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Rough Hands: Family Conceptions of Rural Morocco's Agricultural Labor, a Case Study

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SIT Study Abroad

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Rough Hands:

Family Conceptions of Rural Morocco's Agricultural Labor, a Case Study



Leah Kahler

Independent Study Project

06 December 2014

SIT Morocco: Migration and Transnational Identities

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Abstract

Conceptions of success for people in any capitalist context are tangled with social hierarchies of work. The rural women of Morocco have been specifically singled out as the objects discourses about their domestic and agricultural work, agency, gender identity and role, and their use of private and public space ownership. This project will examine the justifications, conceptions, and satisfaction with rural-agricultural work in a small-scale family farm in Morocco's Al Hoceima province. Using the case study approach, I will live with a family in Sidi Bouafif and work alongside the family for an eight-day fieldwork period. Through participant observation and informal interviews, this project will analyze men's, women's, and children's conceptions of working the land. I will ultimately situate the family members' narratives within the nexus of discourses surrounding women's work in rural-agricultural regions of Morocco. I conclude that the affinity for Europe and the United States and the work the countries represent affects the intimate domain of the family. This gravity toward Europe is reinforced at all generational levels and creates a situation in which the labor required on a small-scale farm is simultaneously stigmatized and contextualized within family honor and respect.

Research Questions: How do women and children who live in small rural-agricultural areas contextualize and justify their daily labor? Are they also subject to the recent trends of stigmatization of manual labor?

Key words: Migration, environmental Anthropology, biographical narrative, Feminist anthropology/ Women's studies, rural Anthropology, transnationalism, success

Introduction

For the 45% of Moroccans who live in rural regions, agricultural production defines economic and social spheres. In 2012, the World Bank estimated that 15% of the country's Gross Domestic Product comes from agriculture, and 33% of the Moroccan labor force participates in some sort of agricultural work.¹ In terms of sheer surface area, 48% of the Al Hoceima's land is worked for agricultural gain, and most of these farms are small-scale family operations.² For the region of the Rif in northern Morocco in particular, small-scale farms are essential to its people's livelihoods and culture.

The role of planting, growing, selling, and reselling these products reaches well beyond the fiscal livelihoods of agricultural families. Since the introduction of development projects aimed towards the agricultural sector in the 1980s and the "Plan Vert," Morocco's farming technology has evolved, land distribution and ownership policies have changed, and modernization has transformed the small farm and its farmer families. In other words, agriculture "... connaît une dynamique accélérée de développement et de modernisation à partir des années 80, encouragée par des politiques agricoles ambitieuses," [has known a dynamic acceleration of development and of modernization starting in the 1980s, encouraged by ambitious agricultural politics].³ This transformation has repercussions for social and gender relations. For the small

¹ Lisa Bossenbroek, *Gendered Impacts of Land Privatization*: (2014).

² "Agriculture," *Centre Régional d'Investissement*, 04 December, <http://www.alhoceimainvest.ma/index.php/en/agriculture>

³ Lisa Bossenbroek, Mostafa Errahj, and Najoua Elalime "Les nouvelles modalités du travail agricole dans le Sais au Maroc. L'émergence des inégalités identitaires entre l'ouvrier et l'ouvrière?" *Farzyat* (07 February 2014), Accessed 04 December 2014, <http://farzyat.cjb.ma/les-nouvelles-modalites-du-travail-agricole-dans-le-sais-au-maroc-lemergence-des-inegalites-identitaires-entre-louvrier-et-louvriere>.

farms in rural and peri-urban Morocco, social structure is dictated by the physical labor of agricultural and the rural homestead.

The increasing presence of modernization renders the Qur'anic standard for good living increasingly irrelevant to the practices of agricultural families. The Qur'an cautions its reader to resist coveting the following desirable goods:

Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: Women and sons; Heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (To return to).⁴

In other words, the original success of another was measured by family ("women and sons"), valuable natural resources turned status symbols ("gold and silver"), labor and human mobility ("horses"), and "cattle and well-tilled land" (animal husbandry and skill in working the land).

The early rural Moroccan farmers had solidified statuses as living a right, honorable, and full lives, but their integration into the international market economies created a situation in which the physically-demanding manual labor of the rural farmer was socially stigmatized. Performing international migration and securing an urban office job are now positioned at opposite ends of the labor hierarchy.

The stigmatization of agricultural labor is well-documented as one of the factors and effects of circulatory migration between Europe and Morocco, but very little has been written on this change's effect on women and children's conceptions of an honorable life. As with any capitalist context, especially one with a recent colonialist history such as Morocco's, individual's conceptions of success are often articulated through descriptions of the ideal job. For women of rural Morocco in particular, their labor (domestic and agricultural) has often served as the subject

⁴ "Land and Women," *Search the Quran*, 04 December 2014, <http://search-the-quran.com/search/land%20and%20women>

of academic writing. Research is conducted around their use of private and public spaces, recognizing their labor as being economically important, questions of agency and empowerment, and their intricacies within the code of honor. There is little current research however, on how the women and their families situate themselves within this nexus of discourses and how they reflexively view their labor's social import.

My project will interrogate the way in which the prevailing discourses surrounding the labor of women of farmer families resonate with my informants. I will put these discourses about women's work in conversation with the new conceptions of success for men in rural areas of Morocco in attempts to create a more holistic image of the aspirations of members of Moroccan families who are currently engaged in non-waged rural farming. Through participant observation and informal interviews, often while the informant and I were working on the farm, I gathered data on the women and children's thoughts on what they constantly referred to as their "travail." In my informal exit-interviews, I asked questions about what each member of the family imagined as having a successful life.

Before conducting fieldwork, I hypothesized that the high social prestige that used to be associated with farm work might be transferred to the women who carry out a larger division of agricultural labor today. My observations and interview data do not support this hypothesis. There was very little affinity for the agricultural work itself, and the children expressed wishes to have a "bonne vie" unlike the one led by their parents. I conclude that the affinity for Europe and the United States affects whole families rather than young men only. Europe's gravity is reinforced by members of all generations and creates a situation in which women's labor required on a small-scale farm is simultaneously stigmatized and justified within the family honor and respect.

Review of Literature

I intend to use this literature review to map out the discourses that surround women's agricultural labor in rural areas of Morocco. There are four general camps for academic approaches; the first works to establish the labor of women as important and economically integral in a way that is reminiscent of American second wave feminist discourses. The second ties the daily activities and mobility of women to discussions of public and private space in Muslim countries. The third manifests as a set of discourses about the debatable "agency" or "empowerment" of women who work the land on which they live. The final discourse attempts to situate the rural Moroccan woman within the Islamic code of honor despite her less-than-feminine manual labor and mobility.

Women as Laborers

Unfortunately, due to patriarchal underpinnings of the Moroccan labor hierarchy and the academic systems that study it, women's labor in the agricultural setting is often unrecognized or considered not as economically important as that of men. Social scientists have responded to and written about the daily tasks of women on Moroccan farms. The authors, often women themselves, argue for their validity as agents of the economic activity on which the country depends. The women who actually carry out this work have also identified disregard of their work as being problematic. Alison Baker's 1998 book, "Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women" explains this experience in her fieldwork. She writes, "Every woman I interviewed took pains to point out the contributions Moroccan women have made throughout history, especially the economic contributions. Moroccan women have always worked. Not only

have they always worked, but they work very hard.”⁵ Here, Baker uses a grandiose summary of many women’s conceptions of their labor to trace “The Roots of Moroccan feminism.”

Beyond recognizing that women in rural parts of Moroccan do work, this discourse also establishes women’s agricultural labor as physically difficult. Alison Baker describes women’s labor in the fields as work as “onerous”⁶ and creates an image of women’s work that is endless and layered. Baker’s language thus echoes Moroccan anthropologist Fatima Hajjarabi’s documenting “the *enormous time* and *backbreaking* labor involved in fetching firewood for cooking in the north of Morocco, a task that is performed *entirely* by women”⁷ Not only do women work in the fields or garden, but many women also maintain a respectable household. Hajjarabi and Baker actively respond to the prevailing thought that women of rural Morocco do not work hard, are lazy, or unproductive with thorough descriptions of the labor and its requisite skill they observe during their fieldwork.

This authors of this discourse willfully privilege discussions of the female over discussion of the male. That is to say, they write with the variety of feminism that values women’s voices and work over that of men. Rather than approaching discussion of women’s work by addressing how the gender spectrum functions on the rural Moroccan farm, the authors write solely of the female under the assumption that the male is already well-documented. Farida Azhar-Hewit lists the arenas of work for women in the Hushe Valley in Northern Pakistan. She writes,

1. Women *produce* for subsistence. This is the essential work which forms the main traditional economy.
2. While maintaining the traditional way of living, women *enable* their men to live and work outside the village for prolonged periods of time.
3. Women

⁵ Alison Baker, *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women* (New York: State University of New York, 1998), 16.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. Emphasis added.

replace men in tasks traditionally performed by men, thereby increasing their own workload”⁸ (Azhar-Hewitt 1999: 142)

and sarcastically asks of men “Are they also like yaks, useful only for procreation?”⁹ Vanessa Maher opens a chapter with the goal to “discuss men’s and women’s work, pointing out that women’s work is very labour intensive,”¹⁰ implying that men’s might not also be labor intensive or that women’s labor is inherently more worthy of attention. She sites women’s work in the realms of child-care, fetching water, washing and reparation of clothing, food preparation, making other family members comfortable, often to the “self-effacement”¹¹ of the woman herself, and socially-appropriate animal husbandry. Maher prides herself on her “especial pains to document these chapters on women with extensive case-studies” because “the empirical details of women’s activities and attitudes... have no often been accessible to the anthropologist.”¹² In this way, Maher is driven by the same impetuses as Baker and Hjarabi in writing about women’s work, despite her decidedly earlier year of publication. That she published her book in the 1970s particularly positions her to use a pre-meditated and bold approach to writing about rural women’s work. She recognizes that women’s labor is often overlooked and attempts to fill this hole in literature. This discourse is intentionally one-sided in order to achieve validation for the women laborers.

⁸ Farida Azhar-Hewitt, “Women of the High Pastures and the Global Economy: Reflections on the Impacts of Modernization in the Hushe Valley of the Karakorum, Northern Pakistan,” *Mountain Research and Development* Vol. 19, No. 2 (May, 1999): 142, accessed 11 November, 2014.

⁹ Ibid., 147

¹⁰ Vanessa Maher, *Women and Property in Morocco* (London: Cambridge University, 1974), 104.

¹¹ Ibid., 110

¹² Ibid., 104

Baker, Hijjarabi, and Maher all address “la question du rôle que joue la femme dans la société” [the question of the role played by the woman in society].¹³ Working against “l’idéologie patriarcale proclamant la fragilité ‘naturelle’ de la femme...” [the patriarchal ideology which proclaims the ‘natural’ fragility of the woman].¹⁴ This affirmative discourse about the labor of women in Morocco argues that women’s contribution to local, national, and international markets, makes them respectable agents who are also worthy of rights and esteem by men workers. Baker asserts that Moroccan women viewing their labor as historically significant renders them respectable agents, worthy of rights and social prestige. This body of work is generally older than the others and offers little more than validation. These writers hope to show their audiences that women in fact do work, with great skill and effort, and that being a woman on a farm in Morocco is significant and not to be disregarded.

Rural Women’s Use of Public and Private Spheres

Women of rural Morocco are said to use public and private spaces in a way that diverges from the “conventional” or “urban” because their labor roles required different standards for mobility. Vanessa Maher’s 1974 “Women and Property in Morocco” draws a hard and fast line between public and private spaces for women. Traditionally within the urban context,

According to this division of labor, the resulting organization of society is one in which children, old men, and young and old women inhabit one world, the ‘private/domestic’ sphere, in a sense hidden as the household economy, while young men, increasingly, move between this world and/or live in another—the ‘public/development’ sphere.”¹⁵

¹³ R. Borrqia, M. Charrad, and N. Gallagher, introduction to *Femmes Culture et Societe au Maghreb* (Casablanca: Afrique-Orient, 2000), 9.

¹⁴ Mokhtar El Harras, *Feminite et Masculinité dans la Société Rurale Marocaine: Le Cas d’Anjra*, ed. R. Borrqia, M. Charrad, and N. Gallagher (Casablanca: Afrique-Orient, 2000), 43.

¹⁵ Azhar-Hewitt, *Women of the High Pastures* 143.

Similarly and without the necessary qualification, Maher asserts “Men are responsible for all activities of the public sphere...”¹⁶ and Bourquia argues “... l’espace domestique dans le milieu rural réalise une sorte de continuité avec l’espace extérieur” [Domestic space in the rural sphere occurs as a sort of continuity with exterior space.]¹⁷ It is common for anthropologists to discuss social segregation in a two-sphere paradigm, and this fathers the discourse that surrounds rural women’s mobility within and without their homes.

In Vanessa Maher’s section on activities performed outside of the house walls on the agricultural property, she explains that women’s divergent use of public space functions as a symbol of low class status. She writes, “the bulk of fieldwork is usually said to fall on the shoulders of men. However, in the rural fieldwork is not necessary component of the role-set of house head, but it is of that of a field-owner’s wife, unless her husband is rich enough to seclude her, and employ laborers to do her work.”¹⁸ Maher here also references the driving conception behind the first discourse, that men alone benefit from agricultural work’s social prestige, while in reality, the woman is most often its agent if her husband is not wealthy enough to pay someone else to labor for her.

To argue that rural women are allowed to occupy a broader area than that of urban women, Maher employs a dichotomy between what she deems “secluded” and “non-secluded” women.¹⁹ Together, these two markers for women’s mobility imply that women in the countryside have more freedom to come and go as they wish, whereas the urban woman is confined to the walls of her house. The life of an urban woman is “entirely domestic, and so

¹⁶ Maher, *Women and Property*, 111.

¹⁷ Rahma Bourqui, *Habitat, Femmes, et Honneur: Le cas de quelques quartiers populaires d’Oujda*, ed. R. Borquia, M. Charrad, and N. Gallagher (Casablanca: Afrique-Orient, 2000), 21.

¹⁸ Maher, *Women and Property* 113.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

lacking in variety that I have known young strangers without children and strictly secluded to suffer severe nervous breakdowns after their marriage.”²⁰ She describes the task of fetching wood for fire as “large burdens”²¹ but ultimately strikes a tone that erroneously conflates rural women’s higher degree of physical mobility with power that reaches into other areas of their lives and urban women’s immobility with universal disempowerment.

Mokhtar El Harras puts a more refined argument on rural women’s use of public and private spaces. She argues that women who venture into places in which masculinity is privileged do so as an extension of their honorable domestic work. They carry with them a shell of permissible domesticity so as to avoid harassment or accusations of dishonor. For example, the task of fetching water is often delegated to women, and the woman is required leave the plot of land owned by her husband or father (private sphere). In this case, El Harras calls the divergence “... d’espaces de travail où l’activité féminine constitue, dans une large mesure, une extension du travail domestique de la femme, avec cependant comme aspect particulier, le fait qu’elle ait lieu dans un cadre de sociabilité qui diffère de l’isolement relative au travail effectuée à la maison” [... work spaces where feminine activity constitutes, to a large degree, an extension of women’s domestic work, however as with particular aspects, the work she performs in the sociable sphere that is different in relative isolation than work that is performed at the house.]²² El Harras’ discussion refines Maher’s harsh dichotomy between women’s houses and what lies beyond them in public.

Rahma Bourqia focuses particularly on the house’s construction of social space for women. She calls it “le produit d’un acte de delimitation marquent une discontinuité dans une

²⁰ Ibid., 117.

²¹ Ibid., 115.

²² El Harras, *Feminite et Masculinité*, 42.

environnement spatial étendu. La nature de cette delimitation, ainsi que la forme architecturale qu'elle puisse prendre, sont determines par plusieurs facteurs [the product of a delimiting act that marks a discontinuity in an expanded spatial environment. The nature of this delimitation, thus the architectural form that it can take, is determined by several favors].”²³ Her emphasis on the house’s layout allows room for illumination of how “sa [la maison] traduisent les valeurs d’une aire culturelle” [it [the house] translates the values of a cultural air].²⁴ She uses the door as a symbolic “frontier séparant le familial du non-familial” [border which separates the familial from the non-familial].²⁵ Unlike Maher’s secluded and non-secluded which brings with a hefty dose of value-judgment, Bourqia’s approach to the discourse uses the terms of family unit. In the “familial,” the woman is arguably the dominant social presence, but outside of it, or outside of the door, she deviates from her delegated realm.

Agency and Empowerment

Authors who address rural women’s agricultural labor often carry with them an activist bent and attempt to link their work with perceived levels of agency or empowerment for their research subjects. This discourse can be problematic and illogically deterministic because it narrowly defines agency and empowerment and assumes that empowerment would look similar for all rural women. Unfortunately, authors rarely address hegemonic factors other than monetary empowerment and emphasize the traditional capitalist definition of empowerment, status as the head of household.

²³ Bourqia, *Habitat, Femmes et Honneur*, 16.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 19.

For some authors, “capital materiel et capital pouvoir se trouvent liés”[Material capital and capital power find themselves linked].²⁶ Azhar- Hewitt’s paper argues her female research subjects are disempowered because their men control the household economics and use the household budget for materials that might not reflect the best wishes of the whole household. She criticizes men for spending “mostly... for luxury articles which do not ‘filter down’ to women and children because of the ‘traditional’ roles and appearances that men have insisted on maintaining.”²⁷ This discourse has become increasingly more popular with development practices. I interviewed Said Azarkan, former employee of Movimiento por la Paz, a Spanish co-development organization, about the role of women in rural areas of Morocco. He claimed that women in urban spaces have access to more money and economic independence, which makes them more powerful and autonomous.²⁸ In other words, traditional patriarchy is perpetuated when women do not have agency or power to decide where money reaped from their labor is spent. In this vision of empowerment for rural women, women would control how household income is spent because their labor is equally, if not more, economically important than men’s.

Other authors argue that rural women embody Fatima Mernissi’s “invisible feminism.”²⁹ Alison Baker suggests that “we focus our attention on these women’s spaces, we find examples of women’s autonomous expression, a sort of underground ‘invisible feminism.’ The absence of men in a certain physical workspace gives rural women autonomy. This assertion of “underground” feminism fails to acknowledge that patriarchy and the hegemony of men’s decision-making power is ubiquitous, regardless of whether or not men are physically present. It exemplifies what Lila Abu-Lughod calls the romance of resistance. Rather than using studies of

²⁶ Ibid., 24.

²⁷ Azhar-Hewitt, *Women of the High Pastures*, 147.

²⁸ Said Azarkan, interview with author, 13 November 2014.

²⁹ Baker, *Voices of Resistance*, 16.

resistance (in this case to patriarchal standards of behavior in the Moroccan agricultural setting), she suggests “that resistance should be used as a diagnostic of power.”³⁰ Applied to this situation, empowerment of sex-segregated spaces indicates the patriarchal context and women who express their wish to be economically independent illuminate the implications of men’s power over the coin purse. That authors even argue that women who perform agricultural tasks are more empowered because of their requisite mobility romanticizes the empowerment they may or may not perceive when occupying non-domestic spaces.

I favor Cleaver’s definition of agency as “capability or power to be the originator of acts, agents can challenge power relations and existing behavior norms.”³¹ It is the most useful in doing fieldwork like mine because it is not specific to particular cultural context. To define agency in terms of an individual’s perception of their power to change is broader than the terms of economic independence and avoids claims of empowerment where there might not be.

Goodness and Honor

Most recently, social scientists have turned towards discussing the set of informal social rules and standards that govern all Moroccan women’s lives to varying extents. This code of honor “involves modesty and chastity, which is achieved by the segregation and seclusion of women”³² and is said to operate differently in rural landscapes than urban ones. El Harras asserts that it was traditionally more socially acceptable for women to perform agricultural labor because their dignity and honor is more easily safe-guarded in the context of the family land and homestead farm. Rather than going out to search for work that would potentially place the woman in

³⁰ Lila Abu-Lughod, “The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women,” *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (1990): 41.

³¹ Lisa Bossenbroek and Margreet Zwarteveen, “Irrigation Management in the Pamirs in Tajikistan: A Man’s Domain?,” *Mountain Research and Development*, (2014) 267.

³² Azhar-Hewitt, *Women of the High Pastures*, 149.

situations where she must contact men other than her family members in the public sphere, agricultural work keeps the woman closer to the house and husband's watching eye. Of the woman who leaves behind agricultural work in search of a job in the city, El Harras writes, "La 'complémentarité' des travaux agricoles entre sexes ayant disparu, la femme n'a alors parallèlement à son travail domestique, que très peu d'autres alternatives lui permettant de soutenir la valeur de sa contribution à la survie domestique" [The 'complementarity' between sexes of agricultural work having disappeared, the woman now has no parallel to her domestic work and very little other alternatives permit her to support the value of her contribution to domestic survival.]³³ Spatially, the urban working woman threatens her dignity more so than the agricultural woman.

In light of the new direction that men's code of honor has taken, the code of honor is dependent on social space and mobility. Azhar-Hewitt argues that the code of honor affects women but is enforced by men and is actually an extension of gender and class privilege. If poorer women cannot afford to be kept in seclusion because of demands for labor, their manifestations of honorable or good living are arguably more lenient. Hein de Haas explains that for men, "in most of rural Morocco, migration has contributed to the creation of a new social stratification... with international migration households forming a new kind of 'migration elite.'"³⁴ To be considered an honorable man, then, means the absolute opposite for what it means to be considered the honorable woman; deviance from the code of honor is tied to gendered dictations for either a mobile or stationary lifestyle.

³³ El Harras, *Feminite et Masculinité*, 52.

³⁴ Hein de Haas, "The Impact of International Migration on Social and Economic Development in Moroccan Sending Regions: a review of empirical literature," *International Migration Institute* (2007): 27.

Methods and Methodology

Participant observation comprised the bulk of my research methods. Getting to know the daily rhythms of life on a rural farm was essential to understanding how the Khalid family thought about each task, and by working alongside the family, I believe they felt more comfortable with the researcher-researched dynamic. Before arriving at the family's home, I knew that I must establish rapport by neither trying to pretend that I was not a white, female American student, nor by adopting a rigid attitude towards the way Moroccans live. Joseph Hermanowicz's article on the best approaches to interviewing argues "You don't really know people until you've sleep with them... The point is that we must bed our subjects more often—that we should more forward, direct, candid, and adventurous in ways that show the flesh of the people behind all of the garments they wear in everyday social life" (Hermanowicz 2002: 479-480). Metaphorically (and literally) sleeping with my informants was crucial because I wanted to conduct interviews that were meaningful, genuine, and true. I shied away from the traditional interview format, and I got the most generative ethnographic data from chatting while we worked.

Similar to my other experiences living with Moroccan host families, I was immediately welcomed into the family and also treated as a guest. Ilham and I are essentially the same age, and her language capabilities best matched mine. It was most natural for her and I to spend most of our time together if I was to act as a natural working member of the household. I communicated with the other members of the household in French, Fusha, or English, and if we were struggling to understand each other, either Ilham or the Fusha-English dictionary came to our rescue. To the ability, I participated in the agricultural and domestic tasks of the household alongside her and the other women. I harvested chard, prepared bunches for the souq, washed

dishes, did the family's laundry, moved dirt from the hole, and tidied up around the house, all while chatting about their lives.

Not surprisingly though, I could not carry out many of the higher skilled tasks, but whoever I was working with would still explain to me what they were doing and sometimes what it meant to them. For example, when Saaliha went to make hoobz in the outdoor oven, she insisted that I take pictures and pay close attention to her preparing the fire (Figure 9). My status as a non-familial guest became especially obvious around mealtimes. We ate communally, and the women would push food into my zone from their own and insisted that I eat more than was enough. This is almost pervasive in my experiences in Morocco, and I do not believe its significance would transfer over into my data collection. It is merely an indication of the way in which the Khalid's wanted to make me feel welcome in their home. Because the family fed me, housed me, and served as my informants for eight days, I gave my full stipend of 200 MAD per day to them. When I tried to give the stipend to Wahid on the third day, he refused. My advisor spoke with him and told me that Wahid wanted the money to go to his wife for her use and the kids. I was so happy to hear of Wahid's approach to this uncomfortable question of money and handed the money directly to Saaliha on the last day of fieldwork.

I would take fieldnotes either once or twice a day, and the family members were full aware of my status as a student-researcher. My advisor Hakim and I explained that I am writing this ISP and that my subject is their family's work. He also translated line-by-line my informed consent forms for which all seven members of the family were present. In this paper, I have used pseudonyms for all named informants and as requested by Saaliha and Wahid, blurred the faces of women in photographs to protect anonymity. I wrote fieldnotes in communal spaces in the house, either squatting in the kitchen (Figure 11) or on the dinner table in the salon. The family's

relationship to my writing surprised me with its charm. The family equated my schoolwork with their work in the house and on the farm, and when they would see my writing would encourage me “Write well, Leah!” and towards the end of the week, they would ask if I had written anything today. If we had had an especially meaningful conversation, they would ask me to write it down. They asked me not to include images of the women’s faces. The Khalid family was generally very receptive to my research and fieldnote process.

I admittedly bring to this project an approach that is informed by my specific Anthropological training. “... Toute recherche sur les femmes toute en se localisant dans le champ de savoir, se positionne aussi par rapport aux strategies de ce savoir” [... all research on women locates itself in the field of knowing, positions itself also in strategies of knowing] (Bourquia 2000: 27) and my strategy of knowing is one that attempted to observe the actions of my informants, iterate what I had seen to them, and ask them to respond my observations. The limited time of the research period, my own linguistic barriers and racial and class positions have led me to resist the endeavor to create a comprehensive or even definitive image of what it means to be a family in rural-agricultural Morocco today. Rather, I have tried to embrace the subjectivity of social science and let my time with the informants speak for itself within its proper academic context.

I also come to this research with my own personal positionality. I was raised by a group of women for whom agriculture and horticultural had significant power in identity formation, and I feel most at home in the rural setting. I am interested in further pursuit of Anthropology of agriculture and perhaps a future career on a farm. From the social science perspective, the objects of literature are disproportionally male (Bourquia, Charrad, Gallagher 2000: 184). But specific to the Moroccan context, there lacks a large body of literature about Moroccan women

by Moroccan women. While I cannot change my own positionality as a white, Western female researcher, I can however contribute a project that neither exoticizes, nor comfortably compartmentalizes “the” rural family in Morocco, without questioning if it even exists as a single entity at all. I acknowledge that my presence changes the data I intended to collect.

Case Study and Analysis

On Monday November 17th, I arrived at my case study family's house in Sidi Bouafif (Figure 5), accompanied by my advisor Hakim and another SIT student. I would stay for a total of eight days and had intended to pick up as many skills on the farm as possible in order to get to know better the relationship of the family's women to the land that they worked and the work itself. I couldn't agree more with Hakim's comment that I had fallen upon a good week because the two children who were enrolled in primary school had mid-term vacation and the week off from school. The youngest daughter, Houria, was in a informal day-care and would refuse to go to school all but two days I was there because she wanted to see me. The children's vacation from school allowed me to observe the family working together with no members missing and allowed me more time with them than would otherwise be possible. This Monday was not the first time I had been to the family's home. My advisor, Hakim, and I had visited the family the previous week so that I could introduce myself and verify logistics of the trip. During this visit, I was careful to establish that I wanted to work alongside the family and was not to be waited on, as some family's interpretations of "Moroccan hospitality" might dictate.

Daily Activities and Division of Labor

The Khalid household is comprised of seven members; Saaliha, the mother is 36 years old, her husband Wahid 45. Their oldest daughter, Ilham³⁵ is 19 is not fully enrolled in school, although she intends to retake the baccalaureate exam at the end of this year. Her younger sister, (17) is in the same education situation and lived with her grandmother (Figure 6) for the past two months in another village. The eldest son, Hamid, is enrolled in school and very much a sixteen

³⁵ Because of her language capabilities in English and French, Ilham was my main informant for the fieldwork experiences. She and I are also relatively the same age, so I chose to follow her duties in attempts to be like a member of the family. Many of the quotes from other members of the family were supplemented with Ilham's language capabilities.

year old. He spends most of his time with little brother, Yusef who is nine and also enrolled in the douar³⁶'s school. Wahid admittedly spoils his youngest daughter, Houria who is five years old. The family's 2000 square meter farm (Figure 14) has two growing seasons; in the summer, they harvest figs, tomatoes, potatoes, pomegranates, olives, and milk. In the winter, white chard, radishes, milk, and spinach are the main products. Wahid works with an intermediary, and his products appear in three separate daily souqs per week.

All members of the family pride themselves on their status as a family-run farm. One afternoon, we were all standing in and around the soon-to-be depository for irrigation water (Figures 1 and 2), and on her own accord, Saaliha started to dig it and shovel the dirt out of the hole. Having tried this myself, I knew how difficult this task was. My fieldnotes read "Saaliha worked in it [the depository] today and they were both so proud of her working. He [Wahid] said, pointing to her when I used to have other work, 'c'est elle qui travaille comme ça pour préparer la maison.' [It's her who worked like that to prepare the house] He had a huge grin on his face, and she smiled and kept digging." I asked if other families worked together as they did, and Ilham responded with a wagging finger, "No, no, no, no."

The family's division of labor is simple and unspoken. One afternoon Ilham explained to me while we were harvesting food for the cows (Figures 7 and 13) that she was excited for her sister to come back from a two-month stay at her grandmother's house, in part, because Khadija would do the work "de la terre" [in the fields] while Ilham did the work "de la maison" [housework] or vice versa. Because Khadija and Ilham are relatively the same age and both girls, and neither of them are enrolled in school, they are delegated the same array of tasks. I would see that daily activities were often shared, but each member of the family had a part of

³⁶ I use douar throughout this paper to describe a group of houses in a rural area, similar to a village.

the work that each member of the family knew to be theirs. During the same conversation in the field, Ilham would explain this to me by gesturing to each child's partition in the air and saying their names.

Stereotypically, the two boys spent much of their time playing with friends their age if they were not digging the irrigation depository. They would leave during the middle of the day, play soccer, ride their bike, or just roam around the douar (Figure 10). More nights than not, they would go to Boquedon, their village's main street, and play at the video arcade or surf the internet with money from their personal pockets. While at the house, Hamid could often be found digging the hole, (Figure 1). It seemed that Yusef's major family duty was to go to the store for necessities. At least three times, he came home with plastic bags full of flour, materials for dishes, or whatever Saaliha had asked him to buy for the house that day. Yusef seemed to like his job and the independence it carried with it, as one day, Saaliha and Ilham thought that I needed something from the corner store, and Yusef came running into the kitchen to insist that it would not be a problem for him to go fetch it for me.

Wahid, as head of household, exhibited an awareness of the common conception that Moroccan men were often absent from the homestead. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes captures the way in which the Khalid family does business.

Hamid, Saaliha sitting around Wahid as he counts the monetary totals for the week on a piece of Khadija's school paper. Tomorrow he will get the lump sum for how much he earned for the week. Friday starts the week off. After he finishes counting, he calls Moustafa, his intermediary. He says to me 'I'm going to the café now,' with 20 dirham in hand. And I'll visit with my friends. They aren't the kind of people who don't work. They are people like Hakim [Messaoudi]. They are good. I'll stay there one hour, maybe 1.5 hours, not more. I'm not like the people who smoke hash, and never come home.'

Wahid, unprompted, responds to and acknowledges his divergence from traditional delineation between public and private space for men. More than many Moroccan men I have observed, Wahid was present in the home's salon and would often play with his children. I am also

particularly partial to the presence of Ilham and Saaliha while Wahid totals the returns for their labor that week. The three of them make up the bulk force of the labor of the family, as the rest of the children are enrolled in school or absent at the beginning of my fieldwork period (Khadija).

When I first asked Saaliha about her work on the farm, she responded with pointing to herself and Wahid to emphasize that they work together for its success. Over the course of the week, I would see Wahid irrigate the fields, negotiate with the intermediary, prepare the bunches of chard for market, dig the irrigation depository, fix the cow's chains, get up in the middle of the night when it had started to rain and cover the hay bales, and check on the status of his crops. Saaliha, his wife, would wake almost three hours earlier than he would, at 6am, to fetch water, water and feed the cows, milk the cows, harvest chard (Figures 15 and 16), prepare the bunches of chard for market, prepare meals, make hoobz [bread], dig the irrigation depository, do laundry, and muck out the cow's stalls. There was much camaraderie between the couple and joy in feeling that they shared responsibility for the crops. Ilham, as the oldest of their children, regardless of gender assumed many of the responsibilities of her parents. She, watered and fed the cows, did most of the family's dishes, cleaned and tidied the house, washed clothes, harvested chard and radishes, bathed the rest of the younger children on douche day, and was the only one who harvested feed for the cows.

All of the working female family members expressed a preference for housework over working the land or labor that is strictly agricultural. Ilham's excitement about her sister's return also touches on the importance of the division between labor performed inside the house and labor outside of it. During the winter growing season, the family harvests for one week: Friday to Friday, and then allows the chard and radishes to grow for a week. Ilham told me excitedly of

this one week on, one week off system on Thursday. She explained that her work would only be that in the house, doing dishes (Figure 12), laundry, cleaning the house to a higher degree than she is able to during harvest weeks.

The female preference for housework also manifested in the way the women criticized their bodies. Their definitions of beauty were ones that inversely related to work on the land. For example, as Ilham, Saaliha, and I went out to the fields one to harvest chard, they asked me if I wanted to cover my head with a hat or a scarf³⁷. Ilham explained that she doesn't like to work uncovered in the sun because it makes her feel faint from sun exposure, and she doesn't like to be dark-skinned. Whenever Ilham would work outside in the fields, she would wear plastic gloves in order to prevent her hands from being worn like her mother's. Labor inside the house might wear their hands slightly, but work that requires direct contact with the sun and soil is not desirable because it conflicts with their standards of beauty.

As seen as in my literature review, discourses about division of labor and discourses about the use public and private space by rural women are often linked. The Khalid's division of labor was a very conscious one, and it was linked to gender and age. But I would not call the women's entry into public space divergent or indicative of disempowerment as many discourses would. The women demonstrated their awareness of the layers of space for women in Morocco with three garment changes. When working outside in the fields, Saaliha, Ilham, and Khadija would wear long, loose cotton dress with long sleeves and cover their heads. Once inside their house doing domestic work, they would change their clothes to pajama-like pants and shirts that were freer of dirt than the outside garments. On the occasions in which we went to the village, a

³⁷ The women of the family covered their heads whenever they left the walls of their house, but within it, they were generally uncovered. Whenever we would go out in public together, they never asked me to covered for purposes of modesty. For these reasons, I conclude this instance of covering myself for working in the field was purely utilitarian.

commercial space, Ilham wore jeans, a shirt which covered her hips, and covered her head. Her mother also covered her head, wore eyeliner, and a long dress with long sleeves. So rather than the traditional bifurcated system of public and private, the Khalid family operates within the paradigm of private, semi-private, and public. For them, the first two spheres are tied to labor, and the third is defined by its absence thereof.

Reflections on Working the Land

The Khalid family members' conception of their status as an agricultural family is contradictory and bifurcated³⁸. Unsurprisingly, the ways in which they iterated their conceptions of their labor on the farm did not neatly fall within any of the four discourses I discuss in my review of literature. It was immediately apparent that the family conceives of the women and children's tasks as work, and that their own code of honor is important to uphold when carrying out these tasks according to gendered demarcations. When I would ask about their work, they either responded with intense pride for how hard they worked as a family unit or comments that indicated that they were unhappy with their status and wished for more metropolitan jobs. Overall, the Khalids, regardless of gender or age, respond with displeasure when I asked about the manual labor that is required to run their family farm.

Saaliha beautifully articulated this coinciding pride and displeasure surrounding the family's agricultural work. One night after we had all finished our evening meal, she sat back against the wall of the salon and sighed. Without making eye contact with anyone, she started to sing "Le travail, le travail, le travail... le manger le manger le manger... le dormir le dormir, le dormir" [Work, work work, eat, eat, eat, sleep, sleep, sleep]. The whole family laughed with her

³⁸ The family knew that I was with them to study the work of women in rural Morocco, so the frequency of data related to this topic is particularly skewed by my presence. My research might also have prompted them to think about their work more consciously than before.

and started to sing along in their own ways. Ilham joked that they could all write a song together in the style of European disco, and I chimed in that they could sell it and make enough money and never have to work again. Her song was not unhappy, but it emphasized her life's repetitive nature. Saaliha acknowledges that she works an incredible number of hours each day and still allows herself to laugh about it.

The same night, while Saaliha, Ilham, and I were in the kitchen preparing dinner, Ilham cut herself slicing tomatoes. She showed me another scar on her hand and explained that she had injured herself working on the land, something to do with the cows. She said with a smile, “Ça c’est la campagne. Ça c’est le travaille de la compagne. Ça c’est la vie de la compagne” [This is the country. This is the work of the country. This is the life of the country]. Many Moroccans do not regard scars well, and Khadija was using hers as a marker of the rural work that she wants to leave someday. (“I’ve seen my mother and father work like this my whole life. It’s good, but I don’t want a life like this.³⁹”)

Saaliha and Ilham repeated reasoned that they preferred the lives of women who live in cities over their own because urban women did not have to work the land. When I went to the Imzouren market with Wahid, Saaliha, and Houria, Saaliha and I had a conversation about what she called the city. In reality, Imzouren is a sort of peri-urban suburb of Al Hoceima but more urban than the Khalid’s home environment. For instance, this conversation with Saaliha happened while Wahid withdrew cash from an ATM. She told me that she likes the city very much. “Pas de travail, manger, dormir, saffit” [No work. Eat, sleep. That’s all.] Saaliha told me, even after I had expressed that I do not like cities because they are noisy, and there are too many people in them. The Khalids, particularly the women, frequently indicated that they do not

consider domestic labor to be work and that they dislike agricultural labor. Unprompted and prompted by my questions, Saaliha, Ilham, Khadija, and Wahid do not view their labor as particularly meaningful beyond a way generate capital and in turn, to feed themselves.

In the same breath though, as claiming that their work is generally “bad,” the women of the Khalid family would justify their work with pride and familial love. Often, one member of family would see another working, turn to me, and say how hard or how well they worked. Saaliha complimented her son by saying that he helped his father with his odd jobs. Together, they sell roasted corn on the beach in the summers. Houria once saw me and the other women in the house chopping radishes, and she ran over to participate and grabbed a radish. She saw her gendered obligation and wanted to be part of the communal work upon which that her family so prides itself. I asked Ilham directly if she likes “le travail,” which had come to stand for agricultural and domestic labor and the lifestyle it created. She responded⁴⁰, “I like helping my mother and father. It makes me happy.” When I once complimented how hard she was working, she refused the compliment, and put her hands on her mother’s shoulders, saying “Je travail mais c’est vraiment maman qui travail. 6:00am”[I work, but it’s really my mother who works. 6:00am] in reference to how much earlier Saaliha rises than the rest of the family. Family members rarely spoke about their own work in prideful ways, and it was always in the context of their family that work was pointed out in a positive light. The women’s discourses about work were explained in relation to the family.

I do not wish to frame the Khalid family’s conflicting conceptions of agricultural labor as worthy of shame or as an impairment. Each person decides if their work is meaningful to them or not. My fieldnotes read, “People are masters of their own lives, if they think this life could be

better, it could be better. People strive for options if this is all that they've ever known or seen, and they have gotten older, watching everyone around them get little pieces of Europe, then of course they would want that." I do not wish to pass judgment on how my research subjects choose to justify their labor, but it is undisputable that Western influence via international migrants and remittances⁴¹ have informed the privileging of "stylo"[pen] work over "travail sûr la terre" [work on the land]. The Khalids' conceptions of what manual labor means to them is filtered through their family members' and friends' migration and the social status they bring home.

The Question of Success

I heard again and again how each family member thought about the work that their home and farm required, but I wondered about how they individually defined its diametric opposite: success. Their responses would depend on their aspirations and sense of gendered selves, which in turn are colored both by prior cultural experiences and by imaginings of possible futures (Bossenbroek 2014: 274). Social stigma is at odds with an individual's images of success or high social status. I asked each member of the family to imagine success or "نجاح." This was the closest my fieldwork came to interviews because I asked the same question through Ilham's translation to each member of the family. Wahid gave his response without the presence of others, but I asked the rest of the family while we all sat around the table in the salon. Their answers were informed by each other's so I have decided to transcribe them in the order conducted.

Wahid, age 45

⁴¹ In 2004, Morocco was the largest remittances receiver in per capita terms (de Haas, *Impact of International Migration*, 5). 2003 data indicates that 11.3% of the total monetary sum of remittances was put into agricultural sources, either land or equipment (de Haas, *Impact of International Migration*, 14).

Mes garçons et mes filles ils vont gange une travaille avec le stylo. Ils vont avoir les vacances. Et tout ils vont travailler et s'asseoir. Il n'a rien des vacances ici. Moi je travaille tout le temps. [My boys and my girls will find a job with a pen. They will have vacation time. And everyone will work and sit. There is no vacation here. Me I work all the time.]

Yusef, *age 9*

He would want a good job, a doctor or a teacher. And a wife who also had gone to high school. And that she would want to work also. He wants to go to Europe or the US when he's older.

Khadija, *age 17*

Read in school and high school. I will write English. Speak French and English. When I am big, I want a job like a lawyer or Arabic teacher lots of money, God willing, buy a car and a house. Give money to my family who is poor. And the other people who are poor and after, I will marry and have children and my house, that's it. I want to work always so my children can go to school. And I would help my children with their schoolwork. And in the end, I would vacation in all the Moroccan cities or Europe.

Hamid, *age 16*

My, I want to marry with my best friend Khadija. That's it.

Ilham, *age 19*

First, my bac, God willing to make my mother and father happy because my father likes people who do well in school.

Secondly, continue my school to find a good job. I will help my father and mother. I want to get a good job because I want people to say "Ilham, she is a good woman." Because I hate the people who say that the girls of Morocco are nothing. I want a happy future, not a sad one. I want to connect with all the people, Americans, Europeans, Arabs because I like exchange. I want to help my mother and father because they have worked to hard to feed me, worked so hard. In the end, like all the girls, I want to marry a man, and I want a little family. A good family, a happy family. Just two kids so they eat well and can go to school. I want a good life, not like my life now... my life now is good but I want a *good* life.

Earlier in the week, she passed a house (Figure 8) that was built by someone who had migrated to Europe and asked me to take of her in front of it because she said she would want one like it in the future.

*Hamid, age 16, again*⁴²

⁴² At this point, Hamid saw the gravity and thoughtfulness of his older sister's actions and decided he would like to amend his answer.

I want to continue my school (but you hate school) I would work hard to earn money. Dad comes in and says he wants to work with me— Hamid says safit. Wahid chimes in, “He will stay with his mother and his father because I am the leader of this house, and when I die, it will be Hamid.”

Houria, age 5

School, doctor for women, a doctor for babies. (Everyone laughs.) To earn money and buy car and marriage house, I don't want to work with the cows. (Laughs) I don't want to work like my mom. Good marks for school. And after I will buy my mom and dad a huge house. One girl and one boy, a pretty girl. I will help my family. Who doesn't have money and all the people who don't have money.

Saaliha, age 36

C: I would change this work. Me and Wahid. A good house, a good life and good job. I want to be happy for my life. I want to do the pilgrimage with my husband. I want Wahid to have a car because at this time of night I could be going to Hoceima or Imzouren.

L: What do you think of working the land?

C: I don't work because I like it, I do it so I can feed the children. (Then she pointed at her clothes, her face, her dirty big fingernails and hands.)

For the children, these were dreams of the future, but for the adults, conceptions of success took a decidedly less hopeful turn. Every single answer used the concept of an occupation as the cornerstone of success, and each of the jobs mentioned, (gynecologist, lawyer, teacher) comply with Wahid's hope that his children will eventually work with the pen rather than with their hands (intellectual labor rather than manual labor). The children's outright disapproval for the work of their parents is striking also; even Houria at age five, doesn't want to work with the cows and willingly said so in the presence of her mother and father. The Khalid's notions of success overwhelmingly center on jobs and a lifestyle that is less urban.

Saaliha's response is particularly strongly worded against her agricultural work. Arguably, it was her husband's failure to migrate to Europe or find larger sources of capital inside Morocco that placed her in the type of work that she so wants to change. But instead of

framing her wish for what she would consider a better job with complaints or blame, she situates what she wants most in a better life within the context of her marriage and family. She wants her *husband* to own a car so she could increase her mobility outside of the home, and she wants to fulfill the religious pilgrimage *with him*. Her image of success would allow her family to share the benefits of modern material goods and lessen her workload, which she perceives to be too difficult.

Side by side, the father's and daughters' responses richly illustrate the tension between their being drawn to the land and wanting to leave it behind for what it represents socially. Ilham says that her father prefers girls who study hard and succeed in school, and he identifies his own success through the educational success of his children. Staying to work the land and attendance of school are mutually exclusive for the two oldest girls. While discussing the differences between my being an only children and the Khalid's five children, Wahid complained that more children does not necessary translate into more members of the farm's labor force. He went on to call the girls schooling and marriages problematic, which directly contradicts his iterated conception of success. Perhaps there is a difference for Wahid between the logistics of his current life and what he would dream to call success. The latter may have fewer constraints. The three girls' responses, on the other hand, put continuation of school at the forefront and exhibited far less affinity to the land they work now.

Land, Migration, and Family Favoritism

The homogeneity of these notions of success suggests they are informed at least to some degree by family dynamics. I found that not only does the nuclear family contribute to how the women and children family members want their lives to be, but the rest of the family had tremendous impact on the Khalid's self-worth and the stigmatization of their manual labor.

Wahid's land was originally owned by his father. Wahid and his four brothers have contended over the land since their adulthood. In Wahid's late twenties, three of his brothers had already successfully migrated to Belgium or Spain, and Wahid had made five unsuccessful attempts at international migration. He decided he wanted to build a house on his father's property, but own the land rather than informally occupy his father's. His father opposed the idea, and fought with Wahid. Wahid told me that his parents had always favored his other brothers because of their migration. Eventually, he won the land rights from his father and is a proud owner of his property. When I asked if he had had to sell land to liquidate capital, he gratefully responded with "Alhamdulillah, la. Juste 50 square km." That Wahid felt he must buy property off of his father illuminates his parents' favoritism for their sons who have returned from abroad to build huge houses on the property and the high regard Wahid holds for his land and his nuclear family.

Signs of migration's social hegemony are all over Sidi Bouafif. Modern concrete houses are the traditional markers for rural areas with high rates of migration⁴³ and said to be created by a "mentalité de pierre" [stone mentality]. They dominate the douar's landscape (See Figure 3). Ilham would point out each of these houses as we passed them and tell me where each person had made their money. If the house's owner had migrated, she would name the country; if they had stayed in Morocco to make their money, she would state their occupation. Her phrasing indicates that foreign work is important only in its location outside of Morocco, while domestic work requires specificity if it generated significant capital. The most glaring example of such a

⁴³ For a thorough discussion of these houses, their controversy reputation, and social significance, see Hein de Haas' 2007 article, "The impact of international migration on social and economic development in Moroccan sending regions: a review of the empirical literature" starting on page twelve.

house came from Wahid's brother's house a mere 50 meters away from his doorstep. Figure 4⁴⁴ poignantly shows the brother's lavish house in the background of the Khalid's. In 2004, the family's bedroom ceiling collapsed after the deadly earthquake that struck Hoceima and the surrounding region. Although the three of Wahid's brothers were lucratively employed in Europe at the time, money from the government was the single source from which the family was able to only partially rebuild their home. Their old bedroom, shown here in the foreground, remains unroofed. Return migrants and their remittances are an unavoidable presence for the Khalid family, and Wahid in particular is reminded of his gendered failure to migrate just by his physical surroundings.

In accordance with the well-documented modern phenomenon of female migration, Ilham's social group is marked by migration. As a 19-year-old woman, her demographics have not been historically associated with migration, but her peers were divided between either attending university or migrating to Europe. We exchanged pictures of our friends early on during fieldwork, and at least three of the girls she showed me had Facebook profile pictures in Europe where they lived. When Ilham would explain this, it was always with great respect and an impressed tone, the same way in which she spoke about her friends who would continue their education in the university in Oujda.

This affinity for Europe and the economic opportunity it presents for all members of the Khalid family is not singularly driven by personal connections to return migrants. In addition to the visual hegemony of remittances in Sidi Bouafif and social pressures, the Khalids cite Morocco's poor resources and governmental corruption as other components of the pull towards.

⁴⁴ The red yaz, a symbol of Berber freedom, marks the side of the brother's vacant home, compiling quite the image of migrant identity.

Generally, Wahid believes that the Moroccan system is “rien (nothing),” and that the European “system is closer the one that Allah intended.” A few years ago, their son Yusef was hospitalized with appendicitis, and Saaliha spent over thirty days in the hospital, away from her normal rural setting. Wahid claimed that the Moroccan doctors were all incompetent and that they botched Hakim’s operation. Legitimate demands for basic needs, “la nourriture, les vêtements, les enfants, et un bon hôpital,” work towards the family’s wishes towards migrating abroad.

Emphasis on international migration as a gendered conception of success comes at the Khalids from all sides. The grandparent generation clearly prefers their male children who have migrated over their son who has not. He in turn, pressures his sons to hold Europe in high esteem and to strive towards it as a life goal. When discussing schoolwork, Wahid told his two sons to study hard so they could successfully migrate to Europe. Additionally, Ilham’s friendship circle asserts itself as a powerful presence of migration. Taken all together, neither men, nor women, children, nor adults are exempt from the societal pull to position European residency and jobs at the top of what it would mean to be successful for this rural Moroccan farmer family. The Khalids responses in the previous section can thus be explained by socially informed and rational desire for a higher standard of living.

Discourses of Their Own

Accepting that “L’honneur renforce le prestige social” [Honor reinforces social prestige,]”⁴⁵ no longer is agricultural work considered honorable or worthy of social prestige. Before the introduction of Western capitalist hierarchies of labor, “work itself was an act of adoration and if the work itself [involved] cultivating the land, the benefit multiplies.”⁴⁶ But

⁴⁵ Rahma Bourqui, *Habitat, Femmes, et Honneur*, 27.

⁴⁶ “Farming Culture in Islam,” *Med O Med*, 05 December 2014, <http://medomed.org/2012/water-in-islamic-culture>.

now, the social status of farming in Morocco has suffered damages. The discourses of the Akani family repeatedly privileged the work of the “stylo” over the work of rough hands. The women acknowledged that they worked hard and even criticized their bodies in relation to their hard physical labor. In each of the female family member’s responses to the question of success, they mentioned some variation of “a good job,” implying that the work they did now harvesting vegetables for sale at the souq was not good. They also expressed preference for the work of the city woman and thus disputed the common discourse that urban women live more empowered lives. They acknowledged the common discourse that rural women in Morocco work hard, and in fact, they take issue with it, saying that they want to lessen their workload to match that of the urban woman.

The Khalid family’s use of public and private space does not align with traditional discourses; they operate on a system of three spheres, public, semi-public, and private with much room for individual expression. For example, Both times that members of the family ventured to the Imzouren souq, men, women, and children were present, and Ilham and I went on walks together in the douar without asking permission. Their jobs as farmers dictated that the women spend more time outside of the house than perhaps an urban woman might, but they took issue with this use of public space, not on the grounds that it was dishonorable or improper for women to be outside but that harvest is hard work and takes a physical toll on their bodies. In this case, the use of public and private spaces did not occur as a conscious or articulated dichotomy. The female members of the household generally used public and semi-private spaces as they wished, rather than stating an ideological objection to their venturing into “masculine space.”

Although my research period was too limited to make any sort of definite statement about the agency of the women in the Khalid family, Saahlia and Ilham were present in most of the

important decisions about the farm. According to Cleaver's definition of agents, those who "can challenge power relations and existing behavior norms," Ilham and Saaliha moved about their lives with near parity to Wahid's decision-making power. In the two cases in which other SIT students came to interview Wahid, Saahlia and Ilham sat down next to the interview and interjected with corrections or additions to Wahid's answers. This demonstrates that they felt confident in their voices and perspectives on the farm. The dynamic between Ilham, the nineteen-year-old daughter and her younger brother Hamid, age sixteen also indicated female agency within the family. Ilham did most of the work on the family's farm and challenged her father's decisions regularly. She occupied the space of the oldest *sibling* rather than the oldest daughter. Women also had more economic power than is traditionally ascribed to rural women. Wahid, uncomfortable with my initial offer of my stipend, asked me to give it to Saaliha so that she could buy things for the house and children. In these ways, there was general parity between men and women in the Khalid household, and age privilege operated over male privilege for the children.

The Khalids' largest deviation from a prevailing discourse on the goodness and honor of rural women in Morocco was that of goodness and honor. The goodness and honor of the Khalid family expanded beyond the religious piety and adherence to Islam. Saahlia, Wahid, Ilham, and Khadija prayed five times a day and habitually invoked the name of God or the Quran in their speech, but their concept of good or honorable life was heavily influenced by international migration. Gone are the days of the pious, honorable farmer; the "migration elite"⁴⁷ has arrived. For women and children, migration's social authority has translated into articulations of success that are centered around a "good job" or as Wahid and Khadija put it, a job with a pen and

⁴⁷ de Haas, *Impact of International Migration*, 27.

vacation time. The girls of the Khalid household are striving to continue their education, which they feel is hindered by agricultural work, in order to have a better job. The boys similarly strive for education but towards the goal of migration. Both the boys and girls have eyes towards a more honorable lifestyle that is no longer available in their present rural-agricultural.

Conclusion

I approached fieldwork with hopes of gathering data on how the women in my case study embody the four discourses on their agricultural data, but I soon realized that studying Saaliha alone could not possibly accurately portray her. Saaliha justifies her labor along with her life through the intimate domain of her family, and for this reason, I advocate a family approach rather than one that focuses solely on one gender, age category, or familial role. Predictably, none of the four discourses accurately captures the social situation for the Khalid family's work and each individual's relationship to it, but their own discourses employ themes of the hegemony of family dynamics and the rhetorical use of "good work" as a symbol for a "good life." My fieldwork brings two major findings; Firstly, that stigmatization of agricultural labor in rural Morocco occurs at the community and family levels. Secondly, the members of the Khalid family respond to and are products of this stigmatization in a bifurcated way. Individually, they express their visions of success using a more urbanite, less physically demanding occupation as the cornerstone, but their romantic pride in working together and as a family keeps them ideologically tethered to their land.

The stigmatization of agricultural labor and migration from Morocco to Europe and the US are mutually influential, and my project finds that both processes have repercussions for rural families sense of their work's social significance. As I have shown, nuclear and extended families reinforce the pressure to migrate for the sake of modernity and what is considered good work. The Khalids respond to this with negotiations of modernity and traditionalism. They take immense pride in their work because it is rooted in the traditional domain of the family and describe a successful life without agricultural work. Their taking pride in their land and being

ashamed of it are not incongruous or indicative of a flawed sense of self. Rather, it indicates a struggle to situate themselves in the evolving social status of agricultural work.

Appendix 1: Figures⁴⁸



Figure 1: Hamid digs the depository for the farm's new irrigation system



Figure 2: Saaliha, Ilham, Hamid, and Yusef watch as Wahid digs.

⁴⁸ All photos were taken by the author over the course of 17-24 November 2014.



Figure 3: A house built by remittances amongst old farmland



Figure 4: View of Wahid's brothers house from the Khalid's fallen bedroom



Figure 5: Google Map of Al Hoceima region, including Sid Bouafif, Imzouren, and Souani



Figure 6: Ilham and her grandmother prepare sage for tea



Figure 7: Ilham poses beside the product of her work.



Figure 8: Ilham asks for a picture in front a new home she finds beautiful.



Figure 9: Saaliha stokes the fire in the clay oven that she constructed herself



Figure 10: Yusef stands on a slat that covers the farm's irrigation ditch while it is not in use.



Figure 11: Khadjia works in the kitchen.

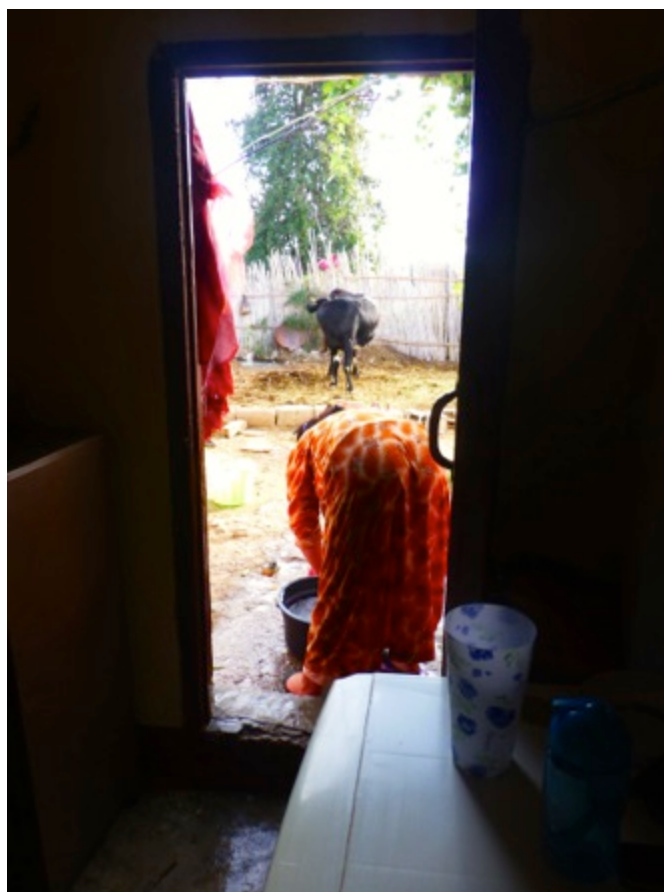


Figure 12: One of the cows seen from inside the kitchen. Khadija prepares to wash dishes.



Figure 13: Hayat bends down behind the wheelbarrow full of cow feed.



Figure 14: Wahid stands in his fields.



Figure 15: Saaliha stands in his fields.



Figure 16: Ilham bends to harvest chard to sell in the souq.

Appendix 2: Consent Form

SIT Study Abroad
a program of World Learning



CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to examine the gendered definitions of success for women in rural areas of Morocco in which there are high rates of international migration for young men.

2. Rights Notice

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
- c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.
- d. By signing this form, I also agree to let me include conversations with the children in my project. Any and all participants can refuse to participate in aspects of the study or may terminate participation whenever they please.
- e. I consent to have photographs of myself and my land taken by the researcher. I reserve the right to veto the use of these photos on social media or the ISP product.

Participant's name printed

Leah Kahler

Interviewer's name printed

Participant's signature and date

Interviewer's signature and date

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