

Making Imazighen:
Rural Berber Women, Household Organization, and the Production of Free Men

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This paper examines the role of women in rural Amazigh social organization in Morocco. I will argue, first of all, that while scholars concerned with rural life have produced interesting work on social entities like tribes, villages, moieties (*lfuf*), notional “homelands” (or *timizar*), and religious brotherhoods (*zawiyat*), we have underemphasized the most vital, most fundamental social unit in Morocco: the household.¹ Making sense of household dynamics is essential to comprehending all other social relations in the countryside –up to and including relations with the State--and household dynamics are likewise central to understanding the rural dimensions of the cultural, technological and economic transformations often lumped under the term “globalization.” Rural production *is* household production, women are central to this household production, and taking seriously the importance of women and households facilitates clearer understanding of the broader socio-political dynamics of the rural Moroccan world.

I am emphatically *not* making the case that women exist in a domestic sphere that while important is separate and largely insulated from male politics. On the contrary, I will assert that in many ways, and sometimes in quite striking ways, Amazigh women *make* free men, a production I mean in political economic rather than biological terms. Given the general invisibility of women in discussions of rural social organization, other than in the literature on marriage dynamics, or perhaps their structural position in arguments about *habitus*, I am aware that my argument here might be counterintuitive, or even controversial.

After a discussion of some caveats and conditions of the research upon which the argument is based, and a summary of the general importance and dynamics of households, the core of the paper will consist of four ethnographic vignettes, expressions of some ways in which women consolidate the land and labor vital to independent *tikatin*, or households. I will not argue that women are secretly in control of Amazigh society, or deny that women are subject to much more difficult and pervasive forms of physical labor than rural men, or indeed that patriarchal values are not in general quite strong in the High Atlas. Nor will I make the case that women are “resisting” male power in James Scott’s terms. What I will contend is that in the High Atlas women possess qualitatively distinct forms of power, and that this power can make or break the fortunes of some men in the community.

Caveats and Context

The main base for my research, and the basis for this paper, is a set of small villages in the Agoundis River Valley, a tributary of the Nfis River, in the mountains 90 kilometers south of Marrakech. I focus intensively on the village of Tadrar, a cluster of mud and stone houses etched into the hillside above the Agoundis River about 1,500 meters above sea level.² All 212 residents speak Tashelhit, most of them exclusively, and they support themselves growing barley, maize, almonds and walnuts in more than a thousand small, steeply terraced plots. These small plots are irrigated by an elaborate canal system that draws water from far up the valley and distributes it via seven main canals with innumerable offshoots and ditches. During my initial research in 1998 the canals were constructed purely of rock, mud and a few logs; the engineering is impressive. Using nothing but hand tools and gravity villagers effectively transport a

continuous supply of water across several kilometers of precipitous mountain while the river that sustains the operation surges from a trickle in the late summer to a torrent in the early spring. Villagers also herd goats and some sheep in the surrounding mountains, and sell these animals along with what nuts they can grow. Outside of migration, these few products represent the only significant means of monetary production, though in this context “significant” really means very insignificant. People here are terribly poor, even by Moroccan rural standards, some living on as little as US \$50 per year.

By 2004 much had changed, and much is still changing. From no toilets in 1998 we had half a dozen in 2004. In 2004 there were eleven electric panels providing solar power, as well as a solar water heater in the mosque and a diesel powered grain mill to replace the defunct watermill in the river. Five people had televisions, some with DVD players that they used for watching Tashelhit (Berber) music productions and some comedy shows, and the new dirt road carried almost daily truck traffic in and out of the valley. These trucks seemed to facilitate more people migrating more frequently, though as yet I have no hard data on this. In addition the Peace Corps had donated funds to build a potable water system that was constructed in 1998, the same year a government school was built, and by 2004 the villagers boasted two classrooms and two teachers and had altered the water system to bring at least sporadic plumbing into most private houses. (I say sporadic because the newer, cheap plastic pipes frequently rupture.) By 2004 the government had even provided a loan to one man to build a tourist *gîte* and so now the villagers of Tadrar are occasionally beset with small troops of European tourists trekking through the village accompanied by Amazigh guides from outside the valley. In short, since my initial visit in 1994 –when there was no road, nor any of the other things I have mentioned—Tadrar has become an exemplar of “development” in Morocco, a village where change has been fairly dramatic and very rapid. This is the context from which I am speaking. It is worth pointing out that rural Morocco is tremendously diverse (Crawford 2005, Berque 1967:78), and so generalizations made from the context of the Agoundis ought to be made cautiously. I am not sure I always follow this advice.

A final, important caveat is that I am writing about women from the perspective of someone who is not one. While in this area of the High Atlas male ethnographers can speak to women (and female ethnographers have access to men), the sex of the researcher does inflect her or his movement through the social world of a village, the type of questions that can be asked, and of whom, when, and where. Beyond the preeminent distinction of gender, it is also true that age, marital status, and race impact how one moves through a village and how villagers will interact with a researcher. As I grew older over the course of my research (from 1994 to 2004), and moved from the status of single white “European” male to the position of a married father, many things changed about how I did research in Tadrar.³ Knowledge is flavored by the way it is cooked. My views changed over my time working in the mountains; my understanding of what family meant, what children meant, and my own changing family status changed the way villagers –male and female—interacted with me. Still, as will be clear when I move on to the ethnographic examples, much of what I write about women came to me indirectly, though men, and this shapes what I have to say in particular ways. I have some terrific direct interviews with women, too, but I read much of their world as a palimpsest –beneath the lines of the male social world I came to know much better, and, in the later stages of the research, the married male world.

The Central Importance of Households

I first traveled to Tadrar as a tourist and aspiring graduate student of anthropology in the summer of 1994; I returned for my PhD research in 1998 with my head full of ideas gleaned from the rich tradition of ethnographic writing on Morocco. I was, at that time, intrigued by Gellner's arguments about segmentary tribes, fascinated by Robert Montagne's work on moieties (*lfuf*), baffled by Jacque Berque's compendium on social structures in the High Atlas, suspicious of David Hart's five-fifths, astonished by Durkheim's use of Kabyle material to make his arguments about organic and mechanical solidarity, bemused by Bourdieu on honor, *habitus* and spatial dynamics, and flummoxed by the Geertz-inspired, meaning-centered reaction to much of this work on social organization.⁴ I gravitated towards the work on social organization and away from the American culturalist riposte to it, and upon arrival in the mountains this inclination strengthened. There were two main reasons for this. First, there were methodological concerns. My Tashelhit was weak and while it was relatively easy to see who worked with whom, and relatively straightforward to ask why, it remained very difficult to write any thick or subtle description of the meanings involved. My second reason was also practical: little I had read prepared me for how village life was organized. It seemed apparent to me fairly early in my study that households were the main way daily labor was organized in villages; people did not live in tribes or villages, they lived in households. Households were the prime social units of production and consumption, and as such they underpinned other forms of social organization. Examining household relations thus seemed to offer a way to contribute to larger debates in anthropology and social theory that were founded on Moroccan data about society and culture. Households seemed absent from the literature, and addressing this gap seemed useful academic work.

To give only a couple examples, Robert Montagne's classic monograph parses Amazigh society, at least "among sedentary Berbers (Anti-Atlas, Souss, western High Atlas, Rif, Jbala, Jurjura Kabylia) [into] four levels: village, canton, tribe, confederation" (1973:29). Elsewhere Montagne explores how *lfuf*, moieties or what were described to me as something like "political parties" operated across these levels. While disagreeing with Montagne about *lfuf* and the restricted number of "levels" involved in Amazigh society, Ernest Gellner argues that a nested, tribal organization is the only form of social organization in the mountains, that the different levels Montagne discovers are refractions of a single, simple genealogical idea. He writes, "What defines a segmentary society is not that [segmentation] does occur, but that this is very nearly all that occurs" (Gellner 1969:42). While this is not the place to review the long, complicated history of the Moroccanist debates on society and culture, my point for now is that they ignore households. Important debates about social order have centered on Berbers from Ibn Khaldun through Durkheim, Bourdieu, Gellner, and Geertz (Goodman 2003, Pouillon 2005, Roberts 2002). While these conversations are sometimes subtle and often roam far beyond Berbers (much less Moroccan Berbers), they have never seriously attended to the household organization of labor, or to women's role in households.

In Tadrar at least, the twenty-nine households, or *tikatin*, are the foundation of village life, the central social units of both production and consumption.⁵ Most village labor is undertaken by, and organized through, the household, and household labor dynamics are central to all larger forms of social organization. In deliberately plain terms: the importance of households has been overlooked in academic work on rural Morocco, whether the topic is the

local salience of the state, the organization of “tribes,” the difficulties of development, or the practicalities of migration. A Morocco-wide cultural valuation of “family” is more than matched in Tadrar by the central *economic* importance of family relations. It is this economic role that begs our attention.

Villagers make this clear. Every one of the 212 villagers in Tadrar belongs to a *takat* (or household) and everybody knows who belongs to which. *Tikatin* (households) are comprised of people who usually live and often eat together, but more importantly *tikatin* are the primary means by which finite, individual, temporally overlapping human lives are organized into productive arrangements. Built mostly –but not entirely-- around marriage and descent, households in Tadrar vary from two to seventeen people, from a husband and wife with their children to a group of brothers with their wives, sisters and mother, from a grandmother with her two married grandchildren to a widow and her niece. Households usually begin as a young, childless couple and sometimes extend to four full generations living together. A *takat* may consist only of an old couple living alone, either childless or whose children have moved away. Villagers articulate their changing internal household dynamics with larger social forms, from lineage based work groups to the village-wide decision making assembly, from the *timzguida* (or mosque) where the men spend their political time to the ad hoc, frequently reassembled associations of women who share the work of harvesting, washing, childcare, and giving and receiving hospitality.

Households are not isomorphic and cannot be simply amalgamated.⁶ Whatever shape *tikatin* take at a given moment, they each have a lifecycle. *Tikatin* hive off from the parent household at some stage, grow, change, wither and expire --like the humans who constitute them.⁷ Households are in constant flux, adjusting available labor with the very limited agricultural land available in the mountains, often seeking new ways to support themselves by means beyond farming, especially wage labor outside the village. All members of a household conceptually share an oven, a hearth. This is literally a *takat* and is what defines the constitution of a household. Men cannot constitute a household without women because men cannot in local ideological terms establish this hearth.

Most household members live together under one roof, but not necessarily all of them. Some members may spend most of their time shepherding or working outside of the village or have houses in other villages. Some households are established across different houses in Tadrar. Household members may have seasonal jobs working on big farms in the plains or permanent work as nannies in the city. These working individuals can be, but are not necessarily, tied to a rural *takat*, which is to say they may or may not continue to devote labor and share resources with *takat* members in the village. If migrants do not share, do not eat, and are not embedded in the power structure of the household, they are not part of the *takat*. We cannot understand rural to urban migration without understanding households.⁸

Some fathers periodically travel to the city to collect the paychecks of their children working there, and these children are seen to remain in the household even though they may very rarely be physically present in the village. Other children have chosen to fend for themselves, to assume responsibility for their own finances in the atomized economy of the flatlands and cities. These people are no longer members of a village *takat* no matter how often they visit or how cordial their relations. The emotional resonance of “family” is not the same as an economic commitment to the household. Some older, dependent sons set up separate houses inside the village with their wives and children --what might appear to be *tikatin* in their own right-- but such men must still work their father’s harvest, must turn to their fathers for seed, and must hand

their crop over to him. The land is “owned” by the patriarch, or at least remains controlled by him. While ambiguous, the households of such older men are referred to as part of the parental *takat* since they are dependent on the land vested in the living paterfamilias. A few sons have managed to set themselves up in the village independently through commerce or periodic wage labor, but only a few. Below I will focus on the role women play in the establishment of this kind of independence.

The fundamental aspect of a *takat* is that it is an economic association, an assemblage of people who *work* a certain set of resources and *share* its rewards. The terms in which this working and sharing is done are never equitable at a given time and part of the role of *tikatin* is to transfer labor, land, love, care, food and money across generations. This “cycle of domestic development” is common to households everywhere (Robertson 1991:11), but, as we shall see, this has particular relevance for our concern with women’s power. *Tikatin* are generally grounded in biological relationships propagated through the social institution of marriage, but there is a wide variety to both the forms households take and the meanings these forms hold for variously positioned household members. There is far more diversity of households than might be supposed, and household members have interestingly diverse opinions about their positions.

Still, economically men dominate almost every *takat*. Women may have inherited property, and this is to varying degrees kept separate from the husband’s property for the purposes of inheritance. In most cases --but not all-- a woman’s property is far less economically significant than what her husband owns, i.e. there is less of it, and in any case is controlled by the husband as long as he is alive. In such a precarious environment, however, the marginal value of women’s property is very high. Women own relatively little property compared to men, but this property is nevertheless crucial in many instances.

The disparity in property ownership emerges over time because of inheritance customs. Sons and daughters inherit their mothers’ property equally, but men’s property goes to sons over daughters by a ratio of two to one, a norm villagers justify using Quranic injunctions.⁹ This ensures that over the generations land tends to flow into the hands of the village men. Moreover, nearly 80% of women born in Tadrar marry out of the village and these women rarely seem able to claim their inheritance. It is one thing to have “rights” and another to exercise them. Women with many brothers and a small patrimony are particularly unlikely to receive their share, even if they marry within the village. Men explain that these women “didn’t ask for their land,” or slightly more forthrightly, “there was not enough.” There are several cases where people -- usually women-- receive token portions of the harvest, or just exaggerated hospitality, rather than their “rightful” share. Three generations ago approximately half of the property in Tadrar was consolidated in the hands of a single powerful man; today it is dispersed, and becoming more so with each passing generation.¹⁰ Few *tikatin* own very much more than they need for survival, and many seem to own somewhat less.

In most cases children will not come to own any significant property until the death of their father. Young women generally marry before their mid-twenties, and will go live with their husband’s *takat*. If the new husband still lives with his father, the bride joins a new, extended household and her working life will probably not necessarily change significantly. That is, if she moves from one large household into another, she moves only from working in the service of her mother to working under her husband’s mother or sometimes grandmother. If the groom has his own property, however, the bride is set up as the female head of a household, a dramatic transformation from her position in her natal home. As a new matriarch of a household a bride moulds her own oven by packing mud around a large pot (again, such an oven is called a *takat*)

and the new matriarch can begin to raise the children who will provide the labor to sustain the household as the older generation ages into infirmity. Brides typically move from one village to another so that marriage for women usually means not only learning a new set of fields, trees and other property to which she has rights and obligations, but a new social world in which such property is embedded.

As for sons, the father may allow them to marry before his own death, but not necessarily. If the father allows marriage he may choose the bride, though however selected the new wife will come to live in the father's *takat*. Sons cannot marry their way out of their natal households in the same way as daughters can. Sons typically serve their father until his death and this economic dependency is supported by an ideology of intense deference, the "master and disciple" paradigm discussed by Hammoudi (1997). My casual question to one man about when he would begin to relinquish some control of his land to his grown, married sons was met with incredulity. He froze on the trail in front of me then wheeled sharply around. "When I'm dead," he said stonily. We continued on in silence.

As mentioned above, some men do manage to establish households inside the village while their fathers are alive and without the father's assistance, usually by working for an extended time in a distant city and then returning to the village capable of supporting themselves. Even here, however, filial duty seems to reign over economic independence and such men tend to end up irrigating their father's property and working his land, especially during peak planting and harvesting seasons. I know of no case where a migrant returned and bought enough land to support himself. Given the exigencies of the irrigation system, buying scattered available plots of land would severely complicate irrigation rights. Rarely in any case do sons go off to the city of their own volition. Typically they are *sent* and only when their labor is not required in the village. It is generally fathers who decide whether to dispose of their son's labor directly in the fields or to transform it into income through migration. A son has to be confident indeed in his own ability to support himself to choose to abandon paternal resources, including, perhaps, a chance to inherit land. A son who breaks away from his father's household risks economic isolation no matter how emotionally warm his relationship with his family. So, as I will show, other than the death of a patriarch, women are one of the few sources of free land in the village, and thus one of the few avenues to freedom.

Materially each *takat* relies on a combination of resources, but none is as essential as fields. Almonds, walnuts, sheep, goats, and wage labor provide ways of making cash, at least for some households, but fields provide the barley that forms the staple of everyone's diet. It is very difficult to make enough money to buy food. Money will be needed for shoes, clothes, scythes, hoes and other tools, medicine, tea, sugar, oil, soap and, in the winter, vegetables, dry beans and occasionally meat. Money is almost always necessary for these things. Barley, on the other hand, keeps people alive when there is no money, and fields are necessary to grow this staple. There are over 1,100 fields in Tadrar irrigated by the seven main irrigation canals. The heads of the twenty-nine *tikatin* organize the nine- and ten-day irrigation cycles for the different canals such that fields get enough water to render them productive. This does not mean, of course, that each field is equally productive, or anything close to it. The fields are studded with trees -over 4,000 walnut and almond trees, in addition to many others, ranging from white poplar for wood to pomegranates for fruit and olives for oil. Thus, not only are there differences in field characteristics like size, soil quality, or orientation to the sun, but some fields are entirely shaded by trees planted near them and are thus unsuitable for growing anything but a small amount of animal fodder, or *tooga*. The fields are not divided equally amongst the *tikatin*, either.

Villagers, especially those on the poorer end of the continuum, have a keen sense of who owns more than whom and are only too happy to expound on the unjustness of it all. Still, rich or poor (or poor and poorer) all households owe their lives to the fields and the canals that support them. I have written extensively about the male labor involved in maintaining and operating these canals (Crawford 2003). Here I want to discuss women's vital contributions to the household political economy.

Women and the Political Economic Dynamics of Households

I. Abdurrahman is about 55 years-old, a grandfather, one of the wealthiest men in the village and certainly one of the most powerful. He is the youngest son of the youngest son of the man who at one time owned half of all village property. Thus, Abdurrahman is part of the most powerful lineage in Tadrar and he is keen to consolidate this power by working with agents of the Moroccan state, development specialists, and me. Nearly anyone who does business in Tadrar will, sooner or later, eat in Abdurrahman's guest room, and those of us outsiders who have spent considerable time in the village have necessarily spent much of it at Abdurrahman's house.

Abdurrahman's heritage does not explain how Abdurrahman gained power, however. In fact, there is no simple, single explanation. Abdurrahman is ambitious, smart, energetic, politically savvy, and sometimes forceful—he possesses many of the qualities shared by successful people in many contemporary societies. But we should not overlook the influence of Abdurrahman's wife Khadija, and Khadija would be easy to overlook. She is quiet, shy, and stays away from the guest areas of the house as much as she can, sending her daughters-in-law and sons as emissaries back and forth from the core production zone in the kitchen to the outside transaction center of the guest room. Abdurrahman's ability to talk politics depends upon his ability to host, and this ability to host depends on the kitchen, the *anwal*, and most specifically the oven, or *takat*. *Tanoort*, bread, and by extension life, comes from this oven. Khadija runs the kitchen, she took over the *takat* from Abdurrahman's mother upon the old matriarch's death, and in this straightforward sense Khadija can lay claim to the very heart of the household and its political potential.

But that is hardly all. When Abdurrahman and I worked to map the fields of the village it became clear that a large number of his fields were inherited from his mother, who died after Abdurrahman's father, and thus had inherited a portion of her husband's land which, upon her own death, passed to her only full son, Abdurrahman. Thus Abdurrahman received more land than his half brothers from other mothers. More significantly, much other land was actually Abdurrahman's wife Khadija's. Because Khadija's only full brother is developmentally disabled, and Khadija cares for him, all of the property owned by Khadija's father has come under her control, and thus, under Abdurrahman's purview. In Tadrar, land is the basis of prosperity. The fact that Abdurrahman and Khadija have so much land is fortunate, and they have been further blessed with five sons and two daughters. These sons, along with Khadija's brother, do all of the male-gendered agricultural labor for the household, even while two sons (and sometimes three) work in the city and return wages to the household; the two daughter's-in-law married into the household help Khadija with all of the feminine labor (from harvesting fields and hauling wood, to milking the cow and baking bread). Thus, Abdurrahman is allowed the most vital tool necessary to the politically ambitious: time. Khadija's land, Abdurrahman's mother's land, and the abundance of household labor means that Abdurrahman can spend his

own time doing what he loves: trafficking in information, kibitzing, planning, plotting, thinking, and traveling.

One place Abdurrahman travels is to the home of the *amghar*, or local liaison to the central government, who lives three villages down the valley towards the main road. The *amghar* is Khadija's half brother, and when making his own rounds of the valley he visits Abdurrahman's house nearly every time he passes -- partly as a matter of "family values" and partly to hear Abdurrahman's version of whatever is happening politically. Moreover, once a week, when Abdurrahman travels to market at the regional political center in Talat n Yaqoub, he generally buys supplies for the household, but he always stays much longer than is necessary to shop. Sometimes he stays overnight. The purpose of these visits is quite clearly about shopping for information as much as shopping for material goods. When he stays at market, Abdurrahman looks for hospitality from relatives of his mother (his father's fourth and youngest wife), who live very near *suq*. Of course, Abdurrahman's patrilineal relatives all live in Tadrar. Only his matrilineal and matrilateral relatives marry outside the valley.

In sum, women's land (Abdurrahman's mother's and his wife's) has been crucial to the material reproduction of this household, including the production of children. Sons in particular are fundamental to allowing Abdurrahman the time to politic. Furthermore, Khadija's labor in the kitchen and fields (and the labor of Abdurrahman's sons' wives) ensures that visitors are always received with tea, food, and time to talk; Abdurrahman's mother's relatives give him a base of operation at the regional political center. Abdurrahman's success is predicated on connections made through women; the land and labor of women provide his livelihood and political potential.

II. My second example also relates to land and its importance in constituting independent households. It focuses on Hussein, one of the many grandchildren of Abdurrahman's oldest half brother, Mohammed Ali. Mohammed Ali died in the winter of 2003, which was very sad as he was a kind and humorous old man. For his sons, however, one of whom was already himself a grandfather, Mohammed Ali's death meant that they would finally inherit land and, thus, would finally be wholly independent. All men are formally equal in the village council or in the mosque, but as I noted earlier, only men with land can control their own labor and to some degree their own fate. I will suggest at the conclusion of this paper that this might prompt us to think more about what constitutes "freedom," whether in Gellner's terms (when he says that in the High Atlas "liberty and equality go together")¹¹ or in terms of President Bush's assertions that "freedom is on the march" in places like Iraq.

In any case, I was not surprised to see that Mohammed Ali's two sons had finally taken their places as independent household heads when I returned to the Agoundis Valley in the summer of 2004. What I did not expect was that Hussein—who was a grandson, not a son of Mohammed Ali—also had become an independent household head while his brothers and cousins did not. How had Hussein gained the resources necessary for independence while his father was still alive? Simply, Hussein is lucky (or smart or both) in that his wife Aisha is also his cousin. Aisha's mother is a daughter of Mohammed Ali and is presently unmarried. This woman decided to live with her daughter Aisha, and thus brings her share of Hussein's grandmother's land and his paternal aunt's land under Hussein's control. This is not much, but it is enough so that Hussein can operate as an independent man in a household with his wife, her mother, and grandmother. He also sharecrops land from other female relatives. Hussein's entire patrimony is, at present, facilitated by women. These women have liberated Hussein from living

under his father's roof and doing his father's labor. Hussein has been made a free man by his wife, her mother, and his grandmother.

III. While my third example of how women constitute property is also about the relationship between land and independence, it is somewhat more complicated. Hassan was an older man when I did my research in 1999, married to his second wife Zaina. His first wife was Khadija, daughter of one of the four apical ancestors within the most powerful lineage in the village, and one of the few sisters in her generation to receive her Islamically just portion of her inheritance. Hassan was Khadija's second husband; she originally married a patrilineal parallel cousin—one of her father's brothers' sons-- named Hejmi and Khadija was thus a link between two of the most wealthy sublineages in the village. Khadija and her first husband had a daughter who married to the new center of power in the Agoundis, the village of Tijrisht where the *amghar*, the main local representative to the central government, lives.

When Hejmi died, Khadija married Hassan, establishing her new household with the portion of land she inherited from her father, as well as the lands of her late husband Hejmi. These lands thus came from the same larger lineage, but from two different sublineages—that of Khadija's father and that of her husband. Hassan, Khadija's new, young husband, was himself in the same sublineage as Hejmi, but at the point he married Hassan had inherited no land as his father was still alive. In fact, Hassan's father is Khadija's late husband Hejmi's brother; young Hassan married his aunt.

While not seen as specifically forbidden (or *haram*) in local understandings of Islamic propriety, this evidently did not please Hassan's father, and the boy was disinherited from what would have been his patrimony, his household property and his part in his lineage dynamics. If this hurt his relations with his nearest lineal kin, it still seems to have benefited Hassan economically, especially as when Khadija died she left her second husband the lands of Hassan's dead patrilineal uncle in addition to Khadija's own (more significant) land from her father's lineage. Thus Hassan got his share of his own sublineage's land—but through his uncle rather than his father—and he picked up a significant portion of another sublineage's land. In interviews some villagers considered him to be “really” a member of this other lineage because that's where the bulk of his property originated. Affiliation was as much about property as it was about biology. Most of Hassan's irrigation cooperation was undertaken with his late wife's nearest relatives rather than his own natal lineage.

It does not seem like this cooperation has gone very well, however, though I could get little specific information. What I know is that by 1999 Hassan had remarried Zaina, a woman from a neighboring valley, and they had had two small sons together. Zaina brought with her a daughter from a previous marriage and by 2002 they added another daughter to the family. With one younger girl and three very young children, by 2004 Zaina and Hassan chose to move to the city, sharecropping their mountain land with the one remaining household of Hassan's late wife Khadija.

Hassan's story illustrates several things, not least the mutability of households in time, and the relationship between kinship and political economy. Through Khadija's patronage Hassan seems to have made himself a better position than some of his other lineage members, or even his own father. However, if non-statements and avoiding the topic are evidence, Hassan also seems to have isolated himself and his household, first from his father and then from his extended lineage. In Tadrar there are limited means of exercising one's ambition, limits that are material (lack of productive property) but also social (lack of cooperation). Khadija helped

Hassan secure the property to be an independent man, but she could not help him with the delicate task of assembling the social cooperation necessary to render the land productive. It takes both luck and political skill to prosper in Tadrar in ways that are acceptable to village mores.

IV. As final illustration of the dynamics of women's importance to the political economy of the Agoundis I want to discuss two extraordinary women, Fatima o Haj and Fatima Id Baj. Fatima o Haj lost her husband in 2003, about the same time as Mohammed Ali, who I discussed above. Fatima's husband was the last of his lineage, the Ohomo; the couple had no sons or daughters. Fatima had originally provided much of the land that she and Ohomo relied upon (she was another woman of her generation to successfully claim her inheritance), and now as a widow Fatima controlled all of her land, and the remaining Ohomo land, free and clear. I had expected that she would go to join the household of one of her many brothers and place her land under one of their control.

On the contrary, Fatima contacted her sister who had married several villages away and asked for help. Her sister found a granddaughter in that village who was unmarried and whose labor was not needed in her own household. This granddaughter came to live with Fatima in Tadrar and now does all the "feminine" labor in Fatima's household, the food preparation, cleaning, and gathering wood. For the male labor required to render her land productive Fatima hires one of this young woman's relatives. Fatima pays this man cash, a daily wage, to come from his village to Tadrar in season to plow and plant, and then relies on her patrilineal nephews (who live in Tadrar) for the more frequently required irrigation. Thus not only does Fatima o Haj run her own household independently, but she does so by employing male and female relatives within her own lineage, as well as connections her sister has made marrying into another lineage in another village. Fatima and her sister's granddaughter constitute a *takat* entirely comprised of women; they hire what male labor they need.

While Fatima o Haj's situation is hardly typical, the importance of the sorts of women's connections she uses is profound and largely unstudied in the literature on rural Morocco. Because women usually marry outside of their lineages and, frequently outside of the village too, it is women who provide the connections between the involuted patrilineages of villages like Tadrar and weave them into a broader rural social fabric. This is why Abdurrahman relies upon his mother's relatives when he travels; Abdurrahman's male relatives all live within easy walking distance of one another.

But it is not always men using these far flung, feminine connections. My neighbor Fatima Id Baj chose to divorce her first husband, who was also her patrilineal parallel cousin. It was a difficult decision as the husband had moved the family 17 kilometers away to the regional center and demanded that he keep Fatima's two children there. Nonetheless, Fatima left him, returning first to her father's house in Tadrar, but then moving again to spend time in the capital of Rabat with her sister who had married there. In Rabat Fatima learned a bit of Arabic (and she remains one of the few women in Tadrar who can speak Arabic) and she strengthened her ties with her sister's new, urban family. Much later, when Fatima had returned to Tadrar, remarried, and had several more children she sent one of her boys to live in Rabat with the same sister who had taken her in years before. Her logic was plainly economic. In Rabat Fatima's son Brahim would go to school, learn Arabic, and might some day come to work in the city and earn money. As it turned out, Fatima's plan did not work. Brahim is very shy, he was homesick, and he is not a very good student, but Fatima still has hope that one of her younger children may yet be able to

take advantage of the urban contacts established by Fatima's sisters who have moved out of the valley. This is useful not only for boys, but for the increasing numbers of girls who are sent to the city to work as maids and nannies.¹²

This transfer of children does not just occur between the village and city. In my second summer of fieldwork in 1999 I reviewed some of the photos I had taken when I had first begun studying the village in 1998. I was distressed at the number of people I could not identify, particularly children. I took the photos to various neighbors in the village and asked what families the children belonged to. I then discovered how many of them were "visiting," sometimes for months at a time. Because nearly all of a child's relatives on her or his father's side live in the child's natal village, the only way to see the wider world, to move between villages, is to visit relatives from the maternal side (typically the mother's home village), or to visit female relatives on the paternal side who have married out. This is exactly what happens. Women of the High Atlas provide much of the social circuitry that allows men and children to move across the landscape. Such circuits allow for the integration of localized social modalities into variegated rural and urban space. Women in the Agoundis quietly and almost invisibly establish the means by which rural Imazighen (or Berbers) gain access to the important resources available in the flatlands and cities. Women provide the land that renders some households independent, the labor that makes all households viable, and the social connections to integrate them into a wider political economic context.

Conclusions – Households, Women and Free Men

There are many other examples of this kind, men, women and children who gain access to productive property and other resources through their wives, sisters and mothers. These resources sometimes serve to transform men from dependent household members to "free" and independent household heads, and other times allow men the means to increase their manual labor force (through offspring or by hire) so as to free themselves for other political, social and intellectual labor. It is in this sense that I argue that women "produce" free men, both free in the sense of controlling the labor of others, and free in the sense of using this appropriated labor to pursue desired political and social projects. Moreover and more broadly, this "bilaterality" of property transfers would seem to support Goody's argument about the commonalities among circum-Mediterranean (including European) kinship systems (1983:12, 27). As he writes, "for though descent groups are always unilineal, kinship is everywhere bilateral" (ibid. 16), a point that seems underappreciated in much of the work on rural Moroccan Berbers.¹³ The "transmission of property to heirs of both sexes," or what Goody terms "diversifying devolution" (1983: 21), is evident in highland Morocco and demonstrates the important, and in "tribal" societies often ignored, connections between property relations and politics.¹⁴ Martha Mundy has convincingly demonstrated the importance of household analysis to understanding larger social forms in Yemen, and in particular the links between household dynamics, broader kinship networks of various sorts, and the state level political economy (1995:199); our understanding of rural Morocco would benefit from a similar approach.¹⁵

These household social dynamics also point to the centrality of women to Amazigh social organization, and the failure of ethnographers to see beyond cultural constructions provided by male informants, especially relatively elite male informants. I am no exception to this general rule, as most of my previous work and most of the examples in the paper have come from my contacts with men. This is to say that our typically masculine "situated knowledge" of the

countryside has led to a kind of ethnographic blindness –and to fatal lacunae in the work of some of our best theoreticians (as discussed in Goodman 2003). Important work has been done on rural women in Morocco.¹⁶ The task now is to connect it to what are often thought to be the masculine domains of politics and economy. My argument is that attention to households allows us to treat the integrated nature of male and female social realms in rural Morocco as a whole, and helps us to grasp the connections between gender roles, kinship dynamics, and the rural political economy. Ultimately we cannot understand the integration of rural Amazigh society into the larger Moroccan and world economy without understanding households.

Apprehending rural Amazigh society requires attention to the production of material life; the Moroccan mountains are very poor and in my experience villagers understand their world in relation to this central fact. In the Agoundis all people maintain themselves through households, and “it is through their commitment to the concept of the family that people are recruited into the material relations of households” (Rapp and Ross in Lem 1999). As elsewhere in Morocco the broad concept of “family,” and the much more specific, economic constitution of “households,” significantly depend upon women’s physical, social and political labor. Failure to appreciate women’s labor has allowed us to ignore households, and this has skewed our most basic understandings of rural society and its articulation with the larger economy. It has also cost us a chance to explore how “Imazighen” –Berbers, or literally “free men”—come to be free, and thus the question of women’s lives in the Moroccan mountains leads us to questions of considerable contemporary importance, like: what exactly does “freedom” mean?

I will end, then, with just a few words on why I believe we have been so blind to women’s role in rural social dynamics. This comes down to what I would call the temporality of knowledge. Localized male forms of social organization in the High Atlas follow, or at least begin, from the idea of lineages. This is not to deny the salience of the state, but to assert that the power of the state does not generally penetrate the quotidian lives of farmers, and here older, or at least more ethnographically famous, sorts of power dynamics retain their vitality (Ilahiane 2005, Kraus 1998, Venema 2002). I’ve written on this elsewhere, but would reiterate that ideas of the importance of patrilineal relations do not translate directly into empirical “lineages” acting in the social world, but all the same these ideas are put to work and do have some relevance. To pick up another line of this argument, relations amongst men are not simply negotiated by atomized and independent actors (Rosen 1984), but are contested in a historical, social, economic and cultural context that bears significantly upon the direction and depth such negotiations can accomplish. Women’s daily labor, unlike men’s labor, does not rely on lineal relatedness. It cannot, in fact, because 80% of the women in Tadrar are unrelated to one another. Instead, women form ad hoc groups for harvesting or cooking, weaving or watering cattle and these ad hoc groups are difficult to track. They are based on a diversity of cultural logics that ethnographers, including myself, seem to have found difficult to penetrate.

Moreover, women’s associative activities rarely occur in a predictable place (like the mosque or a formal meeting of the village council, or *tajmaat*) and this too renders them hard to study. Women’s political arguments are every bit as vicious as men’s, and are usually beyond my ability to untangle even when I observe them, but I do not think we have tried hard enough to understand what women are up to in political economic terms. With communal labor that is hard to track and inelegant to theorize women’s contribution to the social organization of rural life has gone relatively unexamined. Women have, I think, been rendered invisible in the ethnographic record, or, at best, inert because the spatial context of their activities and style of interaction confounds our methods.

A third and final issue is that the work women do constituting households happens in temporal frameworks that are inconvenient to study –either in-the-moment (like groups formed for agricultural work) or very infrequently –during land transfers at the death of a patriarch, for instance. Women’s modalities are not generally manifest in a temporally bounded “event” that can be easily ethnographically framed, except, perhaps for weddings, which may explain why weddings garner so much attention. Even the relations I have discussed in this paper were not so much observed and recorded as induced from disconnected smatterings of social behavior. I used maps of social relations, questions about how those maps were thought to change over time, and reflective interviews based on these changes, as well as the sheer good luck to sit around doing nothing for long enough to be present when something happened. It is hard to write granting agencies for funds to sit around hoping something happens, but some kinds of knowledge are amenable to just that. The timeframes of my original research meant that I only glimpsed the importance of women’s relations dimly, if at all. Women’s labor happens both too fast and too slow to be readily apparent. Only by watching village social relations unfold over more time, and stitching short-term events into longer term patterns, has women’s labor started to come into view, at least for me.

There is something ironic in all this since Amazigh women have been portrayed as timeless exemplars of traditional culture locked in a domestic sphere isolated from the historical world in which men act. This is wrong. I want to assert that Amazigh women are *timeful* actors busily working to secure their welfare and that of their households and families, against sometimes daunting odds, using resources that if not distinctly feminine in themselves, are at least handled in women’s own terms. High Atlas women have types of power, and a type of freedom, that ought to be appraised ethnographically rather than written off as insignificant or subsidiary to the types of power and freedom available to men.

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Notes

¹ The literature on most of these social forms is well known and too voluminous to recount here, with the exception perhaps of recent work on the notion of “homeland” (*tamazirt*, pl. *timizar*). For this, see Hoffman (2002).

² “Tadrar” is a pseudonym.

³ Race is rarely discussed in the Moroccan context, but is hugely important. Being “white” certainly influenced how I was perceived and treated in the village. See Becker (2002), Ensel (1999), Gellner (1969:13) and Ilahiane (2001).

⁴ I have outlined some of my thoughts on these issues elsewhere (Crawford 2005b).

⁵ For simplicity’s sake, these statistics refer to my 1999 census.

⁶ See for example Donham’s critique of Sahlins and Meillassoux (1999:102-103).

⁷ Most of what I emphasize about the significance of households is treated in a broader and more theoretical sense in Robertson (1991). See also Greenhalgh (1985) for a sociological critique of the relationship between households and inequality.

⁸ I explore this at some length in my forthcoming book.

⁹ This comes from the Holy Qur’an, Sura 4:11 (1993 trans. Taqi-ud Din Al-Hillali): “Allah commands you as regards your children’s (inheritance); to the male, a portion equal to that of two females; if (there are) only daughters, two or more, their share is two thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is half. For parents, a sixth share of inheritance to each if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers or (sisters), the mother has a sixth. (The distribution of the cases is) after payment of legacies he may have bequeathed or debts. You know not which of them, whether your parents or your children, are nearest to you in benefit, (these fixed shares) are ordained by Allah. And Allah is Ever All-Knower, All-Wise.” See also Sura 4:12 “In that which your wives leave, your share is half if they have no child; but if they leave a child, you get a fourth of that which they leave after payment of legacies they may have bequeathed or debts. In that which you leave, their (your wives) share is a fourth if you leave no child; but if you leave a child, they get an eighth of that which you leave after payment of legacies that you may have bequeathed or debts. If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question has left neither ascendants nor descendants, but has left a brother or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth; but if more than two, they share in a third. After payment of legacies he (or she) may have bequeathed or debts, so that no loss is caused (to anyone). This is a Commandment from Allah; and Allah is Ever-All Knowing, Most-Forbearing.”

¹⁰ Brett and Fentress discuss the transmission of power across generations as well as the “instability” produced in Berber society by a lack of primogeniture (1996:75).

¹¹ See Crawford (2005b).

¹² Foreign understanding of rural girls working in the city portrays it in starkly horrific terms. Nick Pelham of the BBC reports that “in exchange of \$30 a month, tens of thousands of parents are now contracting their children to urban families to work as domestic servants in conditions of near slavery” (Pelham 2000). The US Department of Labor, in preparing a report related to Morocco’s free trade agreement with the United States, paints a similarly depressing picture, writing that “Children, predominantly girls from rural areas, are contracted by their parents or sold by orphanages as maids to wealthy urban families and work for little or no payment” (2004:5). The Human Rights Internet is still more forthright, summarizing their report as follows: “General points made under the heading ‘economic exploitation’ included the following: the widespread abuse of young girls working as household maids, or *petites bonnes*, is among the most serious problems confronting children; in most cases, these girls - 50 percent of whom are below the age of 10 - are sent by their families from rural areas to work as maids in houses in the cities; often the parents genuinely believe that they are doing the best for their child; other parents see their daughters as a lucrative source of revenue; often an agreement will have been reached with the future employer that the child will receive a certain number of hours of education each week. The results of various studies of the situation of these girls, however, showed that, for example: in most cases, the work involved cleaning and general housework, looking after the children and doing the cooking for the whole family; the working day often began before 7:00 a.m. and did not end until after 11:00 p.m.; the child’s salary was usually US\$30/month and was sent directly to the parents; in some cases, parents were not allowed to visit their daughters; others were allowed only one visit per month with parents; some parents only visited their daughter to collect her salary; up to 70 percent of the girls did not receive any education, regardless of the agreements made before the child left her parents; up to 50 percent had no access to medical care.” To make sense of why parents would send their daughters to the cities it is necessary to understand rural household dynamics, a point I dwell upon in my forthcoming book.

¹³ I do not mean to suggest rural Morocco lacks very good recent scholarship, for example Amahan (1998), Bencherifa and Johnson (1990), Hoffman (2000), Ilahiane (1999, 2005), Kraus (1998), Mahdi (1999), Rachik (1992,

2004), Venema (2002), or even that the classic work of people like Gellner (1969) or Hart (2000) does not have much to teach us. My point is that in this work women are usually absent or are considered apart from the male economy, and the household level of analysis is either absent or relatively under-emphasized, and these qualities make understanding the links between rural society and the larger political economy difficult.

¹⁴ The use of the term “tribal” is contested. Here I simply mean that part of Moroccan society where notions of genealogical lineages are used to accomplish some forms of social labor. See Berque (1953) and Joffé and Pennell (1991).

¹⁵ See Sabah (1987) for one attempt to link the family to the state, albeit without attention to the sociological category of households.

¹⁶ See Belarbi (1996), Charrad, Bourqia and Gallagher (1996), El Alaoui (2001), Gadant (1990), Gelard (2004) Hoffman (2002), Kapchan (1996), Kasriel (1989), Maher (1974), Shaefer Davis (1983), Skalli (2001), Temsamani (1996).