for the peaked clay pots in which meals are simmered, and the word for the meals themselves. Cooked over coals scooped out of the *takat* and placed in a brazier, the *tajine* is filled with vegetables, a little oil, maybe some pepper or cumin, maybe a small piece of meat. It is placed on a low, round table, around which everyone sits on the floor. New babies suckle while mothers eat, or make many trips back and forth from the kitchen to the table with mother if there are no younger boys and girls to fetch the food. The patriarch (usually) reaches into a straw basket covered by a cloth and tears the rough, bowl-shaped *tanoort*, the bread distinctive to this region, into pieces. He scatters them around the table and announces the beginning of the meal with the name of God. Each person repeats *bismillah* before his or her first move to eat. The lid is removed from the *tajine*, and people tear their scraps of *tanoort* into smaller, bite-sized pieces, then dip them in the oil and vegetables of the *tajine*, and savor what the grace of God and the labor of women have delivered.

If there is meat, it is removed and placed in the lid until everyone is finished. Anyone who stops is encouraged to continue, and the conversation around the table is continually punctuated by the command, *shta*, eat. You draw only from the section of the dish in front of you, and to be polite you might press particularly delicious bits away from your section into a neigh-

bor's, who, usually, will subtly flick them back. When everyone is done, or almost done, the patriarch divides the meat, rarely more than a bite per person and usually not even that. In lean times there may be no vegetables or meat, but there is always bread. Bread is provided by God through the fertility of the fields or, failing that, by God through the properly Muslim generosity of more fortunate family and neighbors. Nobody goes hungry.

After dinner the table and the *tajine* are removed, uneaten *tanoort* goes back in the basket and is taken to the cows or chickens, and someone young brings around a kettle of warm water and a bowl to wash in. Then there is the extended ceremony of drinking tea, and while the young clean up, the older people rise to get back to work. There is no local category of "work," however, except for relatively rare paid labor. Carrying babies, preparing food, tilling fields, threshing barley: these have their own verbs, but in general people are "making," "doing," or "busying" themselves. People are always busy, always doing, but they do not necessarily think of it as "work."¹

The fields are terraced up the steep mountainsides and strung together with a dense arterial network of canals and ditches that must be constantly maintained. As the river bites steadily into the bottom of the valley, scratching incrementally deeper into the history of the mountains, back in time, men struggle upward, pushing against gravity, against time, hoisting stone, moving rock, carrying dirt, transporting the animal dung that will render the land productive, that will allow the women to harvest the grain comprising the subsistence economy of the mountains—an economic mode coupled to a set of values (Michel 1997, 3). Every field has been wrenched from the mountainside, constructed and reconstructed, repaired, watered, and cared for by a long series of nameable persons. Each field has come into existence through human labor and survives (and remains fertile) only through continuous, coordinated work. This is the most "constructed" rural landscape in all of North Africa (Berque 1955, 24), and the construction is entirely accomplished through the sweat of humans and their animals.

Each field has a name and a history. The *egran n tamgbart*, or "fields of a woman," were a set of plots a long-dead father graciously gave to his son so the son could marry; the *egr n akshoodn*, or field of wood, was passed between families one particularly cold winter when "the snow was above our hips" and a man traded it for firewood. Sometimes fields are spoken of as families, such that a small field next to a larger one will be known as "the

1. For an Algerian example of the same sort of thing, see Bourdieu (1973, 83).

son of” that larger one, the medium-sized one beside it the “wife.” These families of fields support the human generations and flow through them, separating and coming together in ever-novel combinations as households arrange and rearrange themselves, accommodating death, incorporating migrations, births, and marriages.

Trees, too, are sometimes named, especially the giant, venerable walnut trees dominating sunnier areas down near the river. Young walnuts are planted in the middle of fields, in full sun. They grow quickly, shooting out bright green new leaves, but are said to be “girls” or “virgins” until they are moved. When they reach the age when they are too large for their natal field, young walnuts are dug up and transported to the spot where they will reach adulthood, where they will grow to become reproductive. The area to which a tree moves will be more steadily watered but shadier than the field of its birth, an appropriate place for the needs of an adult tree. The new place will probably be near the river or at least near the beginning of one of the larger canals so that the deep roots can drink through the heat of summer. Here the girl tree becomes a woman, a *tamghart*, and begins to produce walnuts. Like women, it is believed a tree will not be fertile unless she leaves the place of her birth and goes to reach maturity someplace else.

A boy child comes to understand his house as the house of his father, his grandfather, and his grandfather’s father before him. The household—the people who operate the house, stay alive within it and through it—are all assembled around the social skeleton provided by a line of men. Girl children, too, belong to this line of men, the father’s family, but girls come to understand that the house that they are born and grow in will not be the house in which they grow old. A girl will move to marry, will live among other men and women. To become a woman a girl must move as her mother has, as her mother’s mother and her father’s mother have also. If men provide the bones—the *ighsan*, or lineages—that are used to organize everything from male labor to property devolution and the politics of the village, women are the blood of rural life, flowing between families and villages, and sometimes down to the city, nurturing the bones and connecting the village body into a broadly reticulated social order.

Beneath large walnut trees the earth is too shady for grain and grows only *tooga*, grass for the animals. Bound to their mothers, babies move first to the places where *tooga* is gathered, as it must be collected twice a day if the family is lucky enough to have a cow. Babies may go with aunts or sisters or cousins, too, but they move *through* the vast majority of village ter-

ritory, *past* most of the trees and most of the fields, and only move *to* the small, scattered parts of it that the household owns. “Land” is not a general thing, but a collection of a few highly familiar places nestled among the less familiar. All places are associated with people, individuals who own them, groups who work them, and the relationships between places reflect relationships between people. The fields and their sustaining canals connect people. Women are likely to gather *tooga* with other women whose household fields are near to theirs. Boys are likely to cooperate in cleaning canals or irrigating with neighbors who have fields nearby, or who have irrigation rights on the same day of rotation. Sometimes these rights and properties are held by larger family groupings, clusters of households, sometimes the fields of related households are coextensive because they were inherited from the same person, and the work can be shared among relatives. But not always. The lands of Tadrar are enormously complex, as particular as the social relations deployed to render them productive. There is much give and take, borrowing and loaning, gifts of labor and time, the occasional theft of water or crops, and a constant assessment of who is working with whom, for whom, against whom, and why.

As her back grows strong and her hands calloused, a girl comes to know the forests where she cuts wood, and how to avoid the government rangers. She will milk the cow on her own, and gather fodder for the cows with her girlfriends and cousins rather than her mother; she will help the older women pound clothes clean in the river and spread them to dry in the trees or on warm rocks, and she will squat in the kitchen learning to cook, listening to stories, assessing opinions, gathering news. From being scrubbed in the *hamam*, or steam bath, along with the other children, a girl learns to scrub younger children. And at the end of the day, if the men have yet to return from the mosque, women will sit together on rooftops or in dining rooms, or at one special spot on one covered lane just off the open *assarag* at the center of the village. Here they rest briefly between the work of the day and the work of the evening, as the sun sinks beneath the peaks. At this time the wind settles and you can hear the faint bleating of the flocks become louder as the shepherds return to the village. The sunset call to prayer echoes from the roof of the mosque deep into the canyon. Come to pray. God is great. There is no God but God. God is great. Come to pray.

People eat, then drink tea, some go for a final prayer, dishes are cleaned, blankets unfolded, then most lay down on the carpets they have eaten on and drift into sleep. The shepherds up in their *azuab*, or huts by the pastures,

douse their small fires. They have the flocks corralled and turn them over to the care of the dogs. Down in the village, mothers suckle crying babies and shush them to sleep, a few people listen to cassette players until the cheap batteries fade. Propane lanterns blink off, glow orange for a minute, then die, one by one. If there is no moon, the men with night rotations on the canals leave to irrigate with lanterns or flashlights, often in groups of two or three, talking softly, walking surely down the treacherous paths their feet know well from a lifetime's experience. The sky swims with stars, fireflies swarm in the dark pockets beneath the walnuts; a million frogs croak madly for mates above the susurrus of the river. A dog barks, then yelps and is silent. And the village is quiet.

This was how I came to see Tadrar when I lived there for part of 1998 and 1999, but I did not come to these impressions all at once. Like anyone else, I was introduced to Tadrar along a specific route, a set of pathways that came to structure what I knew. In fact, when I passed through the village the first time I did not stop. It was 1995, and I was trekking with a Moroccan friend. We were lost and paused only long enough to chat with a man who invited me to stay; I did not write down his name, but said I'd be back. I am sure Abdurrahman was surprised when I returned.

When I staggered into Tadrar the second time, I felt nearly dead. It was July of 1998. I was a nervous Ph.D. candidate with a backpack crammed with the paraphernalia of fieldwork, from cooking pots to tape recorders, a camera and water filter, antibiotics and a sleeping pad. The village now boasted a Peace Corps volunteer, and a few tourists wandered through, so I was not the novelty I had been only a few years before. There was a dirt road now, but I was still walking. The backpack weighed more than me, or seemed to, and I had been traveling since 4:00 A.M. by bus, crowded group taxis, and then by foot. It was nearly dark when I got to the final incline below Tadrar; I doffed my pack, collapsed by the side of the road, and prayed for a mule, a truck, a miracle.

Instead, to my horror, a group of women rounded the bend below me, chattering and laughing. When they came nearer, I saw they were not just returning from the fields but were traveling resplendent in their best clothes, with sequins, bangles, and scarves of every hue, from luminous lime green and yellow to crimson, purple, gold, and orange. They wore jangling tin jewelry, beads, and twittered all at once, musically, singing and joking. Their hands and feet were stained the burnt rust color of henna. I wrote that

night in my journal that they appeared to me like a flock of tropical birds, or bright reef fish. I thought I might be hallucinating. They belonged anywhere but on this dusty mountain road.

The women were coming from a *moussem*, they said, a kind of fair held around the tomb of a saint, and they gathered in a circle to examine me. At first only the older women would speak, but my obvious helplessness and their festive mood soon had everyone peppering me with questions. I could not understand most of them, especially with the younger girls giggling hysterically, literally crying with laughter behind the skirts of their elders. They wanted to know where I was going, if I meant to go to Tadrar, if I was looking for Abdurrahman (since I was obviously going to Tadrar, and he was the only one there likely to know foreigners), and, most of all, what in God's name was in that huge pack. My *Tasbelbit* (Berber) was worse than shaky. I said, "I'm tired," which sent them into paroxysms of laughter. "My pack is very big" also sent them into convulsions, and inspired one brazen lady to lift it single-handedly and declare loudly that it was not heavy at all. She strolled off insouciantly with the pack over one shoulder, and I was forced to stumble after her to take up my ridiculous parcel myself. Thus humiliated, shaking my head confusedly to the questions that kept coming, I shouldered the pack and dragged myself up the road, prodded by the women like a decrepit mule.

Thus I arrived at Abdurrahman's door, the man who had invited me three years before. It was the first door of the first house next to the road, at the base of the village. By this point the women had run silent, melted into the village pathways, slid inside houses and disappeared into stables, their ebullience muffled by the weight of village propriety. I was bidden to enter Abdurrahman's small, irregular door and passed into a dark hallway, then through a second door, then a third. I dropped my pack to the floor. Abdurrahman laid thick carpets on top of the plastic mat, a red one, an orange one, and a striped white and black blanket, too. I writhed out of my boots and collapsed. He asked, "Would you like some tea?"

"Yes," I stammered. "And some water." He left me there lying flat on my back in the room that every outsider visiting Tadrar seems to come through. It is the only room most guests ever see.

Abdurrahman's reception room is just over two meters wide and five long. The walls are rock and mud covered by smooth cement, the faded blue and red paint wearing off. The low roof beams are painted with geometric designs in red, yellow, and green. They are patched, like the cracks in the

walls, with gashes of white plaster. A stern old print of Abdurrahman's father, Ali, hangs high on one wall, above an elaborate calligraphic rendering of a verse from the Qur'an and a small calendar with both the Muslim and Christian dates. One tiny window looks out over the *agrur*, or stable, and has a shred of screen tacked over it to deter the flies. Another window looks out over the road and the valley southward. There is no glass in the windows here or, in 1998, anywhere in the village, rendering all rooms permanently dark in the winter. Both small windows contain metal arabesque screens that keep children from tumbling out of them; both close only with small wooden shutters. The evening light through the open window fills the room with a wonderfully warm, lemony light, and I lay there that first day staring at the designs on the roof beams, rapturously thankful for the sugary tea seeping into my veins.

This was the first place I came to know—Abdurrahman's reception room—and through the end of my fieldwork it remained the room I knew best. Even as I am writing, in distant New Zealand, a year after I last sat with Abdurrahman, I can still imagine every crack in the walls of that room, every chip of paint. I know the design of every carpet stacked in the corner waiting to be unfurled. I spent hours there eating and talking, listening to tapes of the Qur'an and Tashelhit music, making tapes of English words for Abdurrahman to learn, asking questions about kinship and property and writing down the answers, watching Abdurrahman entertain guests and dignitaries, listening to him expound on village history and family relations. For the first six months I lived in the village this was the only room in Abdurrahman's house I ever saw. It was nearly three months before I ever had a meal with his family as a whole. Before that it was always Abdurrahman and me, alone or joined by the Peace Corps volunteer, Ryan, or by senior men visiting from other households or other villages or, sometimes, Abdurrahman's eldest son, Mohammed. Even when the whole family did come to eat together, there were always two tables, clearly separated by status. I was stranded at the elite one. Khadija, Abdurrahman's wife, would barely make eye contact with me and plainly preferred that I talk to her husband, her sons, anyone but her. She remained at the far table for the duration of my initial stay in Tadrar.

Abdurrahman has, in short, a fairly formal household. What I call the reception room was used for other things when I was not there. But my presence transformed this room into a formal space, and to some degree this remained the case all the while I lived in the village. I saw the kitchen

once in fourteen months, when I was asked to translate its contents for an older, female tourist who had asked Khadija to see it. I saw their bathroom from time to time (the only one in the village in 1998, installed to meet the requirements of Abdurrahman's occasional tourist guests). And I spent one night sleeping on their roof. A few times in winter I packed into a small windowless room they have along with all the family to stay warm. This was during Ramadan, when Abdurrahman would awaken me early for the *sabour*, the pre-dawn meal that would sustain us through the day's fast. As time went on, Khadija and Abdurrahman stated plainly many times—together and apart—that I was always welcome, that I was one of the family, that I should walk in and not knock. But I was a friend of the patriarch, not a member of the family. Even warm summer evenings on the roof, Abdurrahman and I tended to gravitate to one end, the women and children to the other, with Mohammed and the older boys in the middle. This house, and this household, was my first portal, my first path, into understanding Tadar.

The second came with my neighbors, the Lukstaf family. Within a day of arriving in Tadar to begin my research I rented a room in a house owned by Hamad Lukstaf, who had moved to the city. His brother Mohammed lived next door, but the brothers were not on good terms and so I was not especially welcomed by the Lukstaf family in the early days of my village life. It did not matter to me, since my language skills were too poor to talk much anyway; I was happy to spend time alone studying in my room. But I was always observed, never really alone.

Omar Lukstaf was Mohammed's grandson, and he was about eight or nine years old. He didn't know exactly. When I met him, he wore a threadbare "Superbowl" T-shirt almost daily, with a faded Joe Montana dropping back for a pass, but of course he had no idea what football was, much less "a pass." At first Omar would just sit furtively in my doorway, his big brown eyes watching me write or read. But I soon gave him a notebook of his own to draw in, and we began to practice writing Arabic letters and Berber words for things; we became friends. There was no government school then, and Omar had only studied at the mosque. He was not very good at writing or drawing and in fact could barely make out his name. He wanted to learn, though, and filled his pages with written lines of "Omar" and the names of his brothers and sisters. He began to bring his younger siblings, and they would cluster together to examine magazines my mother had sent me from home—*Sports Illustrated*, *Surfer*, and *National Geographic* were what she supposed I might read. The children tried to guess what the pictures meant.

(They had a particularly hard time with surfing pictures, and they assessed Tiger Woods golfing as an imam leading a prayer.) I also had a book with me that had pictures of household objects with the Tamazight (Berber) words spelled next to them. Once I had memorized it, I gave the book to Omar to practice reading; later his grandmother Aisha, Mohammed Lukstaf's wife, came over to thank me and invite me to dinner.

The Lukstaf family is much poorer than Abdurrahman's. Their house was twenty meters or so from mine, a freestanding structure away from the core of the village. It presented what might generously be called a casual appearance. You enter from the uphill side, on the second floor. As in most houses, there is only one door. Upon entering, immediately on your right is a small storage room with a tattered cloth to hide it; there is little stored there, just some pans and a bit of crockery. On the left is the *anwal*, the kitchen, a cramped, dark room with a few clay bowls, wooden spoons, a stack of branches and kindling, and the two ovens continuously belching smoke. There is a small hole in the upper part of the far wall, but often as not the smoke pours out the low doorway. The whole room is black with soot, and the floor is packed earth. A step beyond the kitchen is the *hneet*, a large room with a sort of bench running along one side, open with a view out over the road and the river. It has cement-covered floors and walls, and a tree trunk in the middle to support the roof made of sticks, roughly hewn branches, and packed dirt. To the right of the *hneet* is the only other room the family uses for living quarters. Small children are put down for naps here, to keep them out of the way, and in the winter the whole family squeezes in to stay warm. There are storage rooms down below, and a stable, accessible only from outside. Upstairs, where the people live, there is only the open-air *hneet*, the kitchen, and this one other small room for sleeping. There is no concept of "dining room" or "bedroom." All rooms are multipurpose except kitchens. Unlike Western houses, rooms here do not so plainly prescribe their contents and the processes appropriate to them. The way people use the space in the rooms, however, is highly prescribed by gender, and the position of the individual within the composition of the family.

After that first meal I generally ate at least once every day with the Lukstaf family. At first the patriarch, Aisha's husband, Mohammed, ate alone with me. The Lukstaf house, though, does not have a separate room to serve guests, so Mohammed's teenaged granddaughter Khadija would either have to crouch on the other side of the room waiting to serve us, or pretend to busy herself in the smoky kitchen and wait to be called. It was similar with

the other women: Fatima, Mohammed's oldest son's wife, Mohammed's own wife, Aisha, and the little granddaughter Fatima. The boys, too, would want to see their grandfather talk to the odd foreigner, and so Omar and his brothers, Mohammed, Hassan, and Hussein, were always lurking around, hunched in corners, watching me with suppressed giggles. All were kept away for the first few meals, but slowly people started to creep in, first listening in on the conversation, but soon joining it from across the room. Little by little people started to join old Mohammed and me on the carpets around the low table. First his son Ali, on the infrequent occasions he was down from the pastures. Then grandmother Aisha, always jolly, always laughing. Then the older grandsons, Mohammed Jr. and eventually Omar. The little ones would climb on, too, until at the end of six months there would be thirteen of us pressed around a wooden table only a meter across trying to eat out of one common bowl. The Lukstaf family was still careful to outfit me with a comfortable carpet to sit on, and a warm wool blanket with which to wrap myself when it was cold. They were always extravagantly hospitable, presenting me with too large a share of any meat that might be available, and beseeching me to eat more long after I was stuffed. *Ar timiyartik*, they would say, you are "used to" or "comfortable" here. If I had not exactly become one of the family, I was assuredly a different kind of guest.

The structure of the Lukstaf house allowed for little formality. In the summer everybody slept together in the *hneet*. In the winter all were crammed into the one small, warm room next to the *hneet*. Grandfather Mohammed certainly ruled with an iron hand, but this was guided by a soft heart. It was far from uncommon toward the end of a meal for the grandchildren to run quickly out the door and disappear as the old man started to delegate work assignments. Old Mohammed would thunder fiercely for their return, but when thunder broke without effect, and even the mischievous giggling of the grandsons had faded, he would chuckle. Mohammed would open his eyes with mock incredulity and ask, "Did you see that? They went! They just *went!*" And he'd laugh quietly and get up to busy himself in his fields.

The third household through which I came to know Tadrar was that of Mohammed Belaid and his wife, Fatima Id Baj, who were my neighbors on the other side of my house from the Lukstafs. I met Fatima before I came to know her husband. One morning in the first few days of my stay, when I knew little of who was who, and people still did not know me, Fatima called at my door. She stood with a pot of coffee and a big bowl-shaped loaf

of bread wrapped in a scarf. I don't remember what I had been doing. What I do remember is that I was experiencing a lack-of-caffeine crisis alone in my room, and that I had nothing but canned sardines to eat and nothing to eat them on, and that there could have been no more welcome sight in the whole universe than a pot of coffee and a folded slab of freshly baked *tanoort*.

Our communication was poor because I had not yet mastered even the simplest Tashelhit. But Fatima had lived for a short time in Rabat and could thus make sense of the Moroccan Arabic that at that time I could still remember. This was sufficient to make our way through the formal conversation that all people everywhere seem to have when they first meet. It was clear enough that she was welcoming me, her bright smile alone said that. The bread and coffee were for me; that seemed clear, too. I was thrilled. I was stumbling around trying to thank her, trying to figure out how to invite her in for coffee, sardines, and bread without appearing to ask anything inappropriate. It did not seem wise to invite a married woman into what was effectively my bedroom, but it did not seem right to just retreat inside with the coffee and food to consume it alone. More delicacy was required than I could verbally manage, and in the midst of my stammering and stalling my landlord's voice came booming from the inside of the main part of the house.

"Get out of here with that coffee," Hamad yelled at Fatima. His tone suggested that she was supremely ignorant. "Don't you know Christians don't drink coffee!?" Fatima apologized in a flurry, thrust the bread into my hand, and sped off with the coffee. I nearly wept. The other "Christian" in the village, the Peace Corps volunteer Ryan, or "Khalid," was Mormon and indeed did not drink coffee, and through limited contact with him my landlord had, in his inimitable way, become as much an expert on Christian practices as he was on all else. Thus began the first of many explanations I was to give about the different kinds of "Christians," explanations that never failed to perplex the villagers.

Fatima was not altogether convinced by Hamad, probably because she saw me so obviously crestfallen when she retracted her coffeepot, and also because it simply did not make sense to her that a person would be offended by an offer of coffee. In any case, it was not long before I began to eat meals at Fatima and Belaid's house, and not long after that that Fatima started to care for me, bringing me small cups of fresh milk each morning and checking on me at night to make sure I had eaten, that I had a candle for light, that all was okay. She and her husband loaned me carpets to sleep on, dishes, sugar, bread, and good will. I eventually hired them to help with laundry,

and Fatima always broke up my bricks of sugar because I tended to smash my fingers when I tried to do it. Fatima became something like a sister, while Aisha o Hussein (Mohammed Lukstaf's wife, or Granny Aisha as I came to call her) was a kind of mother. I admit that I did little to dissuade them of my utter dependency. After those first days I never again ate alone. Fatima's house came to be the most comfortable place in the village for me, at least when Belaid was present to dampen any suspicion of impropriety.

Fatima and Belaid's house sits just below the window of the antechamber of the mosque, where the old men gather to pass the time and look down over the few houses below the main part of the village. Belaid's front door is very small, less than a meter and a half high and more suitable for hobbits than men. This gives into a dark, cramped hallway about four meters long and a head or two shorter than me. I nearly knocked myself unconscious here at least a half a dozen times. This cramped hall in turn gives on to the only room in the upstairs part of the house. It is low and narrow, not quite two meters high, and just over two meters wide by about four meters long. There is a doorway leading outside to the *akfaf*, the rooftop of the stable below, where the family sleeps and meals are served on the hottest nights of the summer. This *akfaf* is protected from public view by the house, and so is a cozy, private outdoor space. Some of my best nights in the village were spent here. With the children asleep on the blankets around us, Fatima, Belaid, and I looked up at the night sky talking about everything from comparative parenting techniques to the virtues and drawbacks of city life, from the mysteries of walnut pollination to the origin of starlight.

The very structure of Fatima and Belaid's home could not support the sort of formality that Abdurrahman manages, or the sheer number of people in the Lukstaf household. Partly this is what made my interactions with them so intimate. Certainly, too, they were approximately my age, and in 1999 they had only two children, who in the evenings would fall asleep in our laps and allow us to speak privately. Privacy can only exist in a place like Abdurrahman's, where a room is specifically defined for it, or in a place like Fatima and Belaid's, where the small number of people in the house virtually ensures it. But these seem to me different sorts of privacy, one self-conscious—a room preserved from family use—the other organic, a function of the space itself. The specified privacy of a reception room is different from what Belaid and Fatima offered. More than just allowing for privacy, the forced intimacy of sitting knee to knee in a small room does something to encourage a different, more personal or more expansive mode of conversation, as

does reclining together drinking tea under an African sky alive with stars. This is not to propose a spatial determinism, but a small group of people (as opposed to a large group) conversing in a securely private space (as opposed to a public one) encourages intimacy of conversation. Also, in the winter the cramped quarters made it necessary to walk through the area where Fatima cooked in order to get to the place where we ate. This is how I, as a male, came to understand something of how women worked. Fatima was able to remain involved in the conversation while she went about preparing meals or baking bread. There was little, or at least less, separation by gender as compared with larger households, or wealthier households, and certainly households that were both larger and wealthier. Houses are “machines for living” (Bray 1998), and their spaces become what they are through practices—especially labor practices—which reflect gender and other inequalities of power.

In this chapter I have tried to conjure a sense of the relationship between physical space and social life in Tadrar. Through an overview of the spaces important to village life, and snapshots of the places through which I came to understand the village, I have tried to evoke the sensuous particularity of the village. I have emphasized that spaces are a product of human labor, while at the same time they shape the lives people undertake. My intention has been to suggest that such labor-produced spaces can help us think more deeply about social transformation. So far I have emphasized the way I observed Tadrar during my 1998–1999 fieldwork. However, when I returned for short trips in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2006–2007 it appeared that much was changing.

Most striking for me—ironically, perhaps, given the mushrooming satellite dishes and new cement canal—was the disappearance of a particular trail. In the mountains southeast of Tadrar there is an area called Tikhfrin where women gather firewood and a small spring supports a stand of walnut trees. While hiking in the mountains in 2004, I tried to come back to Tadrar by the precipitous path down the cliff face from Tikhfrin but found the trail had completely disappeared. It was now just a treacherous slope of loose rock. Abdurrahman was with me, and I asked what had happened. Evidently there was no more wood in the region, or the area was now better patrolled by the government forestry agents, and thus for several years nobody had bothered to maintain the trail. It seemed ordinary enough to him, but it struck me powerfully that things that seem ancient and durable

(a stone trail well-trod by women) are in fact quite fragile. Only a few years of disuse and trails cease to exist, fields wash away, houses collapse. Entropy erases human order from the world; only human labor can restore it.

This means that places that seem to remain are in fact constituted anew. This is evident in the many fields that had washed away and been rebuilt since my first visit. Detecting this is not very difficult. The oldest rock terraces are covered with ivy and brambles and the stones are weathered a deep black. New fields are easy to spot. The stones are different colors, look newly hewn, are perhaps still dusty, and the spaces between them are clear of rich soil, moss, and weeds. Fields that appeared eternal in 1995, I saw in 2004 as substantively brand new—if structurally identical to what I remembered. Stability is a product of labor as well as the product of the human mind: what is stable and what is changing is a matter of choosing not just particular elements to consider, but the temporality of the observation. I did not tend to notice the changes right before my eyes while I did my original fieldwork, but trips back to the village thrust issues of transformation and regeneration to the foreground of my attention. Change, in other words, is what I most noticed over the years I was absent, not the years I was present in the village. How much of this “noticing” is a product of the observer (changes in me and my life, my time away) and how much the observed? How much of the change was due do my new interest in change, and how much was due to the transformation of Tadrar itself?

I am not ready to accept that this is purely a matter of perception. Materially in 2004 the house above Abdurrahman’s was abandoned, as were several others, while Abdurrahman’s own house had nearly doubled in size, and included new cement quarters for tourists, a proper ceramic toilet, solar power, and even a shower. *Zound Marraksh*, he told me excitedly in Christmas of 2003 when visiting me in the city; it’s “just like Marrakech.” By 2004 Belaid and Fatima had done renovations, too, though not so dramatic. They had two more children (they now had three boys and a baby girl) and had removed and then raised their roof by half a meter, making it possible to enter their house without bending over.

Sadly, old Mohammed Lukstaf had died. Aisha was still mourning when I came up to the village, and we sat and held hands and cried quietly and talked about the loss of her “friend” (as she called him) and mine. Aisha’s husband was dead, but her household was intact, and transformed by new babies born, a daughter leaving for marriage, and Aisha’s son Ali taking over the role of patriarch. The Lukstafs had purchased Hamad’s house that I had

earlier rented, and installed a small solar panel and a television with a video disk player. They still lived in the old house, but they entertained in the big upstairs room of the new one.

In fact, while several houses in the village core were crumbling, a whole new set of houses was being built on an empty hillside next to the village, an area people now jokingly referred to as a suburb, “new Tadrar” or *Tadrar Jdid*. A main irrigation canal, *targa Taforikht*, had been rebuilt also, with cement and rebar replacing rock and mud. This is not a “new” canal, but it is built of new materials and operates in some new ways. Also in 2004 there were no more stone dams in the river (and thus no more complicated labor negotiations about who would build and maintain them) because there was plenty of water to go around. Potable water, too, was now delivered differently. Fetched by bucket from a spring in 1995, and then taken from a series of public taps in 1999, water was being piped directly into the majority of houses by 2004. This created new problems (the cheap plastic piping breaking constantly) and changed social dynamics (no more girls meeting at the well to gossip), and it illustrated new forms and new degrees of village inequality (from different amounts of female labor to fetch water to differential ability to afford plastic pipe). The mosque now had solar hot water and electricity (provided by grants I had obtained), there was a diesel-powered grain mill owned collectively by the village, and a new public bath for the women.

What happened? The people of Tadrar had labored mightily to keep some things the same and change others, to maintain some village spaces, reconstitute them in new forms or with new materials, erase some others or let them be erased, and create some entirely new places. How this happens, why and how this complicated reproduction and transformation is taking place, will take us the rest of the book to explore, but at the outset we should reflect on *kinds of change*—not just different processes but different ideas of what we mean by “change.” Is a rebuilt house an example of change or continuity? What if it is rebuilt slightly differently, with new kinds of materials? What if it is owned by new people or new forms of collective ownership? These questions have no obvious answers, but should call us to abandon the simple “stability vs. change,” “tradition vs. modernity” model that most of us use to understand the transformation of our world. Globalization is not about the elimination of traditional places, but about particular types and degrees of transformation inevitably coupled with forms of regeneration, especially, I will argue, in the organization of time.

So what kinds of transformations are driving change in Tadrar? We might begin with demography. Villagers depend on their children to keep them alive, and having children is both a central cultural ideal and a material necessity. Abdurrahman estimated that in his life infant mortality has dropped from 30 percent to 10 percent because of government health intervention efforts, which would explain the rising population. In my genealogical tables it is clear that over one hundred people today live on land that was owned by a single man four generations ago. In interviews women repeatedly emphasize the mortality of children as one of their greatest concerns. Changing numbers of people in a finite space requires dramatic reorganization of social relations. It certainly requires a reorganization of space.

By 2004 an eight-year drought ended. I had not appreciated before that these farmers were going to extraordinary lengths to capture water for their fields, not simply following ancient patterns that their culture dictated. This is an area of the world where the climate is famously erratic, but from the perspective of the men of Tadrar there used to be one dry year in eight, while now there is one wet year in every eight dry seasons. In Tadrar, 2003 was this wet year, and so in 2004 I got to see for the first time what the village “normally” looked like from the perspective of the older men. There was far more grass for the herds, and it took far less work to irrigate the fields. Women’s labor did not seem to have changed much, but men’s work was dramatically easier in wet years because they did not have to build and rebuild dams on the river to capture diminishing levels of water. Thus men had much more time on their hands to coordinate changes they desired, to work with development agents, or to send men and boys off for wage labor outside the mountains.

Exogenous development exploded between 1995 and 2004. Through the efforts of two Peace Corps volunteers and a World Bank scheme to improve the environment and tourism capacity of Toubkal National Park, Tadrar had become a major recipient of outside assistance. Thus cement and money flowed into the village and corruption—at least the predatory exactions of outside officials—largely stopped. The Moroccan government added an official school and teachers, even if it failed to pay them, and gave one man (Abdurrahman) the materials to build his new tourist hostel. The government even offered support in getting guides to bring troops of tourists to stay there. If development was uneven and supported new kinds of inequalities, there was also some trickle down effect, some ways in which all

villagers benefited, and certainly ways in which all of the villagers' lives were transformed.

Most significantly, perhaps, I found that more villagers than ever worked outside the village. My 2004 census showed that eleven households out of twenty-eight now had at least one member working in the city, and some had as many as three. Only by such outside cash remittances can villagers afford televisions, cement, gas stoves (and the gas to power them), indeed anything that requires money. The village itself only produces almonds, walnuts, and goats in amounts barely sufficient in most cases to handle the costs of clothes, shoes, and medicine. Goods beyond this require money from outside, and these funds are coming to be available by sending household members to work in the plains and cities. The use of the cash economy for local purposes is arguably the most important spur to local social and spatial transformation.

Given these sorts of integration, what makes "the village" a social unit worth considering? If some villagers live in the city, and urban and international goods flow in, why situate our study in so fusty and seemingly over-determined a locale as "a village"? My response to this is simply that the people of Tadrar see themselves as a being from a place, as being connected to a particular collection of named, built places that only a person from Tadrar can name. While the membranes of the community are porous, elastic, stretched out in space to new places, and individuals may belong to more than one community, the canals, fields, pastures, and buildings of Tadrar are solid emblems of a carefully nurtured village identity; a deep sense of belonging to a place comes from knowing its secrets. Amin Maalouf begins one of his novels with the line, "In my native village, the rocks have names." I do not think this is uncommon, and the "native-ness" of the village is related to knowing the proper names of things—the rocks, people, trees, and history.

The buildings, terraces, trails, and canals of Tadrar are an apotheosis of the dead: a slow-moving monument to the generations of villagers who have bent their backs to the building and rebuilding of this place. Identifiable people have constructed these fields and canals slowly, incrementally, over many hundreds of years, but the built environment itself has worked on the builders, too, calling them into certain pathways, pressing them into relations within a small part of the range of all possible interaction. People

have made and continue to make their lives from the materials available, and “in this sense the most important work that technologies do is to produce people: the makers are shaped by the making, and the users shaped by the using” (Bray 1997, 16). The homes, canals, fields, threshing areas, and pastures comprise a fabulously intricate technology for living that requires constant care. But Tadrar is now in the hands of the living, and the men and women who continue to live there are operating their patrimony in a novel global economy. To understand how this changes the nature of their social operations, we move now to examine the most basic, most important set of relationships in Tadrar, the household.