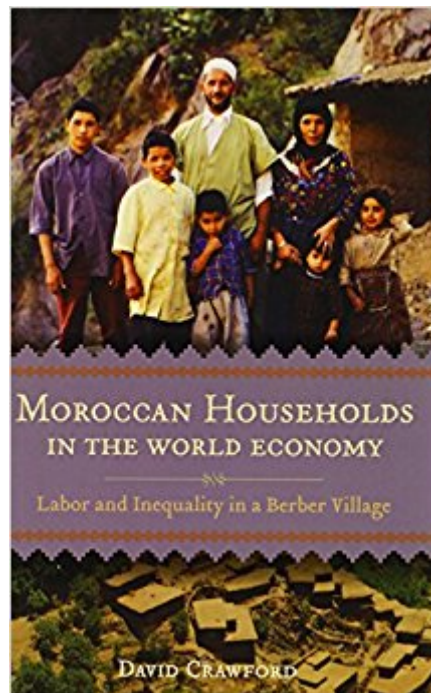




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Moroccan Households In The World Economy: Labor And Inequality In A Berber Village



Synopsis

In the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, far from the hustle and noise of urban centers, lies a village made of mud and rock, barely discernible from the surrounding landscape. Yet a closer look reveals a carefully planned community of homes nestled above the trees, where rock slides are least frequent, and steep terraces of barley fields situated just above spring flood level. The Berber-speaking Muslims who live and farm on these precipitous mountainsides work together at the arduous task of irrigating the fields during the dry season, continuing a long tradition of managing land, labor, and other essential resources collectively. In *Moroccan Households in the World Economy*, David Crawford provides a detailed study of the rhythms of highland Berber life, from the daily routines of making a living in such a demanding environment to the relationships between individuals, the community, and the national economy. Demonstrating a remarkably complete understanding of every household and person in the village, Crawford traces the intricacies of cooperation between households over time. Employing a calculus known as "arranging the bones," villagers attempt to balance inequality over the long term by accounting for fluctuations in the needs and capacities of each person, household, and family at different stages in its history. Tradition dictates that children "owe" labor to their parents and grandparents as long as they live, and fathers decide when and where the children in their household work. Some may be asked to work for distant religious lodges or urban relatives they haven't met because of a promise made by long-dead ancestors. Others must migrate to cities to work as wage laborers and send their earnings home to support their rural households. While men and women leave their community to work, Morocco and the wider world come to the village in the form of administrators, development agents, and those representing commercial interests, all with their own agendas and senses of time. Integrating a classic village-level study that nevertheless engages with the realities of contemporary migration, Crawford succinctly summarizes common perceptions and misperceptions about the community while providing a salient critique of the global expansion of capital. In this beautifully observed ethnography, Crawford challenges assumptions about how Western economic processes transfer to other contexts and pulls the reader into an exotic world of smoke-filled kitchens, dirt-floored rooms, and communal rooftop meals -- a world every bit as fascinating as it is instructive.

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Customer Reviews

David Crawford is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut.

In "Moroccan Households in the World Economy," David Crawford manages to analyze humanity as a whole by analyzing a small village that few people even know exists. Tadrar, Morocco, for all the challenges it faces, is a community that truly reflects what today's world needs from itself. Though Tadrar transcends its anonymity through Crawford's book, the village also finds safety in being unknown, as Crawford's evidence points to the fact that it would be far better for the world to learn from Tadrar than it would be for Tadrar to learn from the world. To me, the crux of Crawford's argument is that Tadrar is so much more than its humble physical self; it is a microcosm not of society but of the global community to which the world should be aspiring. Tadrar is, in itself, a communal effort to not only survive, but to thrive -- imperative participation in community labor projects reflects a highly progressive understanding that human connections and interdependency are what give us the best chance of survival. Crawford does not avoid the fact that "farming in Tadrar is hard." The villagers' humility in their willingness to overcome this challenge can serve as inspiration for the rest of the world to reject any notion of "survival of the fittest" and embrace the need to depend on others for the success of every individual. This is undoubtedly the most important lesson found in the book. Crawford's book is also unique in the way it elucidates the deeper meaning of our physical spaces and the way we occupy them and move within them. In describing how the tigemmi, the physical house, is warmed by the hearth into a home, Crawford makes us think about what truly inhabits and impacts our spaces, the most important of which is the planet on which we all live. He also establishes emotional and relatable consequences to the way

we move within our physical spaces and how this changes the way we derive meaning from our space. It takes five minutes of research to find out that 58% of Moroccans live in urban areas and that this number is increasing. However, when Crawford relates the consequences of the villager Abdurrahman's two oldest sons moving to Marrakesh (consequences both economic, since good workers are lost, and emotional, since they elected to sever ties with their family), statistics like the one above take on a human significance, and readers are given pause to reflect on the significance of how they occupy their world. Finally, Crawford subtly emphasizes that there are things Tadrar is doing better than the Western world. Imperative participation in communal labor projects improves the community measurably in its physical state and immeasurably in its sense of itself. One looks at Tadrar from a country in which many citizens are loathe to write a simple tax check, let alone physically improve the community, and realizes that we have a lot to learn from the villagers' incredible efforts toward prosperity. Furthermore, Tadrar's openness toward visitors is almost unfathomable in this country; how many households in the United States would open their homes to a total stranger from another continent? While most Americans assume the worst in strangers they encounter in the public sphere, the people of Tadrar opened up their private homes to Crawford, innocently devoid of Western xenophobia. Crawford seems to possess the appropriate amount of culture-shock at this difference in customs: enough to emphasize that Westerners are generally not used to such strong community and hospitality, but not so much that he seemed surprised that this could exist at all. Rather, the book emphasizes that Tadrar--its community, internal interdependency, and hope--*does* exist, and that the Western world needs to stop looking for its own Tadrars and start creating them. Physically, Tadrar is still a small village in the middle of the mountains. Crawford's book, however, allows it to transcend itself--or rather, reveals that in many ways, it already does.

Extremely well researched book. Good balance between the "findings" and insights, and the experiences of the author, an anthropologist. Does not cover links to the world economy as extensively as the title suggests. The inequities of gender roles is presented in great detail and with insight. Was glad I read the book after visiting Morocco.

The first chapter of this book serves as an introduction to the topics that will be discussed in the later chapters. It introduces the reader to the village of Tadrar high in the mountains of Morocco. The reader also learns of the globalization that is beginning in the village. The village is modernizing at the same time it is keeping with its traditional values. The next chapter (chapter one) goes into a

deeper discussion of the village and more of the particulars of village life. This chapter informs readers about how it is like to live and work in the village of Tadrar. We learn about the system of farming the people use in the village, about the eating habits and the availability of food in the village. This chapter focuses on how the village was before the effects of globalization were really seen. We are also introduced to Abdurrahman and told about his life, his family, and what his role is within the village. Readers are also told that the village changed a great deal from 1998 to 2004. Chapter two is a discussion of the households in Tadrar and the role they play in society. In Tadrar the households are very strongly patriarchal. Boys can generally only have their own household when their father dies and they inherit his land. Households are the social structure of the village. Households also determine how labor is divided both within the individual households and within the village. Within the household labor is divided based on sex and age. Households are connected based on lineages. There is also a description of a day in the life of Abdurrahman and his wife Khadija. In this section we are introduced to the other members of Abdurrahman's family. We also meet Crawford's other neighbors while he stays in the village, Mohammed Lukstaf and his family. We see how the two families are very different. Chapter three looks closer at the differences between households. The two main signals of inequality are land and irrigation time. Because there is limited access to irrigation the time has to be split among the village, people who have less land are generally lower on the list for irrigation sometimes receiving none at all. Property ownership is one of the easiest ways to see the social organization of the village. Property ownership is also a way to see connections between households and which lineages are more prosperous because land is passed down in households as inheritance. Chapter four discusses how labor for village projects is divided among the different lineages. Village level projects are divided into five workgroups, which are based on the lineage affiliations. The labor is divided so it is as fair as possible and essentially balanced among the households in terms of how many people they have to work. Of course there are many inequalities that still exist in the division of labor. Chapter five argues that even though the people of Tadrar are far removed from the cities it doesn't mean they don't feel the influence from the outside world. This chapter discusses how the people of Tadrar are connected to the state and how the state affects their lives. It also discusses how the government is taking more interest in the mountain villages. This chapter also discusses how the increased involvement of the state is helping to fuel the development of the village. Chapter six discusses the globalization of Tadrar and how it is affecting the people of the village. It discusses how more and more people are having to leave the village to go work in the cities for wage labor in order to support their families. The chapter discusses how this move of people is affecting the major social unit of the

village, the household. It also discusses the different reasons villagers end up working in the city. The concluding chapter pulls together all the previous chapters. This chapter also has a deeper discussion of the different inequalities that exist within the village. The chapter argues that globalization is essentially a transformation of inequalities. It discusses how the globalization might be affecting different people of the village in different ways and how it is good and bad in different ways.

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