

# Women in the Muslim World

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
and London, England 1978

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## Working Women in a Moroccan Village

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While several studies have dealt with women's economic roles and related statuses in a generalized and multicultural manner,<sup>1</sup> more detailed data on the problem of women's economic roles in specific societies are rarer. This essay examines the economic roles available to Muslim women in one large Moroccan village and assesses the effects that playing these roles have on their status in Moroccan society.<sup>2</sup> A few sociological rather than ethnographic studies have discussed the relationship between women's economic roles and their status in Morocco. Forget, in a study of attitudes toward work, concluded that the majority (60 percent) of her urban sample favored female employment (1962). Nonner suggested that factors entering into the evaluation of different women's jobs include whether they were traditional or modern and if they required contact with men (1962). In a 1966 survey of Rabat University students (a very different and select sample, presenting the views of the most educated part of the population), Martensson found that approximately 61 percent of the males and 73 percent of the females had favorable attitudes toward women's working professionally outside the home. If these favorable attitudes translate into a positive status for the working woman in Morocco, and if urbanites and villagers have the same attitudes, similar results should be found in the data presented in this essay.

### The Village

The data for this essay come from a large Arabic-speaking village (population about ten thousand) in Morocco (a Muslim Arab and Berber country), located on the inland edge of a fertile agricultural

area that had much French colonial contact.<sup>3</sup> While much of the population is involved in agriculture, it is employed mostly as wage laborers or sharecroppers on large and often modern farms, not on personal or tribal plots as was traditionally the case. The main crops grown today are wheat, oranges, olives, chickpeas, and sugar beets. Persons are also engaged in commerce (local shops), transport, and a few in industry in the nearby town's oil refinery. Because the larger town is only three kilometers away, there is a great deal of contact with current events and modernization; in fact, in 1972 there were perhaps fifty television sets in prosperous village homes. Yet the village has no running water and no paved roads or civic services such as a post office or police station; the nearby larger town seems to have a monopoly on these amenities. However, the village under study does have a primary school, a women's center (also used for civic celebrations), and a mosque and a saint's tomb that are the centers for a religious brotherhood having branches in several of the larger cities. Because this village has nearly ten thousand inhabitants, it offers a wider range of activities by which a woman can support herself than would a smaller village, but this range does not include options found only in larger villages: all would be found, some in one village, others in another. So while the village is less than strictly traditional, it does offer an almost complete array of the activities open to rural women today. Some of these activities are traditional, while others are of more recent origin.

### Economic Activities of Village Women

If a Moroccan woman wants to support herself, what are her options? Strictly speaking, the fact that she is in the position to support herself implies a limitation of options. In a traditional village a woman does not usually *choose* to take on an activity to earn additional income or enrich her life as a Westerner might; rather, she does it out of necessity.<sup>4</sup> This necessity usually arises because her husband divorces or repudiates her and for some reason she cannot fall back on her family, or because the husband cannot or will not support her and the children even though they are still married. There is no tradition of professional single women in this area; women expect to be supported first by their families and later by their husband. Marriage is the norm for women in Morocco and virtually every woman marries; those who are single are temporarily divorcees. A recent study found that divorce is very common in Morocco, with 55 percent of the marriages of rural women in the sample ending in divorce (Walter 1974:194). If a woman bears no

children she will almost certainly be divorced, and if she bears only daughters the husband may divorce her or marry a second wife simultaneously in order to produce male heirs. Incompatibility and the family's financial status are also factors in divorce. Laws exist providing for the payment of alimony or part of the bridewealth to the woman upon divorce, but they are infrequently enforced. There are also occasional cases of widows and a few spinsters who have no family to support them; how do these women manage to survive economically?

The women discussed here fall outside the ideal norm.<sup>9</sup> In distress, there are certain alternatives available to females, however, and these are described along with their implications for women's status.<sup>6</sup> There are only a few ways in which a village woman can support herself and increase her status simultaneously. The traditional public baths have men's and women's hours, and a woman who is often the wife, widow, or mother of the owner controls them during the women's hours. The small amount (\$0.15) that each woman pays for admission is hers (even if she does have a husband), and she is responsible for managing the help, keeping the fires going to heat the water, and breaking up the inevitable fights over pails for water. This is one of the most profitable of the available activities, but is only open to those who already have some capital. This implies that a bath mistress does not always work from necessity, and this is indeed the case. In the two village baths, one woman was a member of an important family and worked there partly to earn her own spending money (to spend on things like a \$1,000 gold belt) and partly to help maintain her important status in the village. In an area where women are still generally secluded, the bath is one of the main places where women of all families and social classes meet and gossip; most go once every week or two. Although clanging pails, splashing water, and crying children all conspire against it, the bath is one of the main centers of communication. The other bath mistress in the village used to run her family's bath for her son on women's day, keeping something less than the total earnings for herself. However, her husband recently died and with her share of the estate she purchased full rights to the bath, which she now runs as a means of livelihood. While her family-based social status is below that of the other bath mistress because her male relatives hold no important positions, she is still an important personage in the village because she is the hub of the women's communication network. This role has traditionally been available to women in villages large enough to support a public bath, but may decrease in the future when most homes have private baths.

Table 20.1. Effects of wage-earning activities on women's status and subsistence level.

EFFECT ON STATUS	INCOME-EARNING ACTIVITIES	ADEQUATE SUPPORT <sup>a</sup>		MINIMAL SUPPORT <sup>b</sup>		INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT <sup>c</sup>		
		SUPPORT <sup>a</sup>	SUPPORT <sup>b</sup>	SUPPORT <sup>c</sup>	SUPPORT <sup>c</sup>			
INCREASE	Bath mistress	x						
	Seamstress-teacher	x						
	Seamstress		x					
	Holy woman			x		x		
	Musician				x	x		
NEUTRAL	Midwife			x		x		
	Clothes washing					x		
	Cooking (celebrations)					x		
	Spinning, weaving					x		
SKILL DECREASED	Raising small animals					x		
	Broom making			x				
	Clay brazier making				x			
	Live-in household helper			x				
	Water fetching					x		
	Grain gleaning					x		
	Bath massage			x				
	Bread baking and selling				x			
	AMBIVALENT	Witch/magician					x	
		Fortune-teller/secr					x	
Teacher			x					
SIGNIFICANT DECREASE	Field laborer		x					
	Prostitute		x					

a. Woman can support herself and family adequately.

b. Woman can earn enough money to barely subsist.

c. Woman cannot earn enough to subsist; several are frequently combined to earn a living.

d. These lower women's status since they cause a woman to be seen in public.

Since no one in the village has running water yet, the extinction of the bath mistress does not seem imminent.

Another way to support oneself and raise one's status is to be either a seamstress or a seamstress-teacher. The former sews clothing on her own machine, usually for children and women who bring her their cloth. In a large village, a seamstress with a reputation for good work can usually accumulate enough cash-paying customers to make a living. Traditionally, she sewed by hand, but now virtually all seamstresses have manual, treadle, or electric sewing machines. A new source of income, owing to the nearness of the larger town, is sewing ready-made clothing to be sold by shop owners there. A seamstress will ask shop owners if they have any work, and, after doing a few test-garments to demonstrate her skill, will make garments from the shop owner's cloth in her home, receiving a set fee for each garment completed. While exact figures are unavailable, approximately thirty local women worked as seamstresses. A seamstress-teacher may sew garments for money, but her main job is to teach young adolescent girls the skills of cutting out and sewing traditional women's clothing and more modern styles for children. Much more than the ordinary seamstress, a "good character" is a necessary attribute for a woman in this role. Her home, in addition to being a classroom for the teaching of sewing skills, serves as a young ladies' finishing school. The novel *Confidences d'une fille de la nuit* (Bonjean 1968) describes a more elaborate form of this in the home of a *sharif*a (woman of a saintly lineage) in Fez, where the girls sew, embroider, sing, pray, cook, clean . . . and learn to be all-around gentlewomen. The village equivalent is not nearly so thorough as its counterpart in urban areas; there is no praying, and any singing just accompanies the work. But in turn for being accepted as students, the girls agree to clean house, occasionally cook, and do errands for their teacher, in addition to paying a fee in kind (sugar, tea, or oil) or in cash. They thus learn to fulfill their teacher's high standards in these areas, and to sit politely and quietly while learning their sewing—or risk being expelled. Visiting the seamstress or seamstress-teacher is another of the few chances adolescent girls and women have to meet women outside the family and neighborhood group with which they usually interact, and the seamstress' house, and the woman herself, are centers of communication for women of the village.

To become a seamstress one does not need much capital; the skill is the most necessary aspect. Many girls receive this training (in preference to public schooling) and acquire machines as adolescents, so some divorcees will be able to earn money this way. How-

ever, those without the training will seldom seek it after a divorce; rather they will turn to another alternative. The seamstress-teacher does not in theory need more capital than the seamstress, but in fact she often has more. This is because she conducts classes in her home, implying she has a home large enough for this. More importantly, her main asset is a good reputation, something which she has built for years. It cannot be suddenly achieved if she should need it to start a school. Since they must know and teach the ways of a gentlewoman, one frequently finds seamstress-teachers coming from better families, where they have received such training. This does not mean that the poorer women cannot hold this role, assuming that they possess the requisite good reputation, but rather indicates that in fact these women are often better off to begin with than their counterparts who are seamstresses only.

For the above occupations there have been certain prerequisites: capital, previous training, or a virtuous reputation. Most women who need to support themselves are lacking in these, so that these status-raising remunerative activities are actually available to very few women. There are other activities available to women that can also be remunerative and raise one's status, but they serve both these functions to a lesser degree than those described above. These include the roles of holy woman, musician, and midwife, all of which also require a special talent.

The village is the home of a brotherhood, the members of which trace their origins back to the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>7</sup> In 1971 there were 324 living members of this saintly lineage, presumably about 160 of them females of various ages. In addition there are present women from other saintly lineages, imported to marry the local *sharif*a (saintly endogamy is preferred) or who have come to the area for other reasons. A woman of a holy lineage, a *sharif*a, is a unique type of specialist. Although other women's status derives from their own and/or their husband's activities, a *sharif*a has an inherited rank as a member of a saintly lineage. While she can raise or lower her status by her own behavior, inherited rank places her above other women from birth, so that ordinary women in need can never become *sharif*at. She has contact with the supernatural because of her descent rather than her current activities, as do some of the women described below. She may be sought out for advice by other women if she is highly respected (as only a handful of the plentiful local *sharif*at are), but she does not play a formal religious role. She is not usually paid directly, but if she is poor people may give her gifts of food and clothing. This is not a role that any woman can choose to support herself, but one that can be parlayed

into income for a woman who has the correct genealogy and is in need.

Another type of female specialist is the musician. While certain types of prostitutes also sing and dance, there are a few women who are musicians only and play drums and sing in small groups at respectable women's parties such as birth celebrations, circumcisions, or weddings. While the men's half (the sexes do not mix at such parties) of these family celebrations will often engage singers who are also prostitutes, it is not considered proper for the women to do so (though they love to peek at them dancing for the men). Instead, they have a female musician's group that just plays while individual women at the party dance for each other. The musicians usually play popular folk tunes, but sometimes have contact with the spirit world when certain guests dance into trances. This is characteristic of only a few women, who have a particular tune (belonging to a particular spirit) that will possess them, and they dance until they collapse.<sup>8</sup> The musicians must play this tune when necessary, but not so long as to exhaust or harm the dancer. In general, the musicians are not seen as working with the supernatural as are the fortune-teller/screr and the witch/magician, and they are well-accepted members of the community. They can earn up to twenty-five dirhams<sup>9</sup> each at a "fancy" party, and while this is a good supplement, even in this large village where they are the only group, there are not enough celebrations for one to live entirely by this means. This activity is again of limited access: it requires training or talent, and local celebrations can only support four women in this way.

A third specialized role is that of the midwife. Since until recently there were no medical facilities locally available (and even currently these are seldom used), nearly all births occur at home. There are several midwives in the village, and a family usually chooses one as one elsewhere would choose a doctor to assist at the birth of all the children. The midwife is paid in cash at the time of the birth (as little as one dirham, a bargain compared with the twenty dirhams fee the hospital charges) and is also remembered with gifts of food and clothing on subsequent holidays. Her contact with the supernatural, like that of the musicians, is limited, hers to a few propitiations to ward off evil spirits during the birth. She, too, is an accepted member of the community, and falls into an affectionate and loose kinship-type role with the children she has delivered. As with the two previous roles, however, one needs training or talent to become a midwife, and a woman will not become rich doing any

The majority of the options available to village women for self-support have little effect on their status, aside from the fact that the necessity to work at all will lower it somewhat. These are termed *neutral* activities. It should be noted that the activities that require a woman to appear in public, thus displaying her lack of a male supporter, do lower her status a bit more than other neutral activities that occur within a house. It is also apparent that most of these activities provide very little income, so that a woman must combine several of them to support herself.

Most of the neutral activities are traditional household tasks of females and have only recently become locally available as "jobs" because of the increasing prosperity of some village families. While wealthy city families may have employed women in these capacities for centuries, it is only recently that a substantial number of rural women have filled these jobs. A rough estimate would be that 30 percent of village women engage at some time in one of these occupations. This is not to imply that these women support themselves in this way; many married women may occasionally do one of the jobs discussed below for extra pocket money. A much smaller number combine the jobs into a means of self-support.

A woman may help another (who is not a relative—one would help a relative without charge) with washing clothes, an exhausting job, given large families and no running water. The water is brought from the river by a boy on donkeyback, and washing is done in metal tubs made from the bottom quarter of an oil drum. Women living near the river often do all their wash there, saving the cost of water (\$0.08 for twenty gallons) and getting a chance to gossip.

Other activities require *some* specialization, but a degree that many women have or can easily achieve. These include cooking for celebrations and spinning and weaving wool. While most women cook the food for family celebrations themselves, an especially large or extravagant one will require extra help. The women who are called in have a reputation for being good cooks and knowing special dishes and are also known to need money. (Many women of the best local families have all the requisite skills, but would only be asked for advice, never to contribute labor.) Similarly, some women cannot spin and weave all the wool to make blankets and men's *djellabas* or outer robes for their families, so they pay someone they know who is particularly skilled at these tasks to do it for them.

There is some competition from men in weaving, and men actually have shops and support themselves in this way, while the women work at home part-time and charge less. There is also a market for

loosely (to be used for well threads) or very tightly (for warp threads) and take it to the suq to sell.

Women also raise rabbits and chickens to sell at the suq. This is one of the few of these activities that well-off women as well as women needing money may engage in for remuneration with no social stigma attached. Whatever the case, the money earned this way belongs only to the woman, not to the husband or the whole family, and is hers to do with as she likes. In the case of better-off women, this may be the only personal money they have, the rest being wheedled from the husband. Ironically, the poorer women have more personal control of money since they earn it themselves.

A few of the neutral activities may provide enough income to barely support a woman without combining jobs. Two other jobs in which women may make enough cash to scrape by involve manufacture in the home, for sale, of clay braziers and palm-leaf brooms. The raw materials can be gathered free, and although both items often need replacement, one needs many clients to make even a meager income, and usually old women without families to support engage in these activities. Sometimes women do supplement this with another activity, like one of those described below. It is interesting to note that the braziers are made of clay from the river bank, as are the large jars used for carrying and storing water. However, the jars are more nearly perfect in form because they are made on a wheel at the pottery works—which employs only men. Although these women are not especially respected by the community, they are not censured either; since they do work inside their homes, they are usually considered "nice ladies."

Unsupported women can sometimes subsist by living with another family, usually one related to them. In the case of a divorced woman who returns to her parents' home, she is supported as she was before marriage, although perhaps with some reluctance because she was not expected to return. She is not actually employed in this case, yet acts as a general helper, readily doing tasks no one else wants to do to justify her presence. However, she earns no actual cash and is closely controlled by her family, so she usually does not enjoy this type of support.

The neutral activities that somewhat lower a woman's status because they involve her appearance in public include the jobs of water carrier, grain granter, massage in the public baths, and bread seller. Women fetch all the water for drinking, cooking, and utensil-washing from the well. With only two wells in the village to serve ten thousand people, one can wait several hours for a turn

be home to manage the house. Like the public bath, the well is a center for communications, so that the women who do have to go do not resent it as much as they might. However, those who can afford it pay a woman about five dirhams a month to bring them one or two jugs of drinking water every morning, usually before dawn as the well is least crowded then.

Another activity is one that all families probably engaged in when they had their own land: gleaning the grain left on the ground after the harvest. Now that most families do not live directly off the land and most farms are large and not self-owned, only some women still do this. The landowners regard allowing this as a form of charity, and poor women do it, sometimes accumulating one or two sacks of wheat if especially industrious. Since it is after the harvest, this occurs in June or July when the sun is very hot, and one must remain bent double looking for the fallen heads of grain. It is excruciating work, and obviously only those who are really poor engage in it.

While the bath mistress collects the admission fee, she usually has two or three women working for her inside the bath. These women, the "scrubbers," work all day in the hot steam, filling and carrying pails of water for the bathers and rubbing them down with a coarse string sponge to remove dirt and dry layers of skin. One can do all these chores oneself, but higher-status women usually have the scrubber do them and pay her around one dirham. She is also paid a daily wage by the bath mistress, and combining the two she can usually manage to survive. This is a low-status job, more because of the strenuous work than because of the public appearance. Because there are only two baths in town, there are just a few openings.

Another limited opportunity, lower-status neutral job is the baking and selling of bread. Bread is the staple of the Moroccan diet, and every household makes bread once or twice daily and sends it to the public oven to be baked. Bread is only *bought* by bachelors or families with unexpected guests, and because the village is large, enough bread can be sold daily for two or three women to earn money in this way. These are older women past childbearing age and the only females to be seen as vendors in all the shops along the main street. Although this job is of rather recent origin because of the increased population and especially work-seeking bachelors in the village, it is threatened by the commercial bakeries in the nearby town.

A few of the ways in which women can earn income have an ambivalent effect on their status; that is, women in these jobs are

least partially due to the fact that these women deal with the supernatural in their roles as fortune-teller/seer or witch/magician.

The fortune-teller or seer and the witch/magician may be one woman or two separate ones. The fortune-teller/seer often uses Tarot-like cards to tell fortunes and may also discover the reason for an illness or the whereabouts of a missing person. The witch/magician is more active in such matters; rather than discovering things, she prepares potions and spells to deal with certain problems such as an unamorous husband or the cure or cause of illness. She deals mainly in what is often called "black magic"; "white magic" is done by men, either religious teachers who know Arabic and the Quran and can use them to advantage in their craft or by male magicians without religious training. Female magicians have no ties to formal Islam; in fact, there are no formal religious roles for village women. It has been observed that while men's magic deals more with incantations, formulas, and writing, women's is more straightforward and generally involves poisoning, usually of husbands. These women, both the fortune-teller/seers and the witch/magicians, are usually old and are viewed with apprehension, especially by men. Women cannot easily enter these occupations at any stage of their lives; rather they are socialized into them, often by their mothers. They also are not very financially rewarding; one is paid a consultant's fee of approximately one to five dirhams for each case.

Another job that appears to have an ambivalent effect on a woman's status is that of schoolteacher, but not because of contact with the supernatural. In fact, the sampling is very small (two primary school teachers, one high school teacher, and two women's center teachers) and differences in personal style make it difficult to generalize about the reasons for the ambivalent effect teaching has on status. It has a positive effect because of the pay; it is a civil service job and pays well (about 350 dirhams per month).<sup>10</sup> Yet these teachers are not universally highly regarded. This may be partly due to the fact that teaching (except in the women's center) puts them in contact with men (other teachers, janitors, and administrators) and this has a negative effect on their status. One can see that this is not the only negative aspect, however, from the case of the teachers at the women's center who deal only with women. Even these are not totally positively regarded. Judging from the comments of local women, this is due to their habit of frequently "putting on airs" or acting superior, a behavior one is tempted to assume when one holds one of the few well-paying professional jobs

than their moral standards, and teachers learn to have more respect for their clients and neighbors, one would expect teaching to have a more totally positive effect upon a woman's status.

One of the last two means of self-support available to these village women, the job of field laborer, substantially lowers their status. Yet in terms of job availability and income provided, this is one of the two "best" local jobs. Because this fertile part of Morocco was heavily colonized by the French, there have been large mechanized farms for decades. As a result of the introduction of sugar beets as a crop in 1956, population was affected. Migrants settled to work on the farms and doubled the population of the village. The village also grew because partible inheritance decreased the land available for farming and men left the land of their families. Migrants, including women, entered the agricultural labor pool. Girls from nine to ten years of age as well as old women are accepted, as long as they are able to work from sunrise to sunset. Although these jobs are open to both men and women, women are somewhat preferred because they are cheaper to hire. Overall, wages have recently increased from four dirhams a day for men and three dirhams for women to five dirhams and four dirhams, respectively, but women still work for less money. Because this village is in a rich agricultural area, although each crop is seasonal, a woman can work nearly all year around on one crop or another. There are olives to harvest in the fall, oranges in the winter, and sugar beets, wheat, and chickpeas to be weeded and then harvested in the spring and early summer. Although tractors are used when possible, much of this work must be done by hand. The supervisors in the fields are always men, though some do the same field labor as women. There are several men in the village who have teams of workers, and when the owner of a large farm needs labor he contacts one of these, who tells his workers when and where to be ready to be picked up by the trucks that usually transport them to the field, sometimes up to twenty kilometers away. In some areas the team organizers charge the laborers for a place in the group, but in this village they do not, probably because field workers are much in demand and could easily find a job with another team.

Being a field laborer is the most common way for a woman to support herself and her family; an estimated 8 percent of the village girls and women are thus employed. It is open to anyone; no capital or prior training is necessary, only good health. Only women (and also men) who really need the money work in the fields, however, since it is a very low-status and physically exhausting job. Espe-

invited (a veil is a hindrance in collecting olives or weeding chickpeas, not to mention the problem it causes in breathing), and may be available for a quick trip to the other side of the orchard with one of the young men, makes this a very low-status activity. An unmarried girl who works in the fields lowers her potential bride-wealth. Perhaps it was not very high in the first place because her family is poor, but by doing field labor she loses the opportunity to claim a sterling reputation as one of her assets. She may in fact be just as classe as if she had remained at home, but no one will believe that, because of all the opportunities she has obviously had, and everyone presumes that women are weak and cannot resist (see Vinogradov 1974). Such women are therefore forced by circumstances into a position of susceptibility to social criticism, although their efforts on behalf of their families may win grudging admiration. They do not relish the idea of working in the fields, but acknowledge that eating is more important than their preferences or than social criticism. Working on the same principle, their better-off relations are somewhat embarrassed to have female kin out in the fields—but not enough to keep them honorably in the home by supporting them. An example is a local woman of good family who had once been married to an important city judge. She had two children and was divorced, and she supported her family by field labor. Her respectable relatives (two brothers and a sister and family; her parents were dead) wished she would stay respectably at home, but they did not take on the obligation of supporting her.

The final alternative in supporting oneself comfortably—the second best of the two local jobs mentioned above—is less frequently chosen than field labor, and somehow both more and less prestigious. This is prostitution, which is in theory abhorred by the society. Yet prostitutes are thought to lead a rather glamorous, if sinful, life; they pamper themselves, buy beautiful clothing and jewelry, have money to give to relatives as gifts, and receive much attention from men. Women are ambivalent in talking about people they know who are prostitutes. They would *certainly* never want to be one, would be truly horrified at the thought of their daughters' doing this, and they look down on the girls who are prostitutes. Yet they discuss these girls at length, what a prostitute really does, the clothing and jewelry they buy, and how they help support their families. There is some feeling that these girls are forced into such a job (one girl known to the author in fact chose it over field labor when her family threatened to force her into the latter), so they are

some respectable women interact socially with prostitutes, for example when both are guests at a wedding or circumcision celebration. Since many prostitutes live together in a house in a larger town instead of locally, there is little opportunity for social interaction with village women, but when prostitutes visit the village they are not shunned socially. There is some verbal censure behind the prostitutes' backs and less often to their faces. Moroccan Arabic is a perfect medium for double entendres, so it is up to the girl to decide how to interpret the comment, and she seldom challenges it.

There are two types of prostitutes, the ordinary prostitute and the one who also sings and dances for men (*shikhat*). All *shikhat* are prostitutes, but not all prostitutes are *shikhat*. Because they dance, sing, and play instruments and therefore get higher prices for their work, *shikhat* are more glamorous. But again this usually presupposes some training, which most women who turn to prostitution lack. Rather, they are most likely to be just prostitutes, and living usually in an area well away from their families. If such ordinary prostitutes have children, they are often left with relatives. (By contrast, in the larger cities there has developed a maid-prostitute combination: the job seekers sit on a particular corner near the old city wall, and are hired for one task or the other. In that case, they can probably maintain their children in rented rooms and say they work as a maid, while a regular prostitute who lived in a "house" would have nowhere to lodge the children. The fiction of being a maid is also used by wayward village girls whose parents are curious about their jobs in the city.) Since fewer women go into prostitution than field labor, even though it is more glamorous and certainly better paying, one concludes that prostitution is the lowest-status way to support oneself reasonably well. The lower status derives in part because a woman damages her own reputation but also because her family's reputation is injured.

#### Conclusion

All the activities described allow a woman to support herself, to a greater or lesser degree. Their effect on her status in the community, with a few exceptions, is deprecatory because the ideal woman is a virtuous wife and a good mother and remains in her home and out of the public eye. The jobs that may enhance a woman's status are also those that can be done inside, out of the male public's eye, those of bath mistress and seamstress-teacher. They also involve their holder as the center of a communication network, which enhances status; information is one of the few commodities to which

it. Information about others is power and can be used to raise or lower their status and thus control them. Unfortunately, because of the need for capital or prior training and the relative scarcity of such jobs, few women earn a living in these ways.

Most of the other activities do not have a significant effect (positive or negative) on one's status, except that working in them at all indicates a lower status. Excepted, however, are activities that expose women to men, like field labor and prostitution, which are the least desirable to participate in.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, more women can support themselves in these status-lowering activities without having training or capital than in the neutral ones, which pay less well. Thus, "independent" women, whose status is already threatened by their reputation or other lack of support, are further threatened in that the most profitable opportunities easily available are also those that will greatly lower their status. Such a woman thus has a double burden, that of supporting herself and her family, and that of trying to guard her reputation, and often achievement of one precludes the other.

These conclusions are in general agreement with those of Nonnaker (1962) who states that woman's work was valued when it was deemed traditional and did not involve contact with males; the activities that increase status all fit these conditions. Agreement is not total, however, in that the seer and magician also fit these conditions, yet are not unambiguously regarded as high-status occupations. Forget (1962), too, wanted to discover the criteria used for ranking jobs as "very approved," "very disapproved," or "above criticism"; again, we would expect high approval to coincide with high status. Forget's urban sample includes some jobs unavailable in rural areas, such as factory worker, secretary, and waitress, but there is also some overlap with occupations available in rural areas. She found that approval of a job depended upon whether it fit in with the local ideal of femininity; approval was not contingent upon whether a job was considered traditional or modern, or whether it required much education or paid well. The results here generally agree with hers in areas of overlap (seamstress-teachers are approved, bath massesses disapproved), with one notable exception. She finds teachers are beyond criticism, while in this study they are perceived ambivalently. This may be an example of how the perception of teachers will change with time, as suggested earlier. Forget's urban sample had had longer contact with teachers.

In general, however, the results of this study do not support those of Forget, Marensson, and Nonnaker, all of whom found the ma-

women considered here, working lowers their status. There are two main possibilities as sources for this disagreement. First, the earlier studies were of attitudes toward women's working, while this one assesses the effect of working on status. Thus, the earlier studies may have elicited an idealized response; perhaps these writers would not be so positive if they were evaluating the status of actual women already in the labor market. A second possibility is that the diverse origins of the samples may have caused the difference: urban groups may in fact feel differently about working than rural people do, and perhaps with time and more exposure to modern, better-paying jobs, the rural group will come into agreement with the urbanites. Presently, however, having a job is usually a liability for these village women.

#### Notes

1. See Rosecup (1970), Hammond and Jallow (1973), and Sacks (1974). Although Yonssel (1972) focuses on Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, her perspective is still quite broad. In a multicultural survey, Sunday examines women's status and finds that "female productive activities may be a necessary but not a sufficient precondition for the development of female power" (1973:1697), and that other factors such as female control over the products of their labor and/or the presence of female solidarity groups are necessary for women to wield economic and political power in a society.

2. The most commonly used definitions of status and role are those set forth by Ralph Linton. In this schema, a status is a position (specifically, a collection of rights and duties) in a particular pattern of reciprocal behavior among individuals or groups of individuals. A role is the dynamic aspect of a status, that is, the actions involved in fulfilling a status, and the two are inseparable (Linton 1961). Authors who have focused their research on women have found that the definition of status needed to be further refined. Thus, Sunday writes: "Female status is generally defined in terms of (1) the degree to which females have authority and/or power in the domestic and/or public domains; and (2) the degree to which females are accorded deferential treatment and are respected and revered in the domestic and/or public domains" (1974:191). The second definition is the one used in this essay: a woman's status in the village refers to the deference and respect accorded her by local males and females. Males and females in the village are basically in agreement on the status which working confers on a woman in either the public or private domain.

3. Field work was conducted in the village in 1970-1972. This settlement of 10,000 people is called a "village" because of its physical character and its lack of conveniences.

4. Although the sample population was urban rather than rural, Forget

informants said a woman works "in order to clothe and feed herself and buy soap" (1962:115).

5. For the ideal woman in traditional Moroccan society, the focus of life is the home. She is an excellent housekeeper, a virtuous wife, and a devoted mother. While her activity is in the home, her father or husband deals with the work outside the home. He supports and protects his women, and they run the household.

6. A preliminary examination of Morocco's 1971 census results found that only 8 percent of the total female population was economically active (Castador and Larqui 1973:3). Since it also notes that 46 percent of the total population was under fifteen years of age, it can be assumed that approximately 17 percent of adult females were economically active. This is less than one-fifth of the adult female population; it is apparent, if census data are accurate, that working, in an economic sense, is not very common for Moroccan women.

7. Lineages in Morocco that can trace their origins back to Muhammad are considered holy and their members, living and dead, are *shorfa* (saints).

8. The women who are put into a trance by a special "game" are members of a religious brotherhood.

9. In 1970, five dirhams was the equivalent of \$1.00.

10. In 1970 per capita annual income was 1,015 dirhams, or about 84.5 dirhams per month, in Morocco (Department of State, "World Data Handbook," 1972).

11. Being a fortune-teller/seer or witch/magician is also frowned upon, even though done in the home, but comparison is difficult because these activities are subject to special rules.

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