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THE STUDY OF RURAL EGYPT: A CRITICAL REVIEW

by

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PART I

1.1 Purpose and Scope:

This report is intended to provide an overview of work done on Egyptian villages, villagers, and, in broader terms, on rural conditions in the ARE. My comments will be developed along two parallel lines: first, on the conceptual level, an examination of the studies in terms of their dominant theoretical and disciplinary orientations. Have there been any major shifts in approach and emphasis? What are some of the more serious recurrent conceptual difficulties that can be identified? At the substantive level, I will assess the topical coverage of the studies in order to highlight any significant gaps that may exist in the literature. What should emerge from all of this is a critical guide; an indication of where to look for certain types of information; a sensitization to problems raised by certain theoretical approaches and methods. As such, this exercise will assist in identifying virgin research territory, and will indicate possible ways to reformulate or restudy those that have absorbed so much interest in the already existing literature.

Given the breadth of the subject, selection of studies to be considered here, or in other words, how broadly to cast the net, posed some problems. Only a limited number of the most obviously relevant genre, village or community studies are published and available in the United States. This has made it necessary to choose from

among a wide variety of works, many of which shed some light on or are tangentially concerned with rural life, but whose primary focus lies in probing broad theoretical or poly-related issues such as: political and social change, population growth, economic conditions, class structure, development policy, etc. Adoption of such broad criteria for inclusion obviously raises the problem of where to draw the line. For this reason I include only more recent monographs and articles, published from the late 1960s and thereafter with exceptions made for earlier works which continue to serve as focal points or springboards for current debate and discussion.

1.2 A Key Conceptual Issue: The Problem of Change:

Much of the literature produced over the last fifteen years or so has concerned itself or at least claims to be dealing with change in its various aspects: social, political, economic, cultural. Aside from the fundamental differences between Marxists and non-Marxists, proliferation of this sort of literature, on Egypt and on other Third World countries, has in turn spawned a good deal of critical comment within and between each of those basic currents challenging formerly prevalent premises and conceptual models.

Because the subject of change is so closely implicated in questions of development policy, the debates emerging reverberated well beyond academic circles. Indeed, the prominence of social change as a subject of study may be traced to expanded development efforts of the 1960s (the UN's "Development Decade") and the rising criticism,

to the all too frequent failures encountered, whether in programs or in theoretically based predictions and outcomes. Egyptian social scientists have tended to exceed their foreign counterparts in policy-oriented or applied research involvement.[1] However, as U.S. assistance to Egypt has expanded to unprecedented levels in the last few years, we find many more U.S. scholars involved in the policy area. This trend is also apparent in the titles of dissertations prepared on Egypt particularly over the past five years or so.[2]

Most of the contemporary criticism has been directed against two targets: the Orientalist tradition[3] and structural-functionalist perspectives (homeostatic). Objections raised come from both Marxist and non-Marxist sources who converge in their criticism of several features of Orientalist, formalist, and functionalist literature. These forms or approaches are faulted, among other things, for being ahistorical, static, descriptive rather than analytical, for accepting formal categories, institutions, and structures at face value, and for treating cultural elements, in particular, Islam, as if they operated in a vacuum disconnected from other structural or societal factors. Peasant fatalism, traditionalism, resistance to change, and so on are said to spring forth from cultural traits, most fundamentally, Islam, and some, to validate this position, would refer the reader to the Quran or other religious texts. Such cultural formalism and determinism is but one symptom of a fragmented perspective of society, something also manifested in the treatment of

other social categories--the village, the tribe, the city--as undifferentiated and unconnected spheres. Rosenfeld is one of a growing chorus "critical of cultural explanations tending to portray the rural community as an isolate." [4]

The aforementioned features merged indistinguishably into the modernization literature which came to dominate so much of the Western, especially American, non-Marxist social sciences from the sixties onward. Occupations, personality types, and residences were stamped as either "modern" or "traditional," sometimes "transitional." Within this essentially dichotomous framework villagers and villages were assigned traditional status, cities and their residents declared modern. Parallel schema, most notably Redfield's Great and Little tradition or his urban-folk continuum, also had great impact on the literature finding its way into several of the works on Egypt.

As far as ethnographic literature is concerned, the category under which most of the community studies conducted in Egypt may be subsumed, H. Rosenfeld , an anthropologist himself, addresses himself to many of the problems just outlined. His comments are of relevance to a broad gamut of research types, not just to ethnographies.

He dismisses " . . . interpretations that consider the cultural predispositions of the village and its structural barriers to be the main impediments to change,"[5] and which treat culture as a "superorganic force."[6] As he puts it: "Is the lack of change a matter of an integrated group-sect resisting higher agro-technical education

for its sons, or is it a matter of the lack of opportunity to receive such an education?"[7] He also challenges the idea of a static traditional village pattern or a traditional baseline in remarks extremely pertinent to the Egyptian context, contending that"

> Those who believe in the Immovable East with an unchanged peasantry existing in some places for five to six thousand years must prove their thesis. They must prove that there have been no population movements; no interchange of nomadic, village and urban peoples; no intercontinental commercialism; no creation of new peasantry out of tribal elements or out of declassed urban elements . . . .[8]

Fundamentally, the type of research criticised by Rosenfeld embodies a mechanistic view of change. It sets the baseline as the traditional village community or villager and the destination as modern urban residence, values, and institutions presumed to be best exemplified in the experience of the industrial West. Use of terms like diffusion penetration, disintegration are natural accoutrements in such a model. Modern forces are said to be diffused and the rate of this diffusion said to relate negatively to such things as distance of a village from an urban center, traditional values and institutions, and social solidarity through kinship, and religiosity at the community level which may act as barriers to external penetration.

The image conjured up by this approach is of two separate spheres, and of change being unidirectional from the modern urban sector to the traditional rural sector. This paradigm renders the analysis of process impossible because process cannot be reduced into a flow or a diffusion of unrelated elements between two undifferentiated spheres. Such a view lends itself at most to description: as

J. Kennedy put it, "Many studies of socio-cultural change indicate what has changed while allowing the process of such change to remain inferential--that is, how change came about is anyone's guess."[9] It has also taken the form of an artifacts approach to change, where the mere existence of modern consumer goods, forces of production, and the change in the makeup and number of these sorts of items are considered to be sufficient evidence that change has occurred. Again quoting Rosenfeld: "If there are sixteen radios, a tractor, three trucks and a taxi in a village, then it is assumed that peasants are undergoing change."[10] Distribution of such items and the meaning in terms of relations in the village and social elements beyond it are rarely broached as issues worthy of analysis.

It can be said that some of the Marxist literature on Egypt exhibited several traits broadly parallel to those under fire in the modernization literature, especially the idea of a linear evolutionary model moving irrepressibly from pre-capitalist to capitalist modes of production and social relations. However, by focusing on relations of production and material factors rather than on cultural factors such as Islam as fundamental to understanding the dynamics of change, it skirted problems identified by Rosenfeld and others. Furthermore, given the eminent place of imperialism and capitalist domination in Marxist theory, the connections drawn between the international structure and national and local forces, Marxist writings were not as prone to deal with social entities such as villages as isolated from overall societal factors.

Recently, Marxists, confronted by the resiliency of pre-capitalist relations within national entities dominated in other spheres by capitalist relations, have developed concepts of coexistent or articulated modes of production.[11] This view is rejected by some, particularly by the advocates of a World Systems approach, who argue that it is the dominant mode of production in the world economy, the capitalist one, that is determinative.[12]

It is arguable that, by focusing on Egypt's position in the international economy, world systems analysis tends to blur social dynamics at lower levels of aggregation (e.g., the village level). But this approach does at least incorporate the long and widely recognized fact that in Egypt, for at least a century, what villagers produced and what they received for their products have essentially been functions of world market forces. The earliest and best documented manifestation of such connections has had to do with the introduction and spread of cotton cultivation.[13] Certainly then, in Egypt if nowhere else, there is little justification in treating village communities as isolated entities.

Most of the studies reviewed at least pay lip service to this proposition, but tend to draw the line of effective influence at the national frontier. Ammar argued almost thirty years ago, in as apparently remote a province as Aswan and in a village dominated at the time by cereal production that:

> . . . the village cannot be considered as a self-contained structural unit but has to be related to the forces of national history and their repercussions if any on the village;[14]

> . . . inhabitants are still dependent on outside forces for the price of their crops and for the sale of manufactured goods and textiles. Moreover, with population pressure, more and more of the village members have reluctantly left to seek a livelihood in towns and cities. . . .[15]

To the north, in the Delta area, earliest to experience the impact of West European economic forces and containing the country's two largest cities, Harik remarks that: "For more than a century, the economic and political history of Shubra el-Gedida was bound to nationwide forces, the most important of which were trade and state centralization."[16] Berque describes how world market price fluctuations brought riches to some and ruin to others in another Delta community.[17]

Existence of such organic links manifests itself in several concrete ways. In terms of the present discussion, perhaps the most evident and consequential of these has been migration. The relationship may be viewed as follows:

The exodus from rural areas (or for that matter, from Egypt to neighboring oil-rich states) is a collective or aggregate expression of responses by individuals who, on the basis of their social and economic positions, confront what are either experienced to be sets of structural constraints or opportunities. These conditions are essentially defined beyond village boundaries but are mediated by social class relations and ecological conditions prevailing at the local or community level. Experience with agrarian reform and the shift from annual to perennial cultivation has made it clear though that even such community level relations and production conditions are

not immutable but can be revised by means of political or economic intervention.

Thus migration, which has done more than anything else to blur urban-rural distinctions, so sharply defined in the moderniza-tion literature, belongs within the larger context of village and villager involvement in the national/international economy. There is no shortage of evidence pointing to the close relationship that exists in Egypt between town and village, something that has undermined the validity of dichotomous rural-urban notions.

We see many former villages in the Delta being annexed by rapidly expanding metropoli. This was, for example, the case in the village of Kafr el-Elow, studied by Fakhouri,[18] which in 1966 was incorporated into the city of Helwan and rezoned as an urban area. Also, in Nubia, Kennedy found such intertwining between urban and rural to have been especially tight among those displaced by a national program, the heightening of the Aswan Dam in 1933. As he put it: "So strongly does Kanuba encompass rural village and urban Egyptian worlds that its society might even be termed bicultural."[19]

Micro-level research, most notably Abu Lughod's work on migrants in Cairo, has perhaps done most to dispel the myth that urban migration or intense contact with urban areas (e.g., Fakhouri's commuters) automatically transformed traditional villagers into modern urbanites as defined in the modernization literature. As Abu Lughod indicates, villagers have "ruralized" cities as much as they them-selves have become urbanized. Furthermore, ties to villages of origin

are often maintained and remittances from urban migrants can represent significant sources of income for many villagers.*

Indeterminancy of urban residence per se in accounting for observed behavior, occupational characteristics and so on, is also forcefully demonstrated in the series of essays on Nubia edited by Fernea. Displaced by successive heightenings of the Aswan Dam, most dramatically in 1933, many villagers were forced to seek non-agricultural sources of livelihood; urban work and widespread education of children were resorted to. So farreaching was this shift that by the mid-1960s one community had a male literary of 90 per cent, far above the national average.[21] Many of these migrants eventually returned to live in their village, which came to be a community occupationally dominated by white collar workers, commuting to work in Aswan.

As far as the negative relation posited between distance and diffusion is concerned, it is rather evident in this case, in a region physically remote from the country's major cities to the north, that people responded to pressing livelihood needs imposed upon them by a national program. Furthermore, Islam, which continued to be important to these people, posed no barrier to change under these circumstances.

Again consistent with already cited cases, Harik, studying a Delta community and changes in local politics in the wake of the 1952 revolution, suggests that " . . . modernization does not under

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*Incidentally, this matter of remittance flows and their differential impact in regional or social class terms remains a neglected research issue.

present circumstances necessarily entail or require urban residence." I will quote him on this not only to more faithfully communicate what he has to say but also to further demonstrate through the language he employs that the modern-traditional framework and the mechanistic imagery and conceptualization described earlier are a fundamental though implicit feature of his study:

> . . . Modernization, or rather the integration of an illiterate rural population into the national society, may occur within the local community itself, independently of migration to urban centers or change in occupation. Forces emanating from the center are now reaching rural communities and affecting every aspect of peasants' lives. It may be that the association between modernization and urbanization, so often encountered in the literature based on aggregate data neither precludes modernization under rural conditions nor implies that modernization is inseparable from a change toward urban living; . . . the gap between the countryside and urban centers is becoming narrower in many countries and unless disaggregated into their component parts, the concepts, "urban" and "rural" may prove less analytically useful.
>
> (Note: Phrases underlined are meant to illustrate the application by Harik of the change model which I indicated earlier seems to permeate so much of the literature.)22

Such fluidity between city and village, between the seats of modernity and traditionalism, brings to mind another question: How can one reconcile the notion of rural being equated with traditional while at the same time characterizing the outlook of the political leadership, a leadership made up of individuals who grew up and maintain their ties to their native villages, as ideologically modern?[23] While shifts have occurred in the rural classes represented by this leadership, it is a fact that a significant portion of the leadership and the "modern" bureaucracy are the "sons of the soil." Binder's recently published work on the political leadership of the

country provides evidence that leadership in the village is replicated among kin in various levels of the party hierarchy and in parliamentary positions.

> The predominant social characteristic of the Egyptian elite is its derivation from the rural bourgeoisie. . . . Important segments of the urban-educated middle "class" have more or less important links, economic, social and cultural with members of their own families who are still members of the rural middle class.[24]

Before going any further and allowing the impression to develop that there was some sort of chronological, linear evolution of ideas about social change, that in succession certain paradigms attained supremacy atop the rubble of previous ones fallen into disrepute or out of fashion, let me characterize the process move accurately. In fact, there were no distinct phases but instead several currents existing simultaneously. Yet distinct breaks can be identified in the nature of criticism and in the studies themselves indicative of revision and change, and of limited concensus attained on some issues. As I present examples of works conducted on Egypt it will become clear that within many of them are to be found a mélange of prevailing wisdom, personal insight and conceptions that would be considered outdated if one applied a linear concept of intellectual development to the social change literature.

Ammar's 1953 study of a village (his native village) in As-an[25] is a rather good example of such internal conceptual complexity. While he incorporates now criticized, but at that time well received, paradigms such as Redfield's, and emphasizes psychological

and personality factors, Ammar avoids cultural or value determinism, something that can still be found in works written twenty years later (e.g., Mayfield, 1971): "Psychological characteristics of children and adolescents," he says, "are contingent on social conditions,"[26] not the other way around. Further, he makes it clear that the village cannot be considered independently from historical and national forces, a perception found to be lacking in later works.

A later study by Fakhouri (1972) of a Delta village exhibits some of the shortcomings outlined above, though his astuteness and direct familiarity with the village take him beyond gross simplification; urbanization is said to have an impact on values, for instance, greater receptivity to modern medicine; it also affected patterns of dress and consumption. Primarily attributed to attitudes rather than other possible explanatory factors is illustrated in his observation that decline in the incidence of farming in the youngest working generation reflects " . . . a decline in the popularity of this occupation."[27] Could not land constraints increasing due to inheritance caused fragmentation have been an equally plausible reason for this evident shift in occupational structure among the young? Fakhouri gives us little basis upon which to cast judgment on this issue. However, we do learn from this study that even in a commuter village, which Kafr el-Elow seems to have evolved into, it is precisely this urban proximity which by eliminating the need to move away from the village permanently minimized disruption of marriage and other traditional patterns. Studies on migrants out of commuting range also

reveal that the propensity to settle according to region or village of origin have also had the same sorts of effects.

Earlier, I suggested that challenges leveled against former conceptual approaches to the matter of social change may have emerged as a response to empirical social experience; the failure of development programs incorporating these ideas and among the Marxists the persistence under capitalism of pre-capitalist relations (for example, the continued importance of kinship) within peasant communities. In non-Marxist circles a critical presumption came under increasing fire: the relevance of an evolutionary model applied to the Third World based on the experience of advanced industrial societies, and by implication the appropriateness of Western analytical categories.* A curious twist to this challenge of Western models of social change is that it breathed new life into cultural, normative approaches to the study of contemporary circumstances.

Thus we hear as recently as 1976 from Critchfield that "at the heart of the Fellah's mentality is, of course, Islam."[29] His two-village comparison encapsulated in the experiences of two peasants is meant to elucidate in "the mentality of traditional society."[30]

Mayfield's study of rural politics during the Nassar period[31] represents another example of this tendency to re-elevate Islam and

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*Rather than speak of stratified societies Middle Eastern specialists came up with a new conceptual imagery thought to more accurately characterize societies in that region: mosaic, segmented social structures, the idea of a convergent rather than integrated system, etc.[28]

the purported personality traits unique to the Egyptian peasant. Lenczowski prefaces the work by praising Mayfield for putting his study "within a broader context of the cultural and religious heritage of rural Egypt."[32] According to Mayfield, the central government's failure to execute programs in the countryside is a product of a basic dissonance between the policies and bureaucrats responsible to carry out the policies and the cultural makeup and outlook and traditional structures by which villagers, the intended beneficiaries, order their lives. "Political culture is portrayed in terms of certain fundamental historical, social and psychological factors that have determined the general beliefs, attitudes and sentiments that give order and meaning to the Egyptian political process."33 Legitimacy is seen to operate on the level of beliefs;[34] resistance to change is explained in cultural, social and psychological terms.35 The stress is on personality and individuals: ". . . changes in rural Egypt were largely due to President Nasser's charismatic leadership and the villagers' identification with him." Mayfield's heading for Chapter 3--"Personality and Culture of the Egyptian Fellah"--further indicates the stress Mayfield lays on individual factors. It also embodies or implies a position that there is such a thing as the "Egyptian Fellah," reminiscent of other works in the Orientalist mode, proposing such categories as the Arab mind, etc., which set up stereotypical, ideal categories derived from a formalist undifferentiated view of society.

Such conceptions may be intrinsic or one could say endemic

to studies which, like that by Mayfield, attempt to develop a composite picture of a very diverse rural society. Ayrout's work on the Egyptian peasant[36] again a composite portrayal, is very close to Mayfield's in conceptual terms.

The following sections are devoted to an exploration of rural diversity in Egypt and the way it has been handled in the literature.

PART II: LEVELS AND CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS*

2.1 Regions:

Several regional breakdowns are applied to Egypt, but those which concern us most here have to do with the Nile Valley, where virtually all that country's rural agricultural communities are concentrated. Here two divisions are usually referred to: Lower Egypt, essentially the Delta, and Upper Egypt, the settled area along the Nile below Cairo. A further subdivision sometimes appears assigning the Cairo to Aswan stretch of the Valley to "Middle Egypt" and that to the south to Upper Egypt or Nubia.

Evidence gleaned from the literature points to considerable heterogeneity both within and across regions. Harik observes that while:

> . . . it is generally assumed that the most striking differences in wealth and education regionally are between Lower and Upper Egypt. In fact, the variations are greater between provinces of the same region than they are between North and South[37]

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*See Appendix 1, page 67.

Ecological conditions and settlement patterns also evidently vary between regions, though the extent of intra-regional variation remains unclear. At any rate, loose inter-regional comparisons (such as the ones made by Harik, above) are commonly made on such things as urban migration levels and patterns, main crops grown, poverty, etc. Where might one look in the literature to learn about regional differences?

Regional coverage of the literature, especially of the ethnographic or village survey varieties, has been uneven. Most have centered on Delta[38] communities and only secondarily on those located in Upper Egypt, especially in what is known as Nubia to the south of Aswan.[39] Of the major populated regions, Middle Egypt has drawn the least research attention; no community studies were found on desert oasis communities and coastal settlements to the west of the Delta. The only ones encountered on Middle Egypt were al-Ma'ti's study of class-conflict in three villages in Beni Suef province and another, a brief study by Critchfield, is the only one in English[40] Incidentally, this last study is the only one setting out to compare communities in two regions, one in the Delta and the other in Middle Egypt. Regional elements enter in as his main explanatory variables; differences in outlook and behavior patterns are attributed to the Delta's head start of a century or so over Middle Egypt in the transition to perennial irrigation. This afforded the Delta village ample opportunity to adapt to the far-reaching consequences of this shift. An added factor differentiating the two villages was the Delta's longer and more intense contact with and exposure to the outside world.

Aside from community level studies, others which propose to analyze certain aspects of Egyptian society in national terms occasionally include regional breakdowns for those variables thought to be integral to their subject. Such studies are not only sources of regionally disaggregated data but at least in some cases attempt to evaluate the impact of rural regional differences on social, political, economic outcomes. Binder, for instance, attempts to assess how variations in regional literacy rates and levels of agricultural commercialization (measured by the percent of cultivated area planted in vegetables) relate to the strength and rural linkages of what he refers to as Egypt's politically important "second stratum:"[41] these are not the rulers ". . . but the stratum without which the rulers cannot rule."[42] As far as regional differences are concerned, Binder cites greater availability of health care, and pure water, higher literacy and agricultural commercialization levels in Lower than Upper Egypt.

Studies conducted by the Government agencies concerned with planning, resettlement and social policy questions have tended to cover areas of the country otherwise neglected and thus must not be overlooked as sources of information on rural conditions. Examples include Hilmy's study of Bedouin sedenterization in the North-western coastal zone; Anwar's report on a resettlement scheme involving the transfer of peasants from overpopulated Middle Egyptian villages in the provinces of Menufia, Dakahlia and Beni Suef to new communities in Beheira and Fayyum[44]

Another sort of government study, not explicitly regional in focus but with regional or region-defining implications, is the rural labor survey carried out by the Institute of National Planning and published in 1966.[45] It covered villages and households in what were considered to be six nationally representative provinces (or governates) covering all the main cropping systems in the country. Several years later (1973), Hanafi utilized this data to explore the issue of disguised unemployment.[46] In doing so he provides us with a useful summary of the dominant-crop/rotation systems and family labor utilization under each of them.

To the extent that regions are dominated by or conform to certain crop systems, data such as provided by Hanifi can be applied to the study of broader social policy issues. Such extensions are suggested by Ammar's study of an Aswan area village. He develops his own estimates on labor demand for the village's main crops and shows how important children are in contributing to the work of their families. As a consequence parents have found themselves in conflict with compulsory school regulations and " . . . absence from the school is extremely high during weeks of irrigation and time of harvest."[48] Another study, by Gadalla,[49] on fertility behavior in three Delta communities turns up a similar pattern: a sharp decline in school attendance during peak cotton labor demand periods. The economic value of children was found to have a significant impact on "reproductive norms" on the desired number of children. These findings raise questions on how crop-mix or technological changes might affect educational attendance or family size issues.

An implicit point I have tried to make in this rather lengthy discussion of crop-system/labor demand structures is that data of this kind could be useful for a wide variety of policy and theoretical purposes and could be used to define sub-regions along ecological lines.

2.2 Rural Settlements and Settlement Patterns:

Natural and man-made forces have rendered Egypt's rural settlement scene a highly variable one; we encounter villages flooded out of existence, new communities peopled by sedenterized nomads, or villagers transferred out of over-populated areas. As used in the literature, the term "village" more often than not masks this flux and variety of settlement forms. Studies of individual communities or sets of "villages" tend to adopt the administrative definition of village, according to which rural communities are a residual category; all settlements which are not assigned provincial or district capital status are designated "rural." "Villages" (termed nahia or shiakha) are the largest of three major rural settlement units; the other two, 'ezba's and nag,' are generally termed "sub-village units," "hamlets" or "satellite settlements." These tend to be administratively attached to a central, larger settlement, and are collectively referred to as a village.

2.2.1 The Issue of Village Population Size:

It is not unusual in Egypt for settlements referred to as villages to surpass populations of 20,000, making them ". . . generally

larger than those in other Middle Eastern countries."[50] Elsewhere such highly populated communities would qualify as medium-size towns. This peculiarity leads Berque to ask: ". . . what is the source of cohesion in larger villages . . . which would elsewhere be 'cities.'"[51] The absence of any clear cut distinction between towns and villages is further indicated by Mabro's comment that some of the market towns, though very populous, ". . . retain the features of big villages."[52]

Antoun laments what he terms a remarkable insensitivity displayed in Middle East social anthropology to the significance of numbers.[53] Among Egyptian community studies reviewed, Harik is exceptional in this respect as he does attempt to justify selection of his village in terms of its size, maintaining that it was average for the area.[54] Overall, we see (see Table 1, p. 24) a wide range of village population sizes among the community studies reviewed, but very little in the way of comment on it and how size figured into selection of a village or villages and whether size may have had something to do with findings. This observation is of special pertinence in the comparative two-village study by Critchfield.[55] One can only speculate as to what extent the contrasts he observes between a compact Delta village with 46,000 residents and a Middle Egyptian village of 8,000 broken up into 11 distinct settlement clusters are due to factors related to size and settlement structure, rather than to others proposed by the author.

Several other scholars have alluded to the potential significance of village size. Antoun, for example, suggests that in terms

of village political dynamics, population may have something to do with the number and size of competing social groups.[56] According to Mayfield, in smaller villages, those with under 10,000 inhabitants, ". . . social structure is more likely to be shaped by a limited number of families." Such domination is said to lessen in communities of over 20,000.[57] Another point he makes is that government presence is prone to be more marked in larger villages; and that in such villages, '<u>Omdas</u> or village headmen have experienced a greater loss in authority than was the case in smaller, isolated communities.[58] An obvious exception to this thesis is the small Nubian communities that underwent resettlement.

2.2.2 <u>Settlement Structures</u>

Since so little attention is normally paid to sub-village units, I will reverse the usual emphasis here and begin by outlining some of the major features of the two most common ones: the '<u>ezba</u> and <u>naga</u>.' An '<u>ezba</u>* is depicted by Sweet as follows:

> . . . In its original meaning an '<u>izba</u> was a provisional encampment in the fields, a meaning still preserved in Upper Egypt. The more recent meaning of '<u>izba</u> is a small village or agricultural colony established by a large landed proprietor, the inhabitants of which are mainly employed by the owner. These settlements, now as a result of agrarian reform, have been transformed into administrative centers for the direction of the land reform.[59]

<u>Naga</u>' has:

> . . . an older meaning . . . close to that of '<u>izba</u>: a provisional camp of Arab nomads. <u>Naga</u>' has also come to refer

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*Also transliterated as '<u>izba</u>; plural '<u>izab</u> or '<u>ezab</u>.

> to a small village whose inhabitants are more recently sedenterized Bedawin. The naga' is limited to Upper and Middle Egypt.[60]

While little if anything is said in the literature about the naga'* the 'ezab have drawn at least some comment. Binder observes that these farming estate communities were especially prevalent in the Delta where capitalized fruit and vegetable culture was widespread.[61] According to Chesnin, who made 'ezab the focus of his study, the 'ezba owners represented an ". . . upper segment of the rural elite."[62] Such estates are referred to by Toth in his review of post World War II rural class relations as ". . . large rural factories which produced cotton, rice and sugar cane mostly for European markets."[63]

2.2.3 Variation in Size and Structure of Rural Settlements and Their Implications:

A comparison of communities studied by size and structure (compact versus poly-nuclear) is presented in Table 1. Though based on a small number of communities, regional differences evident from the table conform to the generalizations proposed by Sweet, namely, that in the Delta the dominant form of village is large and compact, possibly broken up into quarters, while in Upper Egypt there is greater fragmentation. There the dominant forms are either the poly-nuclear type of village strung out along the edge of the desert and cultivated area or composed of a chain of closely adjacent hamlets.[66]

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*Exceptions are the articles by Fernea[64] and Haikal[65] in Contemporary Nubia on Ismailia.

TABLE 1

Population and Structure of Villages in Community Studies
Grouped by Regions

Region/Village	Structure			Population
	Compact	Poly-nuclear	No. of Subvillage Units	
DELTA VILLAGES				
Kafr el-Elow (Fakhouri)*		x	3	8,000
Sirs al-Layyan (Critchfield) (Berq'ue)	x		-	22,000
Shubra el-Gedida (Harik)	x			6,200
UPPER EGYPT				
Dahmit (Callender)		x	24	about 2,000
Berat (Critchfield)		x	11	" 8,000
Silwa** (Ammar)	x			3,500
Ismailia (Haikal) (Fernea)			(naga')	146

*Authors of studies.

**Silwa is administrative headquarters for 10 villages.

We learn from Callender[67] and el-Zein[68] that prior to the submergence of some Nubian villages by the floodwaters of the Aswan Dam, the district territorial units would be formed around water wheels (<u>saqia</u>).[69] Speaking of a settlement in that area, he remarks that although it (Dahmit) is classified as a village, ". . . it consists of 24 separate villages where inhabitants belong to at least 12 tribes."[70] Each village consists of a discrete cluster of houses, most with less than 100 residents. Another village, Berat, in Middle Egypt, is less fragmented but is still composed of 11 "distinctly separate agricultural settlements, each close to its ancestral fields and possessing its own identity."[71]

Levels of settlement dispersion are of direct relevance to policy related concerns such as delivery of services and administrative matters, though this fact is generally overlooked. The tendency to establish combined centers which provide health, education and other services in the largest village in a poly-nuclear arrangement can obviously hinder access by those in surrounding, smaller communities, especially if road connections to the central village are poor. It would thus seem that Delta villages, mostly either compact settlements or, if poly-nuclear, with only a small number of satellite communities enjoy certain advantages in service access compared to those in Upper Egypt. "Population-per-service" formulas used to assign the distribution of services do not take such differences into account.

Awareness of such potential problems is evidenced in newly established settlements on reclaimed lands, which apparently duplicated the common nuclear-satellite pattern existing in older communities.

Tadros observes that concentration of services in central villages can deprive those in sub-villages of services.[72] Furthermore, in connection with efforts to strengthen local administration and involvement in local development projects, Stanfield observes a similar bias: central villages are usually selected for local projects, enjoying a dominant position within the local popular councils. To counter this imbalance he suggests that satellite village development committees be organized.[73]

In addition to the other points made so far, the matter of social differences between physically distinct yet administratively united communities is one that merits much closer attention in future research.

The significance of socio-historical factors is borne out by the experience of numerous communities in Nubia. Callender describes how the former identity between tribe and village was washed away with the flood waters of the Aswan Dam (after 1933), to no longer exist in the newly founded communities.[74] The village as the residence unit became secondary to the tribe in defining individual rights and obligations. Another interesting feature discovered by Callender under these circumstances of tribal primary was that the new and more socially heterogenous communities lacked formal organization, had no village, for example. Instead, ". . . leaders represent lineage segments rather than residential groupings." [75] This situation is quite

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*Tadros, commenting on the same area, remarks that tribal affinities have stood in the way of the administrator-settler relationship in now culturally pluralistic communities bringing together three major ethnic and lineage groups.(p. 18)

unlike that described by Berque: the compact, non-tribal Delta village of Sirs al-Layyan, with its full complement of village head-man and sheikhs representing each quarter of the village.[76]

The matter of tribal versus non-tribal structure constitutes a central element in Fernea's effort to typologize Middle Eastern villages.* Subsumed under tribal heritage which is his main dividing criterion, he adds degree of urban influence, economic dependence, outside political dominance, etc. (see in Antoun and Harik, p. 77).[77] Applying his schema to Egypt, Upper Egyptian villages like Ammar's Silwa are characterized as tribally organized with a high degree of urban influence and politically dominated by the center.[78] He asserts that the prototype of villages lacking tribal organization, with a high degree of urban influence and politically administered will ". . . surely be found in the Egyptian village" of the Delta.[79] In both regions, but especially in the Delta, rapidly expanding cities have either absorbed surrounding villages or have reduced distances to

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*In the same collection of essays de Planol suggests a three-fold breakdown of Middle Eastern rural societies which in essential respects parallels Fernea's:

1. Urban dominated rural societies
2. Autonomous rural societies
3. Rural societies with nomadic ancestry (p. 103)

The nomadic or tribal factor had been historically important in that "sedenterization . . . considerably enlarged the power of the sheikh who was promoted to the position of large landlord." (p. 108). Over most of the present day Middle East, including Egypt, the dual processes of sedenterization and the granting of land title to sheikhs or tribal heads had occurred under the aegis of Ottoman rule. The result in most countries in the region has been a highly polarized landownership structure in villages settled by former nomads. Such consequences seem to have been minimal in the tribally organized Nubia.

them, transforming some into commuting villages, as in the case of Kafr el-Elow, a Delta community studied by Fakhouri, and in Nubia Dar es-Salaam, examined by Kennedy, from which most males commute to work in nearby Aswan.

2.2.4 New Communities Established through Resettlement and Sedenterization of Nomads:*

In addition to the resettlement of those displaced by the Aswan Dam project in Nubia, successive Egyptian governments have developed programs to relocate villagers from overpopulated areas of the Nile Valley and Delta and resettle them on newly reclaimed land in planned agricultural communities. A parallel effort, though on a smaller scale, has been underway to sedenterize nomads. These schemes have given rise to new and diverse sorts of communities which, among other things, are of interest as instances of the most direct governmental control. Information about them is largely restricted to reports and surveys prepared by the government agencies involved in these efforts.[80]

Two reports will be reviewed here (Tadros, 1975, Anwar, 1965) to convey the broad nature of resettlement activities and the social and economic questions pursued by investigators initially to lay the groundwork for and then to evaluate the performance of the various settlement, tenure, administrative, and social structures experimented with.**

**Three major community types were created on the basis of land tenure differences: tenant, landowner, and state farms. Both reports deal with the first two. Tadros excludes state farms because ". . . the whole process of cultivation is carried out by seasonal agricultural migrants and hence they do not form real communities per se."[81]

*See Appendix, pages 68 and 69.

Tadros, in the more detailed of the two studies, provides us with an overview of the goals, scope and administrative structure of such schemes nationally, and then turns his main focus upon two communities established in the Northwestern Delta area. Anwar reports on activities centered in Beheira and Fayyoum to resettle villagers formerly resident in Menufia, Dakahha and Beni' Suef (all Middle Egyptian) provinces. He details stage-by-stage the process of selecting candidate provinces, districts, and villages. Criteria employed were provincial density, village size, and for narrowing down the eligible villages, distance of villages from centers with non-agricultural work opportunities. Additionally, villages relatively well off in terms of service availability and number of land reform beneficiaries were eliminated from consideration. Settlers were drawn from amongst the poorest elements, the landless. Tadros argues that exclusive selection of poor, illiterate peasants weakened the fledgling communities from the outset. His reasoning incorporates assumptions about social change discussed and criticised in Part I: "The past twenty-five years of accumulated social science knowledge . . . has shown that people at the absolute bottom of the economic structure are the most resistant to change."[82] Perhaps more to the point and less assailable is his view that over-emphasis on resettling agriculturists led to serious occupational imbalance, depriving the communities of important services.

Aside from the basic tenure structures in the communities studied, the two reports convey the wide range of settlement structures experimented with. Strengths and weaknesses of each type

provide some basis for drawing parallels with similar older communities. According to Anwar, the first community established was of the compact type. This arrangement proved undesirable in that several farmers had to trek up to 2 km. to and from their fields. Consequently, nuclear-satellite arrangements (placing farmers closer to their land) were tested, at first with as many as sixteen separate housing clusters but in the latest form reduced to three. Tadros reports similarly variable structures among new settlements which, incidentally, are called "farms" (or _mezra'a_); all are polynuclear with one assigned the position of the service and administrative center and between two to fifteen sub-village units attached to it.

Adjustments made in settlement structure have amounted to an effort to strike a balance between enhancing social service availability and community participation, purportedly maximized in a compact arrangement, against the problem of distance of farmers to their fields which tends to diminish in a collection of smaller settlements. As already indicated, the idea that community participation is hindered by restricting institutions and services to central villages has recently found its way into the thinking of policy-makers concerned with the older settlements as well. On the issue of social cohesion/conflict a critical difference exists between old and newly established communities. In the former, constituent families are likely to vary more widely in terms of wealth (and occupation) than the new settlers, who are either all laborers, tenants or if landowners, and start off with equal parcels of land. Another difference is that

cohesive forces like kinship and other long-standing community ties are likely to be weakened in resettlement. On this, the comments of Fahim on the transfer of Nubians to the newly reclaimed land of Kom Obo, "New Nubia," are worth quoting:

> In Nubia, the neighborhoods tended to be based on tribal affiliations and ceremonies were tribe-oriented. In New Nubia, the tribally based neighborhoods have disappeared as the government assigned people to houses on the basis of family size rather than old neighborhood ties.[83]

Tadros speaks of a strong propensity of settlers to retain ties to communities of origin, as reflected in visiting, marriage, and burial patterns; within the new "farms" themselves, visiting and mutual assistance also tend to follow kinship and place of origin lines.

That reports of the kind just reviewed are rich sources of information can be appreciated by the broad coverage of Tadros' work: residential patterns, mutual aid, inter-family relations, community services and community structure, including political and religious organizations, are touched upon. Furthermore, research conducted on villages of origin and on the new communities themselves at various phases of development cited by Anwar also constitute important sources of data, in themselves, and fill in some gaps in academically oriented, published works.

Settlement of nomads and semi-nomads, an activity concentrated in the Northwestern coastal region, presents us with yet another varient of social transition. Here we are confronted with tribally organized groups, which until recently had operated under a system of communal land ownership and their own three-century-old legal code based on the Shari'a (i.e., Islamic law).[84] Their main source of

livelihood had been animal husbandry, mainly the raising of sheep. Former social arrangements have evidently been profoundly affected by State action.

As its primary instrument to encourage settlement, the Government converted most of the tribal land--75% between 1965-1970--to individual ownership.[85] Further, tribal chiefs' authority has been apparently eroded by the new dual role chiefs now found themselves in: both as representatives of the State and spokesmen for the tribe.86 This development and the rather recent shift from communal to individual tenure certainly merit greater research attention than they have thus far received.

A final note on villages as a level of analysis: There are several studies, for example Gadalla's on "reproductive norms," which while directed at several communities (in Gadalla's case, three) fail to indicate how village level differences affect their findings. It would be an improvement to select communities differing in ecological or social conditions for comparative purposes, and see how such differences influence research outcomes.

2.3 Sub-village Categories and Levels of Analysis

Some of the sharpest disputes and most difficult definitional problems, even among those professing similar theoretical or ideological orientations, surround the issue of what is to be related to what within village communities and the rural sector in general. For to select out certain elements over others is not only a reflection of an investigator's academic specialization but also, and more

importantly, projects an implicit theory of relations and of how societies function or should function.

Some of the major categories encountered in the literature on rural Egypt are the rather familiar ones of social class, social strata, occupational groups, individuals, or individuals grouped by their attitudes, kinship groups and tribes. Here I will explore the links between theoretical orientation, level of analysis, scope of analysis (mainly community studies versus those national in scope) and the tendency to adopt certain categories over others. A further question to be raised is how these conceptual complexes, if we might call them that, relate to findings or conclusions. As a focal point for comparison I will contrast study types according to how integral social strata or classes are to these studies as analytical categories.

At the outset, the most striking differences appear between community studies, in which reference to class or strata is virtually absent, and the prominent position of such categories in other sorts of studies purporting to analyze rural, political, social and economic dynamics at the national level. A partial reason for the significance of stratification and class analysis in work concerned with rural conditions from a national perspective is historical. In Egypt the political revolution of 1952, which overthrew the monarchy, coincided with a series of sweeping measures aimed at the rural sector, in particular, agrarian reform. Among other things, this reform was designed to eliminate the old regime's rural support base, the large absentee landlords. Prominence of agrarian reform as a spearhead of socio-economic change in the countryside elevated the question of

redistribution of power and wealth to center stage, becoming the focus of most social, economic and political analyses in the post-revolutionary era. To assess the redistributive picture, it has obviously been necessary to apply some scheme differentiating the peasantry at least in terms of wealth. Most observers commenting on where things stood two decades or so after the revolution point to mounting differentiation and polarization in the countryside. Why then have those issues attracted so little attention in community studies?

2.3.1 Community Studies: Why the Deemphasis on Stratification?

Since it is social anthropologists who have been most active in producing this genre of research, a good place to begin answering this question is Jacques Berque's definition of a village: ". . . a collection of families or clans of diverse size, each linked to the others by a system of spatial, lineage, ritual and economic relations . . .[87] To merely fault such conceptualizations and their consequences as suffering from a kinship or ritual fetish would be too facile a criticism to make. Even Marxists writing on peasant society have had to come to conceptual and theoretical grips with the persistent significances of kinship as an organizing principle, even in economies or communities dominated by capitalist production and exchange relations.* What is questionable is the way some authors of

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*One response has been to pose such theoretical constructs as "articulated modes of production."

community research use kinship to displace other possible bases for relations.[88]

Berque, Fakhouri and Ammar see in kinship a key factor leveling social and economic differences. (According to Ammar, for example, several generations of endogamy are said to have attenuated social and economic contrasts.)[89] The size and membership limits of the kinship groups spoken about are never made clear, however. It almost seems as if the authors, who acknowledge that the idea of common descent and ultimate links to the Prophet tend to be mythical, accept this myth themselves as actually reflecting social and economic realities of a community. We do learn of some inter-kinship rivalry in village politics though this is said to occur among large groupings, especially lineages. But whether these aggregates differ much in terms of wealth, occupation, etc. remains open to speculation90 Certainly a degree of socio-economic homogenity is likely to be enforced through mahr or bride price levels, among marriage-related kin. Also, if village political position has something to do with number of kin residing in a village, the positive relationship between wealth and extended families and poverty or landlessness and nucleation (due, among other things, to out-migration) may have some bearing on the role of kinship here.

It can be argued therefore that to introduce kinship in the global or structural terms that it usually is, divorced from economic or other considerations, masks linkages that might otherwise be uncovered. This tendency is accentuated by either a lack of problem-orientation or a pseudo-problem orientation such as that

counterposing the "modern" with the "traditional"; what often seems to follow are statements on how faithfully a traditional or ideal pattern (for example, parallel cousin marriage) has been preserved. The Nubian studies by Fernea and his team make this a matter for empirical investigation and do so in relation to severe livelihood adjustments the subject communities and their members had to make. As Fernea puts it:

> . . . the kinship group constitutes a network of possible relations which can be functionally significant under certain conditions.91

Besides kinship, community studies commonly resort to intergenerational comparison as a way to assess change, again usually in modernization terms; the young and the old, fathers and sons, are contrasted on how they differ in their consumption patterns, clothing styles, educational levels and so on. Typically each generation and the shifts between them are left undifferentiated in terms of wealth. Works outside the community study genre, like Binder's on the rural social background of those holding politically influential positions (in the "second stratum") and Akeel's on the social class origins of engineers indicate there to be a good deal of selectivity into these political and occupational positions by rural class or strata background.

A final note on the holistic approach held out by anthropologists as one of their greatest contributions in viewing societies; too often in the studies reviewed, holism has actually meant selecting fragments of society one at a time for self-contained analysis, kinship, occupations, ritual, etc. This implies and conveys the idea that these spheres are disconnected at the community level and if

connected to anything at all are linked separately by vague forces of modernization emanating from the outside.

2.3.2 Use or Non-Use of Social Class and Findings

The connection between analytical categories and findings can be highlighted by comparing various interpretations of the experience with the agrarian reform and associated programs; were they a success or a failure and in either case, why?

Those employing some measure of class as their main unit of analysis are virtually unanimous in passing an unfavorable verdict about the post-Revolutionary experience so far and point to growing social and economic polarization in the countryside, especially since 1970.

According to Richards (1980), the agricultural crisis in Egypt stems ". . . from the class structure, the distribution of resources and the social bases of both Nasser's and Sadat's regimes. . . ."[92] This view implies a linkage between rural social elements and the national political structure. This political-economic ensemble is termed "state capitalist agriculture";[93] the contradictions inherent in such a structure are said to have blocked the country from making any significant advances. Another observer, Toth, also refers to shifts in class structure but moves beyond Egypt's national

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*Radwan maintains that the agrarian reform ". . . has largely transformed the relations of production from semi-feudalist, semi-capitalist into capitalist relations." (p. 38)

boundaries to a "world systems framework"; the class relations in the countryside are to be understood in terms of Egypt's dependent capitalist position in the world capitalist economy;* the key problem being "how was the state to finance economic development."[94] Toth characterizes the process of bureaucratic penetration into the countryside as ". . . bureaucratic subjugation of rural peasants . . ." (p. 140): "the state had merely replaced the aristocratic land lords."[95]

Among those who either leave out class or stratification from their analyses altogether or consider such things to be secondary, reviews on the post-revolutionary period are mixed rather than universally adverse. Two particular studies merit close comparison, Harik's and Mayfield's. Both address the issue of the State-village/r relationship and how it may have been affected by the introduction of new institutions at the village level: the village councils, the party branches and agricultural cooperatives. Yet, both authors differ markedly both in approach and findings.

Briefly, Harik's is a study of a single Delta village, his analysis and findings based on sample surveys, informants and participant observations. Mayfield attempts to come up with a composite national picture relying on interviews, reference to official documents and reports and extensive travel. Harik acclaims the experience to have been relatively successful, that it broadened the local political participatory base, thereby enhancing national integration, and

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*The ruling class is neither "completely unified nor fragmented . . . it oscillates according to critical cycles of capital expansion and contraction in the core."

amounted to a fundamental change. Mayfield disagrees; the new institutions, especially the village councils, had failed to displace traditional power structures; accomplishments fell far short of intentions. Just how well founded Mayfield's rather dismal assessment is remains an open question simply because the connection between evidence and generalization is left vague. Harik, in contrast, does carefully lay out for the reader how he reached his conclusions, including a translation of his questionnaires and information about his sample.

Harik's analysis occurs basically at two levels: community and individual. On social and economic differences he does refer to some politically articulate young villagers "who spoke of the ". . . rise of a bourgeois class of cultivators benefitting most from the agrarian reform."[96] While agreeing that ". . . a certain degree of socioeconomic differentiation is apparent in Shubra," he maintains that "while occupation, economic condition, and education are factors, social status seems to depend on the individual and the impression he makes."[97] In other words, he substitutes a subjective measure, social status, in place of an objective social fact brought to his attention. Harik's analysis of attitude structures accordingly underplays such differences. He asserts: "any effort to make sense of the current Shubra scene has to focus on individuals rather than on social classes or primary groups" (p. 212).[98] Kinship relations are of little social or political consequence having largely been displaced by the "political system" (p. 214). As evidence for this last contention he points to a weak correlation between patrilocal residence and

authoritarianism" (p. 214), surely a rather restricted view of kinship. Dismissal of primary or kinship group importance contradicts much of the literature on village or rural politics in the country.

Mayfield, for one, argues that "kinship is the one standard no traditional leadership position can ignore"; he cites a case of domination of all the local institutions by a single family. Similarly, Binder indicates that the significance of kinship at the village level extends to district, provincial and national political and administrative positions; office holders above the village level are likely to have or have had a relative filling the post of village headman. Ammar, writing much earlier at the start of the revolutionary period finds ". . . strong evidence that kinship relations and not party politics decide the issue of elections . . ." (p. 97).[99]

Harik does speak of groups of individuals but these are distinguished by individual attitudinal or other traits except for wealth traits; we are told about "opinion leaders," of differences between those who travel more than others, etc., but are left ignorant as to whether there is some relationship between these characteristics and socio-economic background or position.

Nieuwenhuijze's comment about empirical studies, like Harik's, seems to be borne out in this case: in empirical studies there is a tendency to move away from stratification as a general proposition towards some aspects of symptoms, such as mobility, career patterns or status awareness" (p. 54).[100]

Turning to Mayfield, his level of analysis is as already stated, national; the two parties to the relationship he proposes to evaluate are the state bureaucracy and bureaucrats, representing a secular, socialist ideology, i.e., the agents of change; and on the other side the unwilling subjects, termed undifferentiatedly as the "Egyptian Fellah." The core problem is one of "legitimacy." Any limited acceptance of programs by the peasantry that was registered occurred by virtue of the charismatic influence of an individual, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the President. Overall, however, the cultural gap was too wide to bridge; the Government was trying to do too much too soon; the experiment was overcentralizing. These last points can be contrasted with the views of some who employ class in their analysis; among them Richards in essence argues that the government intervention into the rural sector was not deep enough. On recent moves to decentralize planning he says: "It remains to be seen whether this is genuine decentralization or is merely a way for the government to forget about agriculture."[101] Some Marxists would agree with Mayfield that the bureaucracy was subjugating the peasantry. But their reasons are radically different. For Mayfield the problem is one of cultural violence perpetrated by state structure and ideology, out of step with rural cultural realities. For Marxists it is the way Government intervention has occurred at the expense of the poor that disapproval tends to be based. Returning to Mayfield, socio-economic differences that may have existed within the rural sector are not dealt with and do not have to be given the premises and level at which Mayfield approaches his problem and seeks to explain observed phenomena.

The overall approach embodied in Mayfield's work continues to surface, as in the form of a recent dissertation on a "proposed model for Egyptian village government" for population-oriented development.[102] Hassan's proposals are premised on the idea that development programs, including population control, had foundered because of the way the relationship between central government and villages had been structured: in essence a problem of communication.* Correctives he suggests include ideological reformation, essentially the use of Islamic (not Socialist) ideology to garner peasant acceptance and support for programs.

On this matter of population control Gadalla, among others, de-emphasizes ideology as the critical problem. Rather, he indicates that factors like the value of children's labor in agriculture may be more significant, something especially true for small farmers unable to afford hired workers.[103] On Iran, and in a study which could well serve as a model for similar work in Egypt, Azami states that "development of social and cultural differentiation in village communities . . . will have a considerable impact on the peasants' fertility, both as value and behavior."[104] He observes that although differential fertility between rural and urban areas has attracted extensive attention, ". . . the study of fertility differences within rural communities . . ." has not.[105] Doing so he finds a positive association between landholding and fertility.[106] To reach this conclusion he had to devise a way to distinguish villagers by wealth.

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*Sukkary concurs with Mayfield and Hassan that ". . . incongruity between nationional and local ideologies is one of the main reasons for the persistence of traditional political values and organizations."

2.3.3 Definitions of Class, Strata, Poverty and Wealth

In this last section I will outline some of the different ways devised to convey rural socio-economic differences and indicate where some of the more perplexing issues in doing so seem to arise.

Land ownership distinctions are almost universally resorted to as at least the first step in distinguishing agricultural producers in terms of wealth. Where major differences do emerge is at the next stage, deciding upon the basis to subdivide owners into meaningful categories. Frequently, all that is done is to impose some arbitrary cut-off points--large, small, medium--the result being discrete, land ownership strata unrelated to each other or to anything else. Others, particularly those claiming Marxist-orientation, have attempted to establish junctures at which quantitative differences in land-holdings correspond to qualitative differences in production relations. Among non-Marxists, this may also be done though in a more limited sense; to fix minimum plot size able to sustain a family--a poverty floor--or, perhaps, to assess the comparative efficiency of different size farms.

Because so many of Egypt's rural families are either land-less or small-holders, interest in specifying the minimum subsistence holding has been general. Much of the work on this issue was developed to monitor the level of poverty in the countryside and to see what impact, if any, distributive measures may have had on it. On this there appears to be a general consensus that families with less than 2 feddans lack a sufficient base with which to meet their own consumption needs. Radwan establishes this subsistence floor by

figuring income from 2 feddans to be barely adequate to secure a minimum diet (measured in calories).

Beyond this point of agreement* substantial variations emerge on how to proceed in assessing differences among the peasantry. Abdel-Fadil is prominent among those who stress production and material factors. He defines Egypt's rural social classes in accordance with a process of differentiation conceived along three main axes: (1) the magnitude of wage employment; (2) the level of farm mechanization; (3) land use differences instigated by the fact that "economies of scale in fruit cultivation and other highly valued crops has led to an increasing number of rich farmers specializing in their cultivation"[109] (p. 20). By applying these criteria he comes up with four classes:[109]

(1) Poor farmers with less than 2 feddans must sell labor to survive.

(2) Small farmers with 2-5 feddans; the "family-operated farms par excellence"; basically subsistence oriented; rely almost entirely on unpaid family labor.

(3) Middle Farmers: with 5-20 feddans; these are in a position to accumulate some surplus and utilize some hired labor.

(4) Rich Farmers: with over 20 feddans; rely almost totally on hired labor; grow vegetables and fruits; many own agricultural machinery.**

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*And agreement on the dismal position of landless laborers, especially casual laborers, the Tarahil.

**El-Deeb presents 1961 figures which show that 74% of tractors in the country were owned by farmers with 20 feddans or more. Ownership in the 5-feddan or below categories is negligible.

Toth proposes to further subdivide the rich farmer class into owners of 20-50 and over 50 feddans, saying that ". . . they varied considerably in their orientation toward market production, risk taking and labor management."[110]

El-Abdel's emphasis on land use distinctions merits some elaboration. Frequent reference is made to the tendency of large landowners to specialize in the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. Binder refers to percent acreage devoted to vegetables as a proxy for wealth and polarization at the district and provincial levels. He observes that cultivation of such crops had been concentrated in the Delta 'ezab, formerly operated by wealthy absentee landlords.[111] Delta village studies mention the same phenomenon. El-Fadil's main explanation, economies of scale advantages afforded the wealthy, appears to be only part of the picture. Richards points to the variety of structural factors, village rotation system, crop quotas, and so on instituted by the State which have frozen small holders out of these more lucrative activities. This strongly implies that rural class identity and fortune cannot be divorced from political forces at the center and links to them.

2.3.4 Subjective Views of Class

Subjective views of class distinctions or their denial figure most prominently in the community studies of Fakhouri, Berque, Ammar and Harik. Since I already speculated as to the possible reasons for this tendency, I will here elaborate a bit on how this subjectivity

is expressed.

In denying or down-playing socio-economic differences, Ammar, Fakhouri and Berque cite kinship--the idea that "my cousin is no better than myself"; that village life is suffused with a sense of egalitarianism, of shared life style, etc. Also common is the interchangeable use of terms like "social rank," "social status," and "social class," a mix of positional, subjective and relational terms as equivalents. To illustrate this point let me quote Fakhouri: He predicts that in Kafrel-Elow ". . . the relatively unstratisfied village population will gradually be replaced by a class structured community in which status and social mobility are based on personal achievement."[112] The particularist note upon which Fakhouri ends his prediction is also strong in Harik's work, as indicated earlier. Class is viewed as a sensation or perception of difference, indicated again by Fakhouri. He cites the feeling of superiority held by village old-timers toward more recent arrivals as an example of class distinctions.

2.3.5 The Problem of Occupational Heterogeneity:

Staying with Fakhouri, he describes a highly differentiated occupational structure, one of shopkeepers, civil servants, peddlars, commuting factory workers and so on. This situation seems to be the rule rather than the exception in the communities we are able to get a glimpse at through the literature.

While not dismissing other fundamental theoretical flaws,

it is to this coexistance of agricultural and non-agriculturally employed people in a community that one can attribute much of the inconsistency and confusion surrounding efforts to differentiate villagers.

No common theoretical framework for doing so exists. Some have been tried; Fakhouri, Binder and others have gone only so far as to label certain non-agricultural jobs as traditional and lumping them together with farming. Harik draws a broad distinction between laborers and a motley group of all cultivators appended to shopkeepers and officials who "enjoy higher economic and social standing." Occupational mobility frequently comes to mean any movement out of agriculture into non-agricultural work.

Akeel's effort to grapple with this problem in his paper on the class origins (basically father's class) of Egyptian engineer-technocrats is revealing. As long as he keeps rural and urban sectors separate, his categories are comprehensible. But when he attempts to fuse them into an "upper," "middle" and "lower" strata arrangement he runs into serious difficulties; for instance the middle category combines traditional entrepreneurs and middle level cadre; at the most intuition determines who is to go where in such schemes. Marxist theory is also incapable of contributing much to surmount this problem; while it may be able to define and parallel the capitalist and proletariat classes in either sector, those in between pose serious conceptual difficulties.[113]

Any attempt to resolve such a complex set of issues would take me well beyond the scope of this review. It will have been enough merely to have stressed the fundamental conceptual difficulties and distortions which arise in studies involving urban and rural life simultaneously. Such studies cover a wide range of topics: migration, politics, "social mobility," class transformation and class relations, to name some of the more important ones. An adequate theoretical framework is lacking for comparison across rural agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Problems inherent in the modernization literature, one effort to address this need, have been alluded to in the paper. The inadequacies of this and other approaches become most apparent in dealing with social differentiation in a consistent and meaningful way.

Overall, the wide variety of studies covered highlight this and other problems which might have, in a more limited review, gone undetected. Hopefully, future studies will correct some of the theoretical and substantive problems and gaps identified here.

NOTES

[1]See L. Binder (ed.), The Study of the Middle East (New York: Wiley, 1976), p. 173, on Egyptian anthropologists' policy orientation and in the same volume, p. 528 on sociologists attached to various ministries and research institutes; also, Hassan El-Saaty, "Sociologyand Development in Contemporary Egypt," Die Dritte Welt, 5:2-3, 1977, p. 242-255.

[2]Examples are: Mahomed Aly El-Torky, "Alternatives for Delivering Primary Health Care in Rural Egypt" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1980); Ibrahim Ahmed Rizk, "The Influence of Infant and Child Mortality on the Reproductive Behavior of Women in Rural Egypt: Combining Individual and Community Level Data" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1979); Abdel-Moneim Mohammed Badr, "Rural Development and Rural Income: The Cases of Egypt and Kenya and A New Rural Development Program for Egypt" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1978); Frederick DeWolfe Miller, "Studies on Schistosomiasis in Rural Egypt Following the Construction of the Aswan High Dam" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1978; Hamied N. H. Ansari, "The Rural Elite: A Study of its Role in Egyptian Social and Political Development" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1979); Soheir Amin Morsy, "Gender, Power and Illness in an Egyptian Village" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1978); Abdel-Salem Hassan, "Population-Oriented Development: A Proposed Model for Egyptian Village Government" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1977); and Mostafa M. Noury, "The Impact of the Individual and Rural Community Variables on the Adoption of New Farm Practices in Rural Egypt" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Iowa State University, 1973).

[3]The most extensive critical treatment of orientation is to be found in Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1978. According to Binder, op. cit. pp. 9-10: orientalism tended to emphasize intellectual history or ideal self-image and were ". . . all too often content to summarize the meaning of civilization on the basis of a few manuscripts."

[4]Richard Antoun and Ilya Harik (eds.), Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 3.

5Henry Rosenfeld, "An Overview and Critique of the Literature on Rural Politics and Social Change," in Richard Antoun and Ilya Harik, ibid., p. 45. See also Mahmoud Auda, "Social Development in Rural

Egypt: An Identification of the Phenomena of Underdevelopment and a View for Development," Die Dritte Welt, 5:2-3, 1977, pp. 263-290, who dissociates himself from the American school of rural sociology which he faults with isolated, ahistorical treatment of the complex phenomenon of development; and Eickelman's comments on functionalism in Mid-East anthropology, in Dale F. Eickelman, The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), p. 47.

[6] Ibid., p, 47.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 55.

[9] John G Kennedy, Struggle for Change in a Nubian Community: An Individual in Society and History (Palo Alto, Cal.: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1977), p. 78

[10] Rosenfeld, op. cit., p. 55.

[11] See for example the discussion by Aidan Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," New Left Review, No. 107, 1978, pp. 47-77.

[12] James F. Toth, "Class Development in Rural Egypt, 1943-1979," in T. K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), Processes of the World-System (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

[13] See Edward R. J. Owen, Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914: A Study in Trade and Development (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

[14] Hamed Ammar, Growing Up in an Egyptian Village: Silwa, Province of Aswan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954).

[15] Ibid., p. 39.

[16] Ilya Harik with Susan Randolph, The Political Mobilization of Peasants (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. 32.

[17] Jacques Berque, "The Modern Social History of an Egyptian Village," in Saad Edden Ibrohim and Nicholas S. Hopkins (eds.), Arab Society in Transition: A Reader (Cairo: American University of Cairo, 1977), p. 199.

[18] Hani Fakhouri, Kafr El-Elow: An Egyptian Village in Transition (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972.

[19]John G. Kennedy, Struggle for Change in a Nubian Community: An Individual in Society and History (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1977), p. 50.

[20]Janet Abu-Lughod, "Migrant Adjustment to City Life: The Egyptian Case," in Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Nicholas S. Hopkins (eds) in Arab Society in Transition (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1977).

[21]John G. Kennedy, "Occupational Adjustment in a Previously Resettled Nubian Village," in Robert A. Fernea, Contemporaty Egyptian Nubia, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1966), p. 370.

[22]Harik, op. cit., p. 212.

[23]We see this contradiction in James B. Mayfield, Local Institutions and Egyptian Rural Development (Ithaca: Rural Development Committee, Cornell University, 1974).

[24]L. Binder, In a Moment of Enthusiasm: Political Power and the Second Stratum in Egypt (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), p. 28.

[25]Ammar, op. cit.

[26]Ibid., p. 237.

[27]Fakhouri, op. cit., p. 41.

[28]See discussion of C. A. O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, "On Social Stratification and Societal Articularion: Prolegomena to Comparative Stratification Studies with Special Reference to the Middle East," in Commoners, Climbers and Notables: A Sample of Studies on Social Ranking in the Middle East (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).

[29]Richard Critchfield, Egypt's Fellahin (Hannover, N.H.: American Universities Field Staff Inc., 1976), p. 2.

[30]Ibid., p. 1.

[31]Mayfield, op. cit.

[32]Ibid., p. x.

[33]Ibid., p. 3.

[34]Ibid., p. 5.

[35]Ibid., p. 9.

[36]Henry Habib Ayrout, The Egyptian Peasant (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

[37]Ilya Harik with Susan Randolph, Distribution of Land, Employment and Income in Rural Egypt (Ithaca: Cornell University, Rural Development Committee, The Center for International Studies, 1979).

[38]See Harik (1974), op. cit.; Critchfield, op. cit.; Berque, op. cit.; Soheir Amin Morsy, "Health and Illness as Symbols of Social Differentiation in an Egyptian Village," Anthropological Quarterly, 53:3, 1980, pp. 153-161; Saad Gadalla, "The Influence of Reproductive Norms on Family Size and Fertility Behavior in Rural Egypt," in S. E. Ibrahim and Nicholas S. Hopkins (eds.), Arab Society in Transition: A Reader (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1977), pp. 323-342; Fakhouri, op. cit.; and S. Chesnin, "A Subclass of Egyptian Rural Elites" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1974).

[39]See Robert A. Fernea, Egyptian Contemporary Nubia (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press (Yale), 1966); Ammar, op. cit.; Soheir el Sukkary, "Structural Changes and Politicization in an Egyptian Village: The Case of Mit Rahina" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1978).

[40]Abd al-Bașit abd al-Ma'ti. Class Conflict in the Egyptian Village (Cairo: Dar al-Thiqafa al Jodida, 1977); and Critchfield, op. cit.

[41]Binder (1978), op. cit.

[42]Ibid., p. 26.

[43]Hussein Hilmy, Settlement of Nomads in Egypt. Paper presented to the Ad Hoc Consultation on the Settlement of Nomads in Africa and the Near East, FAO, Cairo, 1971.

[44]Rifky Anwar, Resettlement Program in the U.A.R. FAO, Development Center on Land Policy and Settlement for the Near East (Background Document #10) (Tripoli 1965).

[45]Mohamed Nazem Hanafi, Surplus Labour and the Problem of Disguised Unemployment in the Egyptian Agriculture (Cairo 1973).

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ammar, op. cit.

[48]Ibid., p. 216.

[49]Gadalla, op. cit.

[50]Harik (1974), op. cit., p. 7.

[51]Berque, op. cit., p. 194.

[52]Robert Mabro, The Egyptian Economy, 1952-1972 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 44.

[53]Antoun (1972), op. cit., p. 12.

[54]Harik (1974), op. cit., pp. 7 and 10.

[55]Critchfield, op. cit.

[56]Richard T. Antoun, "Pertinent Variables in the Environment of Middle Eastern Politics: A Comparative Analysis," in Richard Antoun and Ilya Harik (eds.), Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 2.

[57]Mayfield, op. cit., p. 116.

[58]Ibid., p. 92.

[59]L. E. Sweet (ed.). The Central Middle East: A Handbook of Anthropology and Published Research on the Nile Valley, the Arab Levent, Southern Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula and Israel (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1971), p. 8.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Binder (1978), op. cit., p. 225.

[62]Ibid., p. 87.

[63]Toth, op. cit., p. 128.

[64]Robert A. Fernea, "Integrating Factors in a Non-Corporate Community," in Robert A. Fernea (ed.), Contemporary Egyptian Nubia, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1966.

[65]Bahiga Haikal, "Residence Patterns in Ismailia, Balona," in R. A. Fernea, Contemporary Nubia (V 12) (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1966), pp. 289-297.

[66]Sweet, op. cit., p. 8.

[67]Charles Callender, "The Mehennab: A Kenuz Tribe," in Robert A. Fernea (ed.), Contemporary Egyptian Nubia, Vol. II (Nea Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1966, pp. 182-217.

[68]Abdel Hamid El-Zein, "Socio-Economic Implications of the Water-Wheel in Adendan, Nubia," in Robert A Fernea (ed.), Contemporary Egyptian Nubia, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1966), pp. 298-322.

[69]Callender, op. cit., p. 207.

[70]Ibid., p. 195.

[71]Critchfield, op. cit., Pt. 2, p. 6.

[72]Helmi R. Tadros, The Study and Evaluation of the Rehabilitation Process in the Newly Settled Communities in Land Reclamation Areas (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Social Research Center, 1975), p. xxxvii; Mayfield, op. cit., p. 85, also indicates that the vast majority of village councils, meant to be a key vehicle for peasant participation ". . . provide services for more than one 'natural' village . . . usually located in the largest village of the area . . ."

[73]Development Alternatives, Inc., Monitoring and Evaluating Decentralization: The Basic Village Services Program in Egypt (Washington, 1980), pp. 179-180.

[74]Callender, op. cit., p. 193. Also, Tadros, op. cit., pp. 18-20, commenting on the same area remarks that tribal affinities have stood in the way of the administrator-settler relationship (19-20) in now culturally pluralistic communities bringing together three major ethnic and lineage groups (p. 18).

[75]Ibid.

[76]Berque, op. cit., p. 201.

[77]Robert A. Fernea, "Gaps in the Ethnographic Literature on the Middle Eastern Village: A Classificatory Exploration," in Richard Atoun and Ilya Harik (eds.), Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 77.

[78]Ibid., p. 80.

[79]Ibid., p. 87. He describes the situation in the Delta as follows: Land reform and resettlement have contributed to the heterogenous character of Delta families; urban domination, formerly through absentee landlords has been translated into political domination: the Delta ". . . has in many ways become an enormous estate operated by the post revolutionary government . . ." p. 88.

[80]The main agency involved is the General Organization for Land Reclamation and Development (EGOLCD) assisted by four autonomous bodies: General Authority for Land Development and Agricultural

Projects (GALDAP); Executive Agency for Desert Projects (EADP); General Organization for Land Reclamation (GOLR).

The department with the most direct involvement in social matters is the Migration, Settlement and Community Development Department. Also, EGOLCD has set up a special Committee on Research and Evaluation, members include the Social Research Center of the AUC and the Agriculture faculties of Alexandria and Cairo Universities. Tadros, op. cit.

[81]Ibid., p. 11.

[82]Ibid., p. xix.

[83]Hussein H. Fahim, "Change in Religion in a Resettled Nubian Community, Upper Egypt," International Journal of Middle East Studies, 4:2, 1973, pp. 163-177, and republished in S. E. Ibrahim and Nicholas S. Hopkins (eds.), Arab Society in Transition: A Reader (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1977), p. 560.

[84]Hilmy, op. cit., p. 4.

[85]Ibid., p. 22.

[86]Tadros, op. cit., pp. 20-23.

[87]Jacques Berque, Histoire Sociale d'un Village Egyptian au XX'eme Siècle (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1957), p. 47.

[88]Eickelman, op. cit., p. 105, cites the tendency among anthropologists to evaluate kinship ". . . in terms of genealogical criteria instead of other bases of interpersonal relations . . ."

[89]Ammar, op. cit., p. 40.

[90]Morsy, op. cit., p. 154, maintains that ". . . a person's position in the village is determined by his/her kinship affiliation. Te power of families is in turn based primarily on wealth, measured in landholdings."

[91]Fernea (1966), op. cit. , p. 280.

[92]Alan Richards, "The Agricultural Crisis in Egypt," The Journal of Development Studies, 16:3, April 1980, p. 302.

[93]Ibid., p. 304.

[94]Toth, op. cit., p. 144.

[95]Ibid., p. 140.

[96]Harik (1974), op. cit.

[97]Ibid., p. 216.

[98]Ibid., p. 217; incidentally, in a later work published in 1979 (Distribution of Land, Employment and Income in Rural Egypt) Harik continues to object to the use of class to the Egyptian countryside; citing others' reference to landlord-tenant strife, he argues that these ". . . [do] not show that 'class struggle,' most applicable to industrialized societies, was . . . important . . ." pp. 10-11.

[99]Ammar, op. cit., p. 97.

[100]C.A.O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, "On Social Stratification and Societal Articulation: Prolegomena to Comparative Stratification Studies with Special Reference to the Middle East," in Commoners, Climbers and Notables: A Sample of Studies on Social Ranking in the Middle East (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 54.

[101]Richards, op. cit., p. 101.

[102]Abdel-Salam Hassan, "Population-Oriented Development: A Proposed Model for Egyptian Village Government" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1977).

[103]Gadalla, op. cit., pp. 338-339.

[104]Ismail Ajami, "Differential Fertility in Peasant Communities: A Study of Six Iranian Villages," in C. A. O. Van Nieuwenhuijze (ed.), Commoners, Climbers and Notables: A Sampler of Studies on Social Ranking in the Middle East (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 395.

[105]Ibid., p. 391.

[106]Ibid., p. 401.

[107]Samir Radwan, The Impact of Agrarian Reform on Rural Egypt (1952-1975). World Employment Program Research, ILO WEP 10-6/ 13, Geneva, 1977.

[108]Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil, Development Income. Distribution and Social Change in Rural Egypt, 1952-1970: A Study in the Political Economy of Agrarian Transition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 20.

[109]Ibid., pp. 41-49.

[110]Toth, op. cit., p. 129.

[111]Binder, op. cit., p. 224.

[112]Fakhouri, op. cit., p. 125.

[113]Mahmoud Hussein does, for example, speak jointly of the urban and rural "proletarianized masses." See, his Class Conflict in Egypt, 1945-1970.

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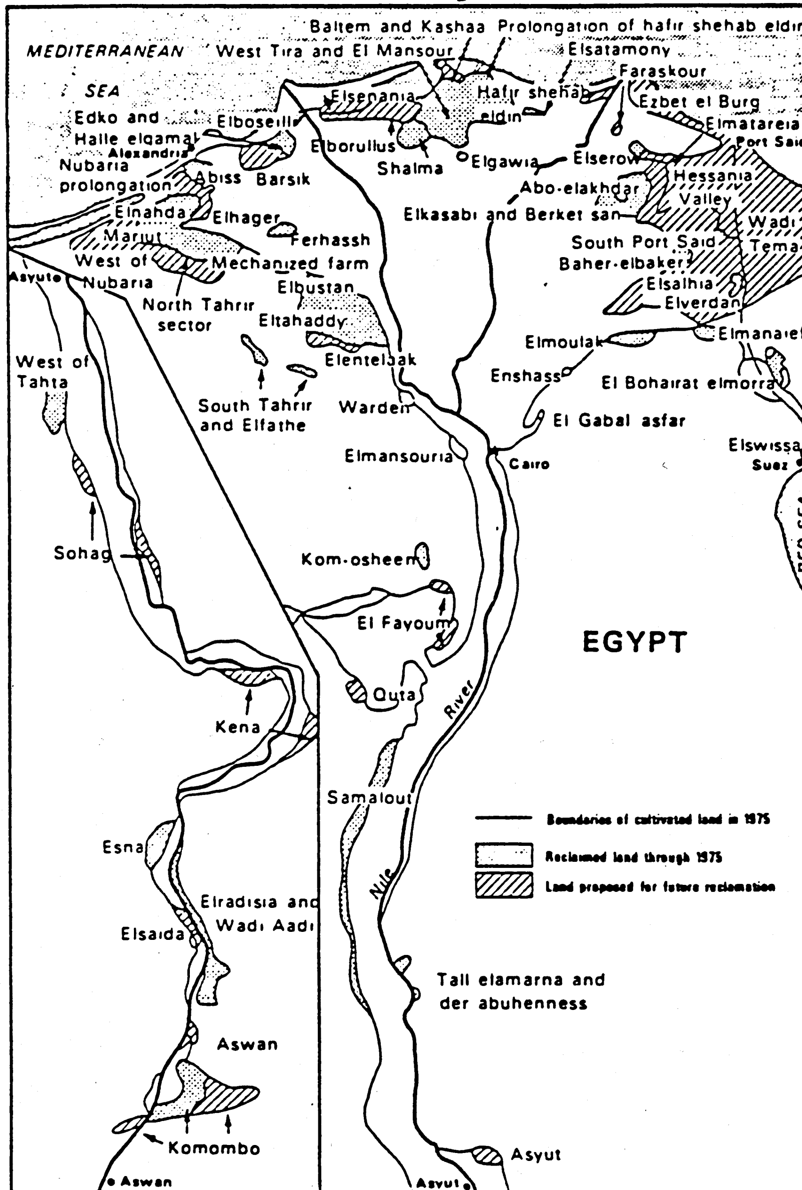
APPENDIX 1

LEVELS AND CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

Author of Study	Inter-national	Nation-al	Reg-ion-al	Pro-vin-cial	Village	Social Group	Occupa-tional Group	Social Class	Family/ Kinship	Individ-ual
Al-Ma'fi		?			x			x		
Harik (1974)		x			x	x	x			x
Ammar					x				x Kin	x
Fakhouri					x	x	x			x
Berque					x				x Kin	x
Critchfield			x		x	x			x Fam	x
Kennedy (1977)			x		x	x			x Kin	x
Horsy		x			x				x Fam	
Kennedy (1966)			x	x	x	x Tribe	x		x Kin	
Callender (1966)			x		x	x Tribe			x Kin	
Binder		x	x	x		x	x		x	
Richards		x						x		
Toth	x	x						x		
Mayfield		x					x		x Kin	x
Ayrout		x							x Kin	
Abdel-dil		x						x		
Radwan		x						x		
Harik		x	x			x			x Fam	
Fernea (1966)					x	x			x Kin	
Hussein	x	x						x		
El-Zein				Dis't	x	x			x Kin	

Areas of Reclaimed Land



Source: John Waterbury, Hydropolitics of the Nile Valley, p. 141.