Perspectives on Nasser Era Rural Egypt

Developmentalism, and understandings of progress and modernity in research published between 1954-2006

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Sammendrag

I 1952 startet Nasser-regimet flere prosjekter for å gjennomføre omfattende jordbruksreformer på landsbygden i Egypt, i et forsøk på å skape fremskritt og modernisering. Disse reformene fikk mye oppmerksomhet i forskningsverdenen, spesielt på 60-, 70- og 80-tallet. Samtidig som mye ble skrevet om disse reformene i den engelskspråklige forskningsverdenen, ble betraktelig mindre skrevet om vanlige landsbybeboeres opplevelse av denne moderniseringspolitikken. Generelt ble det gjennomført få feltarbeid på landsbygden i Egypt på 1950- og 1960-tallet, og relativt lite har blitt sagt om landsbybeboernes perspektiver på tidens forandringer.

Developmentalisme, en ledende dogme innen Midtøstenstudier, spesielt på 1960-80-tallet, hadde stor påvirkning på forskning som undersøkte Egypts landsbygd under Nasser-regimet. Denne masteroppgaven redegjør for hvordan forskning publisert mellom 1954-2006 (med hovedvekt på forskning publisert før 1983) ser på landsbygden i Egypt under Nasser-regimet. Fokuset ligger på developmentalistiske trekk ved denne forskningen, og generell forståelse av hva fremskritt og modernisering innebærer. Flere forståelser av fremskritt blir lagt frem, og det blir gjort rede for at fremskritt ikke er så ukomplisert som tidligere forskning ofte har gitt inntrykk av.

Stikkord: Egypt, landsby, developmentalisme, fremskritt, utvikling, modernisering

Contents

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Abbreviations

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

NGO - Non Governmental Organisation

EASS - Egyptian Association for Social Studies

RSC - Rural Social Centre

RRS - Rural Reconstruction Society

SSC - Social Service Centre

CU - Combined Unit

Chapter 1: Master Thesis and the Comparative Historiographical Approach

"The methodological argument against modernisation theories is not about the subject matter of history, but about how they structured these forces of change and progress in a 'logical' and causal order. As modernisation theories served as an analytical tool to explain when, how and why the Ottoman Middle East became a different, that is a modern, place, it is this structure that we need to deconstruct."

- Ilan Pappè (2014) p. 2

Introduction

In this chapter I will present my Research Questions for my master thesis. The theme of the thesis is a comparative historiographical approach to investigating and understanding the works of authors who conducted research in the period 1951-2006, on the rural population of Egypt during the Nasser era, the choice of theme and how it links to the Research Questions will be further discussed in this chapter. The first part will also include an introduction to the different topics that will be featured in this project. The second part will be a deeper dive into the methodology surrounding such an intricate topic as the comparative historiographical approach truly is. I will here try to explain and defend my choice of method, and explain why this is the right approach to understanding the research literature debating the Nasser era. Finally I will present selected research, focusing on the topic of Nasser era rural Egypt, which will be featured in upcoming chapters.

Chapter overview

The main topics I will focus on in coming chapters of this Master Thesis are:

Chapter 2 & 3: Background
Chapter 4: Perspectives on Agricultural Reform in Rural Egypt 1952-1970
Chapter 5: The Social and Cultural Approach to Rural Egypt 1951-1970
Chapter 6: Comparison of the RSC and CU programs, and Youth and Education reform

Part 1: Presenting the Master Project

In my quest for a topic for my master thesis I fell madly in love with the Post-British years of Egyptian history. This was a period filled with uncertainty and turmoil, massive social and political upheaval, the biggest reform projects ever implemented in the far stretches of rural Egypt and also a time when Egypt was defining itself, after the Egyptian territories had been under heavy influence of a British overlord. This led me to formulate two research questions.

Research questions

1. How does the portrayal of the rural population in Egypt between ca. 1950-1970 vary between different fields of research published between 1954-2006? I have selected research from this period on the assumption that it is representative of developmentalist research.

2. How were perspectives on Nasser era rural Egypt influenced by developmentalism?

Theme and topics

Linked to the above aforementioned research questions, research literature within several different categories will be used in the quest for answers. The literature will be narrowed down to include only literature in English, the goal being to do a historiographical investigation into the English speaking Western scientific world and their perspectives on rural Egypt. It should be mentioned that the researchers whose research I will use come from different backgrounds, some from the Western world and some from the Middle East, but all have in common that they were published by Western publishers, and written for a Western audience. The choice of basing my research on English literature is an attempt to understand Egypt in the post colonial years from the perspective of Western or Middle Eastern researchers, who were publishing mostly within a time period of developmentalist tradition in the social sciences. The topics of developmentalism and modernisation theory will have to be explained in order that the selected research into Nasser era rural Egypt featured later can be scrutinised as being more or less developmentalist in its presentation.

The empirical research that will be explored in this master thesis lay within the fields of applied economics, political sciences, technical studies, sociology and anthropology. In these fields of research I have found substantial enough material for an epistemological discussion pertaining to the era of modernism and developmentalist scientific research on Nasser era rural Egypt.

Part 2: From Orientalism to Developmentalism

For a long period during the 19th and 20th centuries, Western academic literature was viewed as the 'parent' of the Modern Middle East, defining what it was, and building the narrative around the identity of the 'orientals', people from the Middle East. This causal approach to understanding the different regions, which made up the old provinces, tributaries and junior allies of the Ottoman Empire in the period after the Great War (WWI) has been heavily criticised by researchers such as Edward Said and Ilan Pappè.[1] According to Hettne, in the 1960's developmentalism emerged as a leading school of thought pertaining to scientific inquiry into the modern Middle-East, after the period before had been dominated by another scientific grouping, retrospectively referred to as orientalism.[2]

The goal of my master thesis is to explore a broad variety of scientific material exploring the rural population of Egypt in the time period 1948-1970. The historiographical period 1960-1990 within social sciences on the topic of the Middle East, in broad terms, mostly fall within the category of developmentalist research and an interdisciplinary dogma called developmentalism. This thesis aims at exploring whether Egyptian historiography in the post-British era, especially material published between 1954-1982, was affected by a developmentalist understanding of events taking place in rural Egypt during the Nasser era.

The field of history

Already with *New Science* (1725) by Giambattista Vico, you find an example of the attempt to classify one style of writing as scientific history.[3] In the centuries following Vico, many changes would happen within the field of historical research. The process of defining what

[1] Said (1978), Pappè (2014)
[2] Hettne in Desai & Potter (2008) p. 8
[3] Vico (2002) p. 227-230, 233

was history began in this period, and gradually an idea of what defines a historian was formulated, and a new identity was born. The field of history was well established by the early 19th century.

Influences from other fields of research have since then changed the perspectives of history writing amongst historians. As history writing in the 19th and first half of the 20th century primarily centred on large political events and nation building projects, focusing more on economic questions rather than debate on social issues, a change happened during the 20th century.[4] The understanding of what was an acceptable source expanded, from Ranke and his contemporaries utilising only a narrow amount of diplomatic documents and other source material created by civil servants, to the abundance of varied sources used in historical research today.[5] The field has opened itself to use of a wide range of methodology, both within different types of quantitative methods but also the use of qualitative methods like interviews and field research. As a result different dogmas have developed within separate subfields of scientific historic research.

Historical research no longer limits itself to the use of documents by civil servants. Rather the use of almost any type of written material and in recent decades even the use of other forms of sources than is produced by keyboard, pen and paper, notably oral history, have been utilised. In this dissertation's comparative historiographical approach the source material will be limited to written material, yet this material originates in a wide assortment of academic fields of research within the social sciences.

Orientalism: The precursor to developmental studies

The European colonial era in relation to scientific research, means the period of imperialism where Western scientists made research in accordance with and often in support of colonial overlords influencing or colonising foreign lands across the continents. In the Middle East the gradual shrinking in the 19th century, and then total collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20th century, would set the stage for European expansion in the area. This

[4] Heiret (2013) p. 8-14
[5] Melve (2018) p. 36-37

pro-imperialist or at the minimum pro-Western scientific research would come to be defined as orientalist.[6]

Edward Said published a controversial, but well recognised critique of the orientalism[7] of the 19th and 20th century. In his book *Orientalism* (1978) he describes how the Orientalist approach to understanding the Middle East was not a product of the Middle Eastern world, but actually a constructed idea and cultural understanding of the region invented in Europe. Further he criticised the Orientalists for having a political agenda which shaped their research and leading to an unmistakable bias towards a common goal, namely to Westernise the Middle East.

In the English-speaking world with authors like Lane (1890) and Blackman (1927), Egypt has been described as part of the Orient, an excotic and foreign place a place often fantasised about by painters and poets, but also a place described as inferior to the West and in need of westernisation by leading scientists in the 19th and early 20th century. Their mode of research and writing has, quite derogatorily, been described as eurocentric[8] and elitist by later generations of scientists. In the beginning of his book on orientalism, Edward Said presents this quote:

> *"They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented."*[9]
>
> - Karl Marx

Karl Marx himself is here portrayed as an example of orientalism and orientalist rhetoric. Hinting at how orientalism is not just a phenomenon of art and culture, but ultimately an expression of power, which also affected the scientific community. Europe did for a long time view itself as the leading force of progressive development and modernisation in the world, and as a result western science had a 'help them' character. Another point made by Said is that the western industrialised world holds a *cultural* authority, beyond the authority which the forces of practical power (state bureaucracy, military, police) inflict on its subjects.

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[6] Said (1978) p. 1-4
[7] Academic Orientalism came into being in the late 18th century, and flourished until the mid 20th century. In the 1950's orientalists began favouring terms like Asian studies or Middle-Eastern studies to describe their work, and Oriental studies have been gradually falling into disuse.
[8] Eurocentric here means that they are trying to understand a world quite foreign to themselves by putting this foreign world into more comfortable terms, such as using models built to do research on Europe and then transposing these models onto the Middle East.
[9] Said (1978) p. 2

Orientalism is hegemonic, meaning it gives power and influence to the British and French over the peoples of the Middle East, because the westerners define the culture of the 'easterners' and what it entails.[10] In other words, the West backed up its hegemony over the Middle East through Orientalist thinking, and Orientalist academic research underpinned imperialist projects.

Importantly, Said points out that the West sees the 'oriental person' as some unchangeable entity, part of a large homogenous mass, existing within its ideal environment. Racists and imperialist sentiments can be traced in the undertone of Orientalist writing.[11] I think it's clear today to see that Said had a point in his critique of Western writers in the preceding two centuries. Now, quite removed from the European colonial era in the Middle East, which only ended gradually throughout the 20th century, it is easier to see the inherent racism and poorly concealed agenda of scientists writing about the Middle East in the period.

Interestingly some scholars have criticised Said of occidentalism,[12] flipping the coin back on him. They claim his writing presents the Western world as one entity, and creates an image of the Western world from the perspective of a non-Westerner such as himself, lacking nuance. Bernard Lewis on the other hand, one of the historians criticised in *Orientalism*, accused Said of politicising the scientific field of Middle-Eastern studies, by not scrutinising each individual scientific work, but throwing them all into the same derogatory category of 'orientalist' and 'anti-muslim' research.[13] Whether the critiques towards Said holds merit or not is not relevant here. What is more important to note here, and what in my understanding is the more fundamental point of postmodernist[14] thought, is that it is easy to criticise the 'others' while lacking in self critique. Rigorous scientific schooling does not automatically lead to critical self-reflection.

In my opinion, orientalism wasn't a leading school of thought for so long simply because of the power and influence of the Europeans, but because it was easy to see Europe as a leading

[10] Said (1978) p. 9-10 Said also discusses American imperialism, but points out how Orientalism is understood differently by American researchers.
[11] Said (1978) p. 11
[12] Occidentalism means a stereotyped image of Western society, here used as a reverse to orientalism.
[13] Lewis (1982) p. 1-18
[14] Postmodernism arose in the 1990's as a critique of how earlier and contemporary (modernist) social sciences focused on grand narratives, and lacked critical reflection around the dynamic nature of ideologies and sets of values and how these were used to legitimise and maintain political power.

cause of modernisation with the early mass industrialisation in Europe. While Europe forcibly expanded into the Middle East at the expense of the Ottomans and the local populace, European researchers were constructing an understanding of themselves as the leading thinkers of the world, it naturally befell researchers to deterministically define 'European progress' as the way forward towards betterment of the world's peoples. The opinions of dissenting locals from the region were deemed irrelevant, when the schools that mattered to most intellectuals were in Europe, or later also in North America or in Westernised universities, like the American University of Cairo.

Massive geopolitical events happening in the aftermath of WWII would have a huge impact on the Western scientific communities researching the Afro-Asian scene. Anti-imperialist notions as well as critical self-reflection within many fields of social sciences, would lead to the development of new dogmas in the Western research on Afro-Asia. Studies of political, social, economic and technological development in the 'developing world' was a common label put on research relating to the Middle-East and other parts of the world outside the West in postwar years, up until the 1990's. The common notion was that a part of the world, called the third world countries, were underdeveloped. It was observed that these countries were in the postwar years undergoing progressive developments, which it were believed would causally lead to modernisation. Thus a linear narrative was constructed of a backwards past with underdeveloped countries now moving towards a modernised future.

Modernism and development studies

Development studies is a branch of modern scientific research which came into existence as a result of the imagining of a new world order in the aftermath of the Korean war (1950-1953).[15] This new world order was that of the First World being the Western World and its allies, and the Second World being the Soviet Union and its allies. The Third World was thus seen as the remaining countries and territories of the world. These were the 'developing poor countries' who were not important actors in either the West or East Bloc, and who were defined by their lack of industrial and economic growth in recent decades, and were thus termed developing or poor countries.[16] The field was a relatively new branch of the social sciences, flourishing in the late 1960s. Modernisation theory contributed to its developmental

[15] Desai & Potter (2008) p. 4
[16] Desai & Potter (2008) p. xiii, 1-2

orientation and its comparative methodology, and the leading theories of the field revolve around a progressive political understanding of development. The ideology of developmentalism in the 1990's grew in opposition to earlier post-war Third World views, which were largely essentialist,[17] deterministic and focused on the nation state as the agent of development and progress. This change in dogma happened as part of the broader postmodernist developments that emerged during the 1990's.[18]

In the introductory chapter of the book *The Companion to Development Studies*,[19] Klaus Odds presents the topic of the Third World, developing countries, which he explains to be the 'South, poor countries'.[20] This topic encapsulates the essence of what research within developmental studies pertains to. Their focus is on countries outside of the Western identity, often described as the Western civilization, and its rivals in what has often been termed the Socialist Bloc. One of the stated goals of development studies according to Odds, is producing research on the South in order that light be shed upon the need for increased financial aid from the Western governments (ideally 0.7% of GDP) and debt forgiveness towards these countries, in order 'that developing countries can achieve the Millennium Development Goals'.[21] Topics emphasised by research within development studies relating to rural development are: poverty, livelihood, food security, cooperatives, land reform, agricultural sustainability, gene-modified crops and famine.[22] Within studies into social development, economic growth, income distribution and social welfare have been major factors used in measuring progress towards modernity.[23]

Although development studies have evolved into a distinct field of research on its own, developmentalism was and still is an interdisciplinary school of thought revolving around the key principles of aid from the Western countries directed towards the south, poor countries, in order that this would lead to development and economic prosperity. An underlying agenda of developmentalism has been progress toward democracy in less free countries of the South.

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[17] Belief in the Third World as a homogeneous place consisting of predeterminable characteristics defining the broader populace.
[18] Schuurman, Desai & Potter (2008) p. 12-15
[19] Desai & Potter (2008) p. 1
[20] The South, poor countries is here Odds' preferred way of describing what would before the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 be described as Third World countries.
[21] Odds in Desai & Potter (2008) p. 3-7, 30-36
[22] Desai & Potter (2008) p. 141-179
[23] Thirlwall in Desai & Potter (2008) p. 37-39

Postcolonialism has been focused on attempts to recover the lost historical and contemporary voices of the marginalised and oppressed former subjects in the colonies under European domination. Postcolonialist ideas developed with strong critical literary works by Spivak[24] and Said, their goal being that of recovering the voices and agency of peoples subjugated under colonialism.[25] In other words the modernist perspective has been influenced by the idea that the peoples of the former colonies and those living under the auspices of a neocolonial power, should not be excluded from the process of writing the history of their own people from an academic perspective. Postcolonialist writing has been highly critical of orientalism and developmentalist academic research, focusing on the lack of agency of the peoples who are being researched.

According to a common modernist approach to Middle Eastern history, the modern Middle East began with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. This short lived occupation, lasting only one year, would lay the seeds for a reawakening of the peoples of the Middle East, once a place of magnificent civilization, but in 1798 a shadow of its former self.[26] Modernists writing in this tradition tended to emphasise how it was Europeans who gave birth to the modern Middle East, and not internal forces like changes in the Ottoman Empire, like the Tanzimat reforms, or Eastern influences from the Qajars, who took power over Iran in 1794.[27]

According to Knut Vikør, the mode of developmentalist research persists to this day, although the name itself has fallen into disuse amongst most 21st century historians. Other names like global south studies, African studies and Middle Eastern studies are more commonly used to categorise research on non-Western societies, even in the context of research into poverty and development.[28]

Developmental studies within modernisation theory tended from the 1960's and leading up to the new millenia, to emphasise progress towards nationalism and nationhood for the different peoples in the Middle East, and how the introduction of western technology followed by industrialisation, democratisation and women's rights were essential events to occur in order to achieve the ultimate goal, modernisation.[29] In other words, a more or less deterministic

[24] Spivak in Morris (2010) p. 21-78
[25] McEwan in Desai & Potter (2008) p. 124-127
[26] Pappè (2014) p. 2-5
[27] Pappè (2014) p. 23
[28] Public lecture with Knut Vikør at University of Bergen, 26. October 2021.
[29] Pappè (2014) p. 4-9

approach to understanding regional developments and modernity. This implies a government and political system of power sharing modelled on the systems of countries like the USA, UK, France, Germany and other modern Western democracies.

The authors, whose empirical data will be featured in this project, who published their works between 1954-2006,[30] will be categorised as authors writing mostly in a time when developmentalist ideas were the leading school of thought, in the case of Egypt as the area of interest. Secondly, research published in the early 2000's should be read with the understanding that developmentalism had come under strict scrutiny in the 1990's and early 2000's affecting concurrent research. It could also be mentioned that many authors writing during and after the 1990's fall within the school of thought, which we today call postmodernism, and that technically you can be both developmentalist and postmodernist.[31]

The critique of developmentalism as part of modernism, eurocentrism

My master thesis delves into a type of research literature, which have later been criticised. According to Pappè (2014) The modernists have been puzzled since the 1960's by the failure of the Middle Eastern countries to develop into free and fair democracies with similar views on women's rights and sexuality as the Western democracies possess.[32] There have been numerous critiques directed at developmental studies and developmentalism in recent decades. Van Dis describes development studies' problematic understanding of progress:

> *"At this point the developmental studies have been introduced as well as the implicit debate that emerged in sixty years of thinking about development. A common analytical tool all authors used was to look at European economic growth and to analyse why Europe grew economically from the eighteenth-century and on and other countries in 'the rest' of the world only much later…The equating of modernity with Europe reinforces a fundamental assumption of much intellectual thought today: that particular structures, emerging first in the West, would become universal."*[33]

Here Van Dis delves into the Eurocentric nature of the understanding of development, as it was seen in the European context, and then understood to be a universal end point for development. Modernity is understood to be, developing towards the European status quo,

[30] All major works relating to empirical collection of and use of data about Nasser Era rural Egypt, used in this dissertation, were published within this timeframe.
[31] van Dis (ND) p. 2
[32] Pappè (2014) p. 5
[33] van Dis (ND) p. 5

and not, for example, creating some new system entirely, but an imitation of the West. As can be seen in the World today, Modernity in UAE and Qatar, for example, has not taken the form of a typical European state, although clearly definable as modern in the economic sense. Similarly Egypt in 2022 does not fit into the picture of having developed from a preindustrial state, into a modern, developed, secular and democratic country comparable to a Western European country, and does not serve as an universal example of modernity. Bernstein (2006) describes development studies' Western-centric trend in the time up until the 1980's:

> *"Early views of development within the field of development studies undoubtedly stressed catching up with, and generally imitating, the 'West'. The failure of development in so-called Third World countries, together with the postmodern critique and trends of globalisation, are customarily regarded as having given rise to a major impasse in development studies in the 1980s…Further, the trend of globalisation, the reduction in the importance of the state, and the associated alienation of the state from civil society, all mean that development studies face a battery of issues, not least whether these trends are real and inescapable phenomena, or constructs designed to legitimise the logic of the neoliberal market."*[34]

Here Bernstein raises the topic of whether the common trends described, and often expected to occur by researchers on development, are real and natural phenomena, or simply constructs based on the imagining of the world by developmentalists. This accusation dives into the dilemma of Hume's fork, and whether something is empirically observed, an abstract idea, or notions of the natural world not based on observation within this world, but on our own constructed view of the natural world.[35] Proving the truth of such a claim, as Bernstein here presents, is beyond the scope of this master thesis. Yet, it is essential to understand that one of the main critiques levelled at developmentalist research in the 21st century have been how their models neatly fit a narrative of development, as it is understood to have happened in Europe and North America, and then causally expected to take a similar universal form across the globe. Egypt was a mostly agrarian society in 1952, and researchers as well as leading members of the Nasser government, expected that development leading to modernisation was the road ahead of the Egyptian nation. We will delve into the topic of how literature on the Nasser era reform programs for rural Egypt were affected by the current trends in developmentalist understanding in later chapters, and a sizeable part of the discussion taken up by this master thesis revolves around the question of developmentalism within research on Nasser era rural Egypt.

[34] Desai & Potter (2008) p. 1-2
[35] Svendsen (2010) p. 40-41

Still it should be stressed that not every critique of development studies had only negative things to say. Another more positive aspect of the developmentalist trend is also described by Bernstein:

> *"Further, some would argue that, whatever its sins, the 'development project' has brought financial aid and technological assistance, which have sought to raise standards of living in the South, even if they have only been successful locally. Some argue that new technologies will afford poor countries the chance to catch up in ways different from those of the past."*[36]

Even until contemporary times, researchers have regularly been criticised in the Western world for being Eurocentric in their approach to Middle Eastern research. Or in other cases simply implying that every part of the world is more or less the same, and that a phenomenon happening in another part of the world should be analysed the exact same way in research whether it happens in Europe or outside of Europe. Eurocentrism is often understood to be caused by elitist views about the betterness of Europe or the broader Western world compared to other parts of the world, and such views are often linked to how industrialisation and modernisation happened first in the Western world and the supremacy of Western powers in modern times.

Part 3: About the researchers and their research

The literature that will be used for this historiographical presentation of research on Nasser era rural Egypt comes from several different fields of research. In this part follows a general description of each researcher and their literature. Then follows a discussion of the different categories of research utilised in this Masters thesis.

What is the comparative historiographical approach?

To answer my research questions, I intend to use a form of the method, which is known as the comparative historiographical method. In other words my intention is to read and analyse selected literature within a historiographical period and compare it to other selected literature. My comparison will take place mainly between two variables, namely type of research and time. The types of research analysed will be divided into the two main groupings of quantitative and qualitative research. The time variable will also be of utmost importance.

[36] Desai & Potter (2008) p. 1-2

First and foremost I will analyse research material published between 1954 and 1982, where the material published in the late 1960's, 1970's and 1980's are expected to have been especially influenced by the developmentalist trends of the period, described earlier in this chapter. In my last chapter, however, I will also make a comparison between material from the developmentalist period happening close in time with the Nasser period, either concurrent with or right after the Nasser era, and research from the early 2000's, which is critical of the trends within the earlier research.

The quantitative approach in postwar social scientific research

The quantitative approach to understanding the Middle East can be found with the economist Mahmud Abdel-Fadil, he worked within the field of applied economics and his work focused on changes in the Egyptian domestic market, linked to policies of the Nasser regime as well as forces in the international market. His work, Abdel-Fadil (1975) *Development, income distribution and social change in rural Egypt,* presented a unique and extensive analysis into the economic backdrop of the agricultural reforms, focusing on the economic effect the agricultural reforms had on the life situation of the *fellahin*[37] masses of rural Egypt.

Another approach to quantitative methodology can be found with the political scientists. Raymond William Baker was appraised as a leading expert on Nasser era Egypt within the developmental studies scientific community in the 1970's and 1980's. The earlier chapters in Baker (1978) *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution Under Nasser and Sadat,* focuses on the building of the administrative organisation under the young Nasser regime, and only in later chapters does he link his debate on political organisation with the agrarian cooperative reforms and rural health care reforms under the Nasser regime. Alan Richards was another leading political expert on rural Egypt from the same historiographical period. Richards (1982) *Egypt's Agricultural Development, 1800-1980: Technical and Social Change*, focuses on several periods, but the periods closer to him in time, the Nasser and Sadat periods, receive special attention. Both of these authors mainly use statistical data produced from various sources to support their arguments. The article by Springborg (1979) *Patrimonialism and Policy Making in Egypt: Nasser and Sadat and the Tenure Policy for Reclaimed Lands,*

[37] *Fellahin* is, in the general sense, the Arab equivalent to the English 'peasant'. While most of Africa have pastoralist traditions, the *fellahin* predominantly sustain themselves through crop cultivation. The *fellahin* made up the vast majority of the Nasser era rural population of Egypt (9 out of 10).

attempts to explain some of the shortcomings of the projects of reclaiming desert areas into productive agricultural lands, as a result of inefficiencies and corruption in the patrimonial state system under Nasser.

James B. Mayfield is another political scientist who has written about Nasser era Egypt, on the topic of rural political history. What clearly separates Mayfield from Richards, Baker and Springborg is his combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods. Mayfield conducted interviews with *fellahin* and travelled across rural Egypt in the late 1950's and 1960's, observing the Nasser governments attempt at systemic change in village politics. Gabriel S. Saab in his work (1967) *The Egyptian agrarian reform 1952-1962,* on the other hand, presented an agronomist perspective on the technical process and difficulties therewith, relating to the implementation of the various agricultural reforms under the Nasser regime.

These authors represent a quantitative approach to understanding the Nasser era *fellahin*. By that is ment, their research material focuses on data material of a statistical order. Their perspective is large, covering huge quantities of individuals as parts of data sets, and the scope of their research involves dozens if not thousands of villages across Egypt and millions of people. Quantitative data was, and still is, a common type of empirical data used to support arguments within research pertaining to rural development and poverty issues. My hypothesis is that developmentalist and modernist tendencies will be more visible within research that relies heavily on quantitative data.

The qualitative approach

Another approach to understanding the Middle East has been pioneered by both anthropologists, sociologists and some historians, but also interestingly by the political scientist John Mayfield. In his work *Rural Politics in Nasser's Egypt* (1971), Mayfield criticises his fellow contemporary research colleagues for being too naive in their approach to understanding the Rural Egyptians living in Nasserist Egypt during the 1950's and 1960's.[38] Mayfield, although a political scientist, states his intent to use sociological methods in his study of the social and political developments in Nasser era rural villages.

[38] Mayfield (1971) p. 178-180

Mayfield claims that many Western scientists are too focused on looking at how the Nasserists and their big politics are affecting the rural populations of both Egypt and also other places in the Arab world. Mayfield claims that many of his most prominent colleagues are relying uncritically on sources from the Egyptian government's census bureau and also criticises them for being unwilling to go 'see with their own eyes' what the situation is on the ground. In a complementary field research to his work he discovers that many things are not as they might seem on paper, in the different corners of rural Egypt, that he visited during the 1960's.

Another approach to field research you find with Hamed Ammar's (1954) *Growing up in an Egyptian village*, who spent a year living amongst the *fellahin* of Silwa in 1951. His research focuses on what kind of education the children of Silwa experiences, whether that be through play, parental guidance or the Kuttab[39] and the public primary school. Ammar uses a method of field research which is in anthropology commonly known as an ethnographic case study.[40] In a case study usually only one or few groups or local societies are being observed and interacted with, often over a long period of time lasting up to several years.

Other examples of field research we find in the authors Henry H. Ayrout and Hani Fakhouri. Ayrout had done field observations in rural Egypt in the 1930's published in French in 1938, and he later revised his work on the Egyptian peasant to include his perspectives on the 1952 agricultural reform, and its effect on the peasant population. His new take on the Egyptian peasant was published in English in 1963, but was written in 1955, just a few years after the revolution, in cooperation with John Alden Williams.[41] In this thesis the revised version of Ayrout's *The Egyptian peasant* (2005) will be used. Ayrout describes in great detail many of the agricultural traits, cultural traditions and social organisation of the mostly agrarian population of rural Egypt. Fakhouri (1972) *Kafr El-Elow: An Egyptian village in transition,* documents the effect developments since the 1952 revolution have had on the traditional way of life for the villagers of Kafr el-Elow. Most of the villagers used to be *fellahin* and farming

[39] A school system predating the Nasser regime. Here children are thought to read, write, and memorise Quranic verses. In the case of Silwa a local imam teaches in the kuttab, and this is commonplace.
[40] In essence, ethnographic case studies are field research "*employing ethnographic methods and focused on building arguments about cultural, group, or community formation or examining other sociocultural phenomena*" (Schwandt & Gates (2018) p. 344), typically with a long duration, per the demands of ethnographic work.
[41] Ayrout (2005) p. xi

their own fields before the revolution, this was however not the case anymore in 1964-1966 when Fakhouri did his ethnographic case study in the village.

Methods of obtaining empirical data using field research, gives researchers a unique tool for understanding and knowledge sharing within the scientific communities of our contemporary world. The research material used in this dissertation demonstrates the clear distinction that exists between the qualitative and quantitative research material that exists on the topic of Nasser era rural Egypt. Subsequently the perceptions and descriptions you find of the *fellahin* in quantitative versus qualitative research shows a stark contrast.

These and similar methods to understanding the Middle East give us an individual's level approach, which should be used to supplement the vast amount of quantitative oriented research material which already exists in the English speaking scientific community. Ethnographic case studies and also data collections done on a village to village basis, rather than using large datasets, which is often preferred by economists, political scientists and many historians, are not a method diverging from the norm, challenging the status quo, but rather brings forth a supplementary perspective on Middle-Easter history. It is my view that quantitative and qualitative research material can and should be combined when retelling the history of the *fellahin* of Nasser era Egypt.

An important aspect of the field research in rural areas during the Nasser era is how small it is in volume. The lack of field research affected the perspective on culture and social life of rural Egyptians amongst researchers in the period. They often drew conclusions based on a few observations, and then used these few observations to make universal statements about all the rural areas of Egypt across a long period of time. This is especially true for Ayrout, but is evident also in Mayfield, and some broad conclusions on the mentality of the *fellahin* are also drawn by Ammar. The difficulties concerning lack of material means some of the material used in this thesis have been chosen not because of specific relevance to the research questions, but simply because it exists and was available. However, the material does unquestionably fit naturally into a discussion on perceptions of the Nasser era rural population during a research period heavily influenced by developmentalism.

The time perspective

Time is an important factor for researchers. Whether developments are happening concurrently with the researcher's work or have already taken place in the past can greatly affect the conclusions drawn by a research paper or a larger work of research. In the example of the earlier researchers Saab (1967) didn't know what would be the end product of the ongoing reform programs of the Nasser regime when he wrote his book on the issue of the agricultural reforms. Abdel-Fadil, Baker, Springborg and Richards had the benefit of hindsight. There is also an important difference in time between when the various field researches took place, and conditions in one or several villages can not be expected to be the same in the 1950's and the 1960's.

Johnson & Johnson (2006) *Re-Evaluating Egyptian History: A Critical Re-Examination of Rural Development Policy, 1940-2000*, presents critical views on developmentalism in earlier research on Nasser era rural Egypt, taking a longer historical perspective focusing on rural developments in the 1940's compared to the large rural reform programs and their effect on rural Egypt in the Nasser era, their emphasis being to showing continuity in development policies rather than remarkable invention by the Nasser regime. Johnson (2004) *Reconstructing Rural Egypt: Ahmed Hussein and the History of Egyptian Development,* makes a deep dive into the Rural Social Centres (RSC) program, taking place before the Nasser era. In chapter 6 I will further discuss their views, and compare these 2000's publications to earlier research into rural developments.

Chapter summary

The research questions, theme and goals of this Master have been presented. The historiographical period of developmentalism as part of modernism has been deliberated upon in order to give a greater understanding of trends affecting research into the rural Middle East in the period when most of the research material which will be used in this master thesis was written. The preceding historiographical period of orientalism has also been described for context. The concept of comparative historiographical method has been explained, and the researchers and their research material have been introduced.

Chapter 2: Introducing Egypts Geography and Demography

"The five peninsulas of the inland sea are very similar. If one thinks of their relief they are regularly divided between mountains - the largest part - a few plains, occasional hills, and wide plateaux. This is not the only way in which the land masses can be dissected, but let us use simple categories. Each piece of these jigsaw puzzles belongs to a particular family and can be classified within a distinct typology. So, rather than consider each peninsula as an autonomous entity, let us look at the analogies between the materials that make them up. In other words let us shuffle the pieces of the jigsaw and compare the comparable. Even on the historical plane, this breakdown and reclassification will be illuminating."

- *Fernand Braudel (1972) p. 25*

Fernand Braudel was pioneering a new way to look at history, when he wrote this in his introduction to his work *The Mediterranean*. Climate and people are closely intertwined and connected in some form of symbiosis, and whether you think one affects the other more, economic, technical, cultural and social developments do not happen in a vacuum separate from climatic conditions. In this first chapter I will present to the reader basic knowledge of, and help create a basic understanding of climatic conditions (ecology) in Egypt and how this relates to the geography of the country. Then I will link the topic of climatic conditions and geography to the placement and movement of groups and individuals (demography) in modern Egypt. A basic understanding of ecological, geographical and demographical factors in Egypt will be important as we delve into the topics of agriculture and rural village life in coming chapters.

The land

Egypt is a unique land. Not only for its significance in the ancient history of agriculture and civilization-culture, but also for its landscape's polar opposites. Vast arid deserts make up the majority of the land, while the incredibly fertile agricultural areas along the Nile river make up an important minority. In the North Egypt's coastline faces the Mediterranean, with the coastal cities, from West to East, Marsa, Alexandria, Damietta and Port Said, of which Alexandria holds great historical significance. Egypt has an even longer coastline to the East, that borders the Red Sea. The major cities on the Red Sea coastline are, from North to South,

Suez City, Sharm al-Shaykh, Al-Ghardaqah and Hurghada. Past the Sinai desert, In the far North-East, Egypt Borders the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Besides these eight coastal cities, and a few boomtowns far inland, there is little else than sand as far as the eye can see, with one major exception. A whole 96% of Egypts land mass consists of desert, and none but a few creatures survive in this arid landscape. But straight across the Eastern half of Egypt, from the far Southern border with Sudan, and all the way up to the Mediterranean coast, stretches the River Nile. All along the banks of the river there is bustling life from both humans and animals. The major part of the river, known as the Blue Nile, flows from Ethiopia, through Sudan and into Egypt. For several thousands of years the Nile River ran freely down the Egyptian plateau, washing with it sediments and nutrients from Ethiopian highlands and from a minor part of the river stemming from Lake Victoria. In the 1960's Nasser and his regime tamed the river by building the Aswan High Dam which was finished in 1970. The building of this dam would end the seasonal flooding which had watered and brought nutrients to the fields of the Egyptian *fellahin* for several millennia, and from then on controllable irrigation water would water the crops. Now Lake Nasser, the lake which has formed behind the massive Aswan Dam, covers a sizable chunk of the former river run. The lake stretches from Aswan City in Southern Egypt, and all the way into Northern Sudan.

In Egypt the area along the Nile river is divided into two parts, the Delta in the North and Upper Egypt in the South, which together make up the Nile Valley.[42] The Nile Valley hosts one of the most ancient traditions of agriculture known to man. This Agriculture is described both in the works of Herodot (ca. 458 BC) in the Western world, and millennia before this in ancient Egyptian language. Today it's only a narrow strip along the southern part of the Egyptian Nile River which is fertile in Upper Egypt. Surrounded by massive deserts on each side, this area stretches all the way from Aswan City in the South and all the way to the limits of Cairo proper in the North.[43] Cairo, a massive metropolitan city of some 21.3 million people, according to a recent government census,[44] is the largest city in the Arab world, and the second largest city in Africa behind Lagos (23.5 million).[45] In between Cairo and Aswan,

[42] Fakhouri (1972) p. 6
[43] Because of extreme growth, Cairo's borders have expanded a great deal since the Nasser era, and areas that were formerly rural are now part of Cairo's suburbs.
[44] Date 02.10.2021 at 12:30 Link: https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page_id=5035
[45] Because of extreme growth, Cairo's borders have expanded a great deal since the Nasser era, and areas that were formerly rural are now part of Cairo's suburbs.

along the Nile, you also find the ancient cities, from North to South, of Al Minyä, Asyut, Sohag and Luxor, but most of the Nile Valley is still today farmable countryside. In 1952 nearly everyone in Upper Egypt lived in what can be classified as rural areas.

Map 1.0 A satellite picture of Egypt, taken by NASA. The fertile areas of the Delta and Upper Egypt are clearly visible.

What can be approximated as a triangle enclosed more or less within the three dots, where Alexandria, Port Said and Cairo make up the dots, you find what is called the Delta. It holds some of the most fertile farmland in the world, and several harvests can be reaped here each year by the *fellahin*. An interesting aspect of the soil in Egypt, which makes it unique compared to the soil of most other countries in the world, is its consistency. The composition of the deposit is more or less the same across the whole of Upper Egypt and the Delta.[46] This made the daily challenges and necessities of agriculture uniquely uniform across rural Egypt during the Nasser era, leading to subsistence farming being the way of life for most of the rural population.

[46] Ayrout (2005) p. 7

Geography: A modern but also an ancient perspective

As can clearly be seen in map 1.1 the vast majority of Egyptians live in the Delta, Upper Egypt and in general along the Nile. Although the geographical position of the river has changed over the millenia, still it holds true that the majority of Egyptians are *fellahin*. There are little to no pastoralists to be found in Egypt, the name of the game has been agriculture, before agriculture was a thing on the European continent.

Egypt faces long hot summers filled with sunlight. This combined with a humid and wet climate year round, created by the Nile, the life source of billions of organisms.
The nutrients in the soil is washed down from Ethiopia and Uganda, through the two Sudans, and this makes for a remarkable opportunity for intensive cultivation of the soil along the whole length of the Nile. On the plateau of Upper Egypt and across the Delta in the lower part of Egypt both large and small landowners, rich and poor merchants and street vendors, holy men, *fellahin* men and women, and children roam the fields and dirt roads of the small villages.

Although the position of the river has changed over the millennia, the agricultural conditions of the Nile valley have not changed drastically since ancient times, as is evident by Herodotus descriptions from 2450 years ago:

> *"At present, it must be confessed, they obtain the fruits of the field with less trouble than any other people in the world, the rest of the Egyptians included, since they have no need to break up the ground with the plough, nor to use the hoe, nor to do any of the work which the rest of mankind find necessary if they are to get a crop; but the husbandman waits till the river has of its own accord spread itself over the fields and withdrawn again to its bed, and then sows his plot of ground."*[47]

Information on the geography of Egypt is essential if the goal is to understand the people living there, whether 2450 years ago, in the period ca. 1950-1970 or in our current time and date 2022. The importance of climate on history was not only understood by Braudel and many other historians in the postwar years, but even by Herodotus 2450 years ago, as he described the climate, ecology and agricultural qualities of Egypt.

The soil of Upper Egypt and the Delta plus the floodwaters of the Nile during the summer, has made the Egyptian agriculturalist some of the most thriving farmers worldwide. The soils

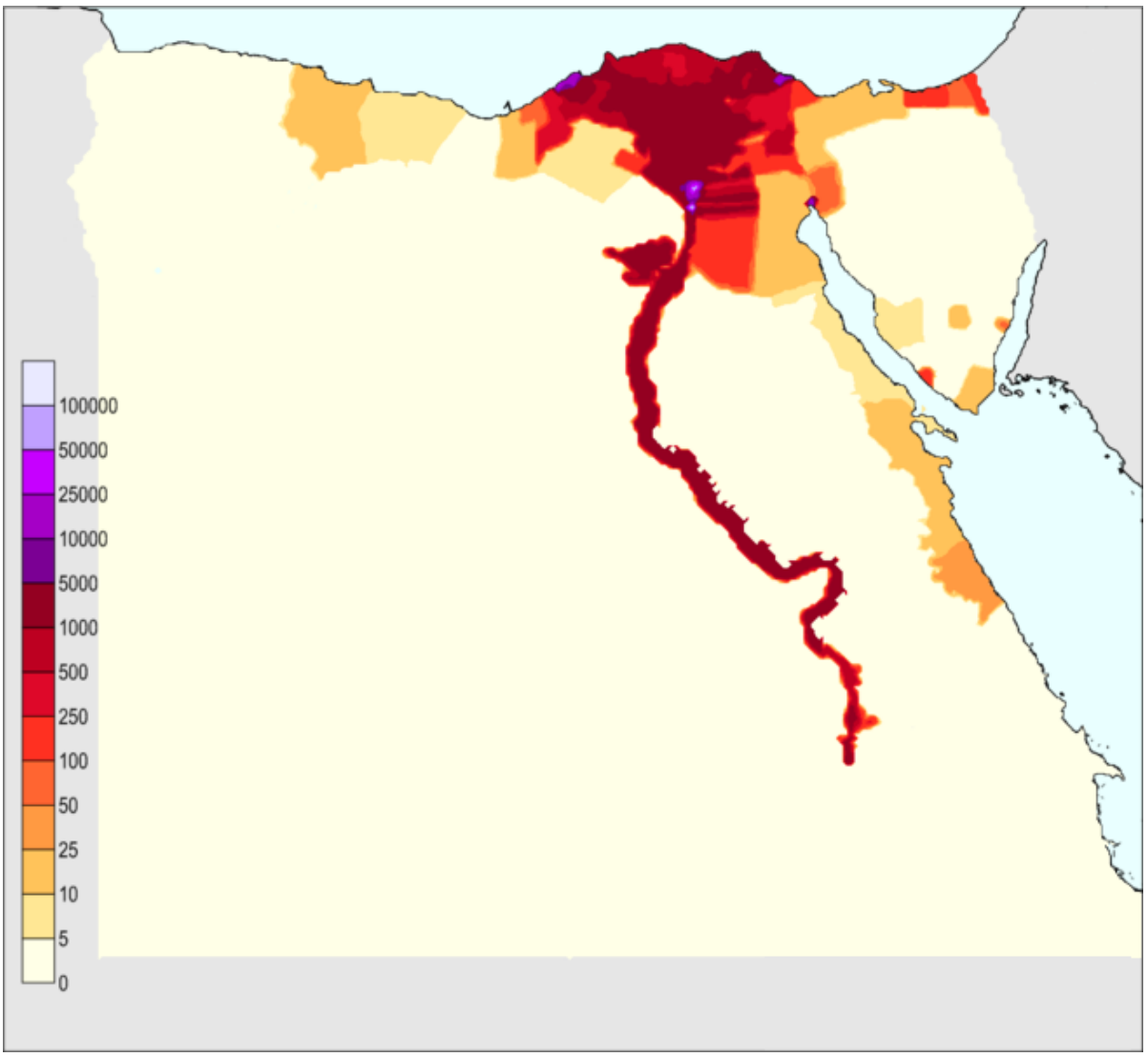
[47] Herodotus (1996) p. 122

of the Nile area of Egypt have been farmed more or less continuously since time immemorial, and inundation of the fields by flood water was the way Egyptian fields were watered until the finishing of the Aswan High Dam in 1970, after which the seasonal flooding has ended and fields are watered through irrigation ditches with pumps in a more controlled way. The Nile Valley area, comprising the fertile lands of Upper Egypt and the Delta, was usually considered the heartlands of Egypt during the Nasser era, and is the main area of Egypt which will be under examination in this dissertation. Suez, Sinai, African Egyptian Red sea area, Western Desert agricultural oases and other areas, which fall outside of the agricultural area of the Nile Valley, will not be discussed in this dissertation. The limitation of which rural areas that will be discussed is a natural byproduct of which areas were focused on by the researchers who are utilised for this Master thesis' comparative historiographical discussion.[48]

Demographics of rural Egypt

As can be seen in map 1.1 the Egyptian rural population is densest in the Nile Valley region of Upper Egypt and the Delta, comprising all the darker red areas and some of the lighter red areas visible in the map. In Egypt nothing less than 95% of the population live along the banks of the Nile, and the majority of these live in or North of Cairo, in the Delta. The total population of Egypt was estimated to have surpassed 106 million in 2022 by the UNPF. The inhabitants of the Delta make up the majority share of the rural population both today and during the Nasser era, while the population of Upper Egypt is quite a bit smaller but still sizable. Today 9 out of 10 Egyptians are Muslim, the vast majority Sunni, and 1 out of 10 is Christian, predominantly Coptic. Egypt has a quite normal distribution of males and females, but the population curve becomes unnatural when you look at the age demographic. Few countries are as youthful as Egypt is today. In 2022 the number of people younger than 25 years of age was estimated to be 57.4% of the total population.[49]

[48] The quantitative research focuses on the Delta and Upper Egypt equally, while most of the qualitative research focuses on Upper Egypt exclusively.
[49] United Nations Population Fund, Date: 12.04.2022 at 19:42
https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/EG



Map 1.1 Demographic density map of Egypt, taken from Wikipedia 27.09.2021 14:02 GMT +1. The illustration was created by the user, Giorgiogp2, dated to 2010.

In 1952 children outnumbered adults almost 4:1 in rural Egypt, making it even more youthful than today. The children of *fellahin* had to work from a young age; boys partook in light farmwork from the age of 5 and serious farmwork from the age of 11, and girls did household work from the age of 5. With a fertility rate of 7.2 in 1952 the population growth had been explosive in the decade leading up to 1952, and it would not stop growing during the 18 year long Nasser era. Wahba (1972) on behalf of UNESCO described the described the dramatic population growth leading up to 1970 in these words:

"The population in 1952 was just under 21.5 million. In 1970 it rose to just over 32.5 million. The rate of increase between 1952 and 1960 was 2.38 percent. Between 1960 and 1970 the rate rose to 2.54 per cent. The total area of the country is approximately [1 million square kilometres] of which

only about 5 per cent is normally habitable or cultivable, the rest being desert. Within this small area, more than 18 million live on the land and more than 14 million in cities."[50]

Wahba here accurately illustrates the major difficulty facing Egypt in the Nasser era period (1952-1970), a population rapidly outgrowing the country's capacity for food production. Population pressures in rural areas also lead to many migrating into urban areas in search of work, and Egyptian cities saw explosive growth during the Nasser era. If you take a closer look at the agricultural sector of Egypt in the 1950's and 1960's, you will soon find that rural Egypt consists mostly of the *fellahin* peasant-culture. This agricultural tradition cannot be dated to a specific year, or even a decade or century for that matter. Usually the agricultural revolution in Egypt is by historians dated to approximately 10,000 years ago, however there is not a lot of certainty. The Egyptian villages of the Nasser era were many and varied. The villages along the Nile hosted some of the most fertile soil in the world, and if properly managed, could show yearly yields two or three times that of foreign lands dependent on rainwater.[51]

In 1952, out of the total Egyptian population of 21.5 million, 70% lived in rural areas. The same year 63.2% (90.3% of rural population) of Egyptians made their livelihood within agriculture, and agricultural products made up 90% of total exports. Still the lack of planning in drainage and irrigation hindered agricultural efforts from their fullest potential.[52] Most acreage was dedicated to crops for human or animal feed, and the majority of animals raised were used as work animals. Meat production was however common within the confines of the rural houses, mostly the raising of sheep and poultry, supervised by the mother of the house. Still crop cultivation made up the vast majority of traded agricultural products.

In 1960 things had not drastically changed, and the share of the national Egyptian labour force employed in agriculture had only shrinked slightly to 58%. In comparison the share of industry in GDP for Egypt the same year was 24%, indicating how agriculture was by far still the most important enterprise for the nation as a whole 8 years after the 1952 revolution.[53] In other words Egypt was still a mostly agrarian society by the year 1960, and agricultural reform would play a major role for the country as a whole in the years after the 1952 revolution.

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[50] Wahba (1972) p. 10
[51] Saab (1967) p. 2-4
[52] Saab (1967) p. 1-3
[53] Ilan Pappè (2014) p. 53

Chapter summary

Egypt is a vast country on the African continent, but only 5% of its land is inhabitable. It hosts incredibly fertile soils in the Nile Valley, but an astonishing rate of population growth throughout the 20th century had led to population pressures and rural out migration, as well as population growth quickly outpacing the food production of the country. These were major issues before and after the 1952 revolution, together with great inequality leading to mounting unrest in rural areas before 1952. Agricultural products still made up the majority of the country's exports in 1952, and in 1960 almost 3 out 5 Egyptians were employed in agriculture. The countryside in 1952 was dominated by traditions rooted in a cultural background in Sunni Islamic values, while still hosting a sizable Coptic minority. The Egyptian countryside has a millennia long tradition of peasant culture, and this was still the case in 1952, as 9 out of 10 rural villagers were *fellahin*.

Chapter 3: Historical Background

Introduction

This chapter serves to present the historical background for the topics that will be taken up in chapter 4, 5 and 6. Firstly in this chapter, I will start off by presenting a general historical background of Rural Egypt from 1805 until the 1919 revolution. Then I will present in a thematic and chronological order the topics of the different chapters, which will follow this introductory chapter.

Egypt's rural history

Egypt's rural history is a long and winding road. Historians have often liked to point out its ancientness, persistence and unchangeability in contact with dominant external forces, such as an overlord or a central government. The truth is that things have not stood still development wise in rural Egypt, far from, but the point might be taken that the rural Nile Valley people within the boundaries of what we today call Egypt, have been agriculturalists since time immemorial in the words proper sense. This agricultural state of existence does not only continue to be the daily life of many rural people today, but have always been a forming factor in how both Egyptians and foreigners alike view the rural population. Rural Egyptians have time and time again been described as being naturally linked to the Nile and its fertile soil on a spiritual level just as much as in the physical sense. Although this might seem like a naive extrapolation to current researchers, this has been and still to many is what defines rural Egypt.

The events of the last two centuries have been quite impactful on the Egyptian rural population. From the tyranny of Muhammad Ali (1805-1848), his family (1848-1882), the British direct intervention period (1882-1922), the abrupt anti-British mass riots in 1919, leading to the partial withdrawal of the British in 1922, and then followed by the unstable and corrupt governments in the nominally democratic period (1922-1952), yet under a British overlordship unconcerned with human welfare.

The Muhammad Ali dynasty period was shaped by use of hardhanded violence to force modernisation on the rural population of Egypt. Inspired by the preceding French administration set up by Napoleon (1798), the rural population was made to bear the heavy yoke of the Albanian dynasty.[54] The British did little to change this when they seized control of the government and its fiscal means in 1882, and the life quality, health and nutrition of the common *fellahin*[55] and other rural inhabitants were in a miserable state by 1919. The period 1805-1919 had seen large investments into modernisation projects like canals, dykes, roads and railways. Under Isma'il Pasha (1867-1879) the expenditure got so out of hand that Egypt could no longer manage its indebtedness to the British and French. When the Urabi revolt broke out in 1882 the British, motivated to reclaim their debt, used the opportunity to seize power.[56]

The British continued the modernisation project and by 1919 Egypt had a rural infrastructure far superior to the one present in 1805. But the *fellahin,* taxed until starvation by the Khedives and British or run of their land, maimed in the conscripted army or self-harmed to avoid the terrible fate of being conscripted, or even worked half to death in the corvée duty system, had little left for it.[57] The vast mass of the rural population was severely impoverished in 1919, and that same year a mass riot of *fellahin* started in the rural areas. This riot reached such a massive scale that the British were convinced to end their full military occupation of mainland Egypt, its continuance deemed untenable.[58]

The nominally independent and democratic period would first be dominated by the Wafd party, formed in 1919 and riding on a wave of popularity after claiming to be the instigators of the 1919 riots. After Egypt formally gained independence in 1922, they would draft a new constitution in 1923 and form the first popularly elected government in 1924.[59] Although the British still held great influence over the Egyptian government and the Suez area was still under British military protection, the government was able to implement its own domestic

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[54] Mayfield (1971) p. 24-29
[55] *Fellahin* is the Middle Easter equivalent to the socio-economic group commonly known as 'peasants' in the English-speaking world.
[56] Mayfield (1971) p. 33-36, Richards (1982) p. 39-43
[57] Richards (1982) p. 22-27 Corvée was a system of seasonal slavery introduced under Muhammad Ali. Each year thousands of *fellahin* were forced into 4 months work doing manual labour on the vast array of public projects being built and maintained. According to Richards this system was inspired by a similar system operated by the ancient pharaohs.
[58] Mayfield (1971) p. 42-47
[59] Mayfield (1971) p. 51-52

policies, and would at first put some effort into fixing the mounting problems created by earlier governments. Still the conditions for the rural population deteriorated in the 1920-1940 as inequality rose and growth in agricultural production stagnated.[60]

The Wafd was a popular movement consisting of a broad coalition of interest groups amongst the elite, following an incohesive political ideology. The main tool of the Wafd to stay in power was mass voter fraud, and they would perfect it over the next 20 years. No other party or political force would threaten the Wafd's dominance in this period. Their membership consisted mostly of wealthy landlords and aristocrats, but a small minority of the party was more progressive leaning liberalists and also surprisingly a few individuals with socialist leanings.[61]

Agriculture was the largest sector of the Egyptian economy in 1922, and the Wafd government introduced technical changes to the process of cultivation on a major scale. The most important change was a switch from a three year rotation to a more intensive two year rotation, now utilising a new system of perennial irrigation.[62] This new system of intensive irrigation would quickly lead to deterioration in the quality of cultivable soil across rural Egypt, and crop returns decreased in the period 1920-1940. Although major problems with the new 2 year crop rotation system were discovered by government experts, attempts to return to the old 3 year rotation and de-intensify the irrigation pressure were largely unsuccessful or simply abandoned.[63] The successes of creating swaths of farmland trough reclamation during Muhammad Ali's reign could not be repeated, and the rapidly increasing population quickly outgrew the amount available land.[64] Table 1.0 illustrates the discrepancy between land growth and population growth in the early 20th century.

[60] Richards (1982) p. 142-145
[61] Mayfield (1971) p. 48-50
[62] A perennial irrigation system uses dams, dykes, canals, water pumps and other forms of controlled water supply to have water transferred to the desired locations and the water distributed as desired. This allows for more intensive cultivation of the soil, and also gives the government the possibility to control when and where water will be supplied to farmers.
[63] Richards (1982) p. 111-116
[64] Richards (1982) p. 21

Year	1897	1907	1917	1927	1937	1947
Population in millions	9.669	11.190	12.718	14.178	15.921	18.967
Feddans[65] in millions	5.114 (1900)	5.431 (1906)	5.451 (1916)		5.838 (1936)	5.981 (1952)

Table 1.0 Showing population growth and size of cultivated area of Egypt ca. 1897-1952.[66]

Comparatively the population grew from ca. 4.5 to 7 million between 1821 and 1876, with an increase in cultivated land from 2.032,000 to 4,742,000 feddans between 1800 and 1882.[67] This shows how the ratio of amount of land per inhabitant grew in the middle of the 19th century while it shrunk dramatically in the first half of the 20th century. During the 1800's There was a gradual process of turning away from paying taxes in kind to cash payments,[68] forcing fellahin to switch from traditional subsistence crops and towards cash crops like cotton, in order to pay their debt. Further, under new mortgage and property laws introduced with the Mixed Courts in 1875, creditors could now foreclose on unpaid debt, and the inability to pay ment a *fellah*[69] would lose his land.[70] The result of these developments combined with increasing population pressure, was that during the early 1900's a rapidly growing percentage of the rural population became landless and fell into poverty. By 1950 as much as 44% of the rural population had become landless. While the majority of farmland in 1848 was owned by independent *fellahin*, 35% of farmland in 1952 was now owned by large estates, and the land was worked by contracted hired labour or rented out to poor *fellahin* at exorbitant rates.[71] In other words, most of the generation growing up before the revolution had become servants working the land their ancestors had once owned, and were now tilling the soil of overlords who reaped the results of their harvest. By 1952 the situation in rural Egypt was dire, as massive inequality and government neglect were leading to social unrest.[72]

[65] Richards (1982) p. xiii Feddan is the Egyptian equivalent to acre (1 feddan = 1.038 acre).
[66] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 4
[67] Richards (1982) p. 38-39
[68] While the Ottomans used to collect their taxes through middlemen, this system was reformed under Muhammad Ali, such that taxes were now paid directly to the central government. Under his successors taxes in the form of cash payments were gradually introduced from 1849, and made the only legal way to pay taxes in 1880. See Mayfield (1971) p. 22-23, 26, 31
[69] *Fellah*; single masculine, *fellaha*; single feminine, *fellahin*; plural
[70] Baer (1969) p. 215
[71] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 4-5
[72] Mayfield (1971) p. 52-53, Richards (1982) p. 98-99

The revolution

"The revolution took place in 1952, and I played a part in it. My participation was not in itself important to me. What was important to me was that the revolution actually took place and that the dream I had from early childhood was realised. It was this that made me live with Nasser for eighteen years without ever clashing with him. I was happy to work in any capacity."[73]

- *Anwar Sadat*

What Sadat is here expressing is the fellowship that the participants of the 1952 revolution felt part of. The revolutionaries came from vastly different ideological backgrounds. The whole spectre comprising officers, politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, teachers, policemen and soldiers that would partake in forming the enlightened dictatorship (the Nasserist regime) had their background in both socialism, communism, capitalism, centrism and fascism. The project of freeing Egypt from the British overlord and creating an Egypt made by and for Egyptians, was the common goal, and for now there would be little dissent in the ranks of the revolutionary movement.[74] The fact that Nasser saw himself as an Arab Socialist, Sadat was somewhat right-leaning, and Ali Sabry was a wholeheartedly Eastblock friendly communist, speaks to how differently opinionated the members of the Free Officer Movement truly were.[75]

But the revolution was no certainty in the last years of the old regime. The fact that the group of young officers that started the coup d'ètat 23 of July, 1952, was known to almost none in the years or even months leading up until the revolution, is quite astonishing.[76] How could a group of a few dozen military men so meticulously plan a military takeover of the British backed old regime? This conspiracy had been in the workings for a few years already, before the events of 23 July, 1952. The first Free Officers cell meeting took place in the autumn of 1949 and at that point Nasser and his conspirators did not have a clear plan for either how to seize power, or how to rule if a coup was successful.[77]

[73] Baker (1978) p. 15
[74] Baker (1978) p. 17-18
[75] The Free Officer Movement is the name most commonly used to describe the military conspirators behind the coup of July 23, 1952.
[76] Springborg (1979) p. 49-50
[77] Mohi El Din (1995) p. 44

Picture 1.0 Featuring Nasser, Sadat and other prominent conspirators behind the coup of 23 of July.[78]

Gamal Abdel Nasser, the man who would become the natural leader of the Free Officer Movement in the events following the 1952 revolution, was born in Bacos village, in the Delta, in the near vicinity of the city of Alexandria. In his early life and years of education Nasser's curiosity led him to read a lot, and he grew fascinated with ideas of nationalism and freedom. The regular relocation he experienced in his childhood taught him the vast differences between rich and poor, and he was repulsed by the wealthy classes who ruled Egypt.[79] Sadat, on the other hand, was from the village Mit Abou El-Kom, located in the deep middle of the Delta between Alexandria and Cairo. Born into a poor family together with his 12 siblings, his early life was marred by poverty. During WWII Sadat was imprisoned by the

[78] Public domain picture. Link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Free_Officers,_1953.jpg
[79] Aburish (2004) p. 11-13

British after he tried to contact the Axis Powers, in order to ask for help to overthrow the British backed regime ruling Egypt.

The success of the coup came down to several factors. The British activities in Egypt were severely reduced in the period 1945-1952, and one of the resulting developments was political instability, as British soldiers, administrators and other members of the imperial network went home. The power of the royal dynasty had relied on support from the British, and their gradual exit threatened the royal family's power base. In the end the British were not willing to put down the coup through military force. Further, king Farouk I had been naive in his interaction with the army, and had not taken any major precautions in securing the loyalty of the broader officers corps, but only the top leadership who were corrupt and disingenuous.[80]

Another development in this period was the waning influence of the Egyptian government, as economic turmoil combined with a growing political movement, namely the Muslim Brotherhood, was causing unrest across rural Egypt. In the three last years of the old regime peasant riots were commonplace amongst the overworked and starving *fellahin*, working on the wealthy landlord's estates. Although these riots were effectively shut down by the use of brutal violence, the number of riots popping up, one after the other in the period 1949-1952 is a clear indication of how immeasurably the old regime had lost effective control of Egypt.[81] The king and his people had focused on threats from civil political movements and not from secret societies in the army. When king Farouk I and the regime sat oblivious to the conspiratory forces getting into action on July 23, the downfall of the regime was swift. Now the British empire had to deal with a new reinvigorated and hostile government, who's leaders objective was to throw the British puppeteer out of the Egyptian motherland.

Economic developments for rural Egyptians before the 1952 revolution

Many small landowners fled Egypt during Muhammad Ali's reign to escape the oppressive and brutal regime to the point that whole villages were left abandonned in the Egyptian countryside. This land was gradually absorbed into larger estates often owned by relatives of Muhammad Ali or other actors who had the money to buy this land from the state. The

[80] Baker (1978) p. 28-31
[81] Baker (1978) p. 27

shortage of workforce in many rural areas led to some increase in the income for *tarahil* workers (casual labourers).

The economic situation in the period after the British takeover in 1882 had been marred by the constant attempts by the British to extract wealth from both public and private sectors. Although the initial justification for the British occupation was to collect the debt owed them by the Khedives, the more long term economical consequence of the occupation was a further integration of the Egyptian economy into the global market. Domestically this would continue the shift away from self-sufficiency crops, towards the cultivation of cash crops, mostly cotton, but also fruit trees and vegetables. Export of Egyptian cotton increased from 3 million cantars[82] in 1880 to 7.37 million in 1914.[83] Between 1914 and 1952, 70% of the Egyptian population was at regular intervals adversely affected by the fluctuation of the world market price on cotton.[84] Especially hard hit were small landowners who regularly fell into such dire straits as not to be able to pay their tax burdens. As a result vast amounts of farmland were sold off to the wealthier landlords, who usually had an easier time staying solvent and could survive the economic turbulence brought on by British governance. The economic stagnation and social decline of small landowners extended through the British period, and into the first 20 years of Wafd rule, as the new government mishandled the weak and volatile economy. Although some efforts were put towards helping the impoverished *fellahin* during the years of the Wafd government, little resulted from this.[85]

Year\SoO*	Small (less than 5 feddan)	Medium (10-50 feddan)	Large (more than 50 feddan)	All (total feddans)
1916	27%	30%	43%	5,451,000
1952	35%	30%	35%	5,981,000

Table 1.1 Showing distribution of land ownership in 1916 and 1952.[86]
Feddan is the Egyptian equivalent to acre (1 feddan = 1.038 acre).
SoO* Size of ownership, sectionalized by size of land to decide wealth class.

By 1950 some 90% of the *fellahin* were living in poverty, and 55% were landless.[87] As can be seen in table 1.1 little had changed in the distribution of farmland between rich and poor

[82] 1 cantar = 45.02 kilograms.
[83] Richards (1982) p. 71
[84] Saab (1967) p. 1
[85] Richards (1982) p. 142-146, 152-153
[86] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 4
[87] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 58

farmers, the change was only 8% of the total acreage transferred from the richest to the poorest. In the same period the rural population grew from approximately 8.9 million (1917)[88] to 13.7 million (1950),[89] the vast majority of this rural population was *fellahin*. The limited increase of total farmland owned by smallholders did not make up for the explosive rural population growth of 4.8 million individuals, the vast majority of which were small landowners or landless *fellahin.* This suggests that the absolute majority of boys born in the countryside between 1905 and 1941 would have to start their working life without the prospects of ever owning any land, or at best getting no more than a miserably small lot they would inherit from their father.

Here follows a description of a rural tradition surrounding the inheritance of farmland in the village of Silwa, recorded in Ammar (1954). If a father had more than one son the land would be measured metre by metre, until the land was entirely evenly distributed. If a father, let's say Ali, had 0.8 feddans, this land would then be divided into 4 long lines stretching from the desert all the way to the Nile. Each of his 4 sons would then get a tiny plot of 0.2 feddans stretching in an extremely thin line from the direction of the desert and straight towards the Nile. Because of this impractical tradition of dividing up land, tiny plots of land became so cumbersome to farm, separate from neighbouring plots, and maintain, as to be rendered entirely useless, even if used to grow crops to feed yourself and your family.[90] The result was that most plots of this size were either rented away to the owners of neighbouring plots, or often sold off to wealthier farmers.

The economy had seen a little upswing during the early war years (1940-1942) because of the large British presence in Egypt, and the amount of money entering the domestic market through British spending. However, this presence did not in the long term benefit the agricultural sector, as extensive government intervention led to changes in cropping patterns, severe problems with food supply, rampant inflation and unrest in rural areas. Further the inaccessibility of foreign markets led to a sharp decline in fertiliser imports. Rural out migration did by 1942, however, lead to an increase in the real wages, which had fallen in the period 1939-1942.[91] The years after WWII, especially the years between 1948 and 1951,

[88] My own calculations based on Saab's claim that 70% of the population were rural and then removing 30% from the 12.718 million of the 1917 population census. See Saab (1967) p. 1
[89] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 5
[90] Ammar (1954) p. 24-25
[91] Richards (1982) p. 168

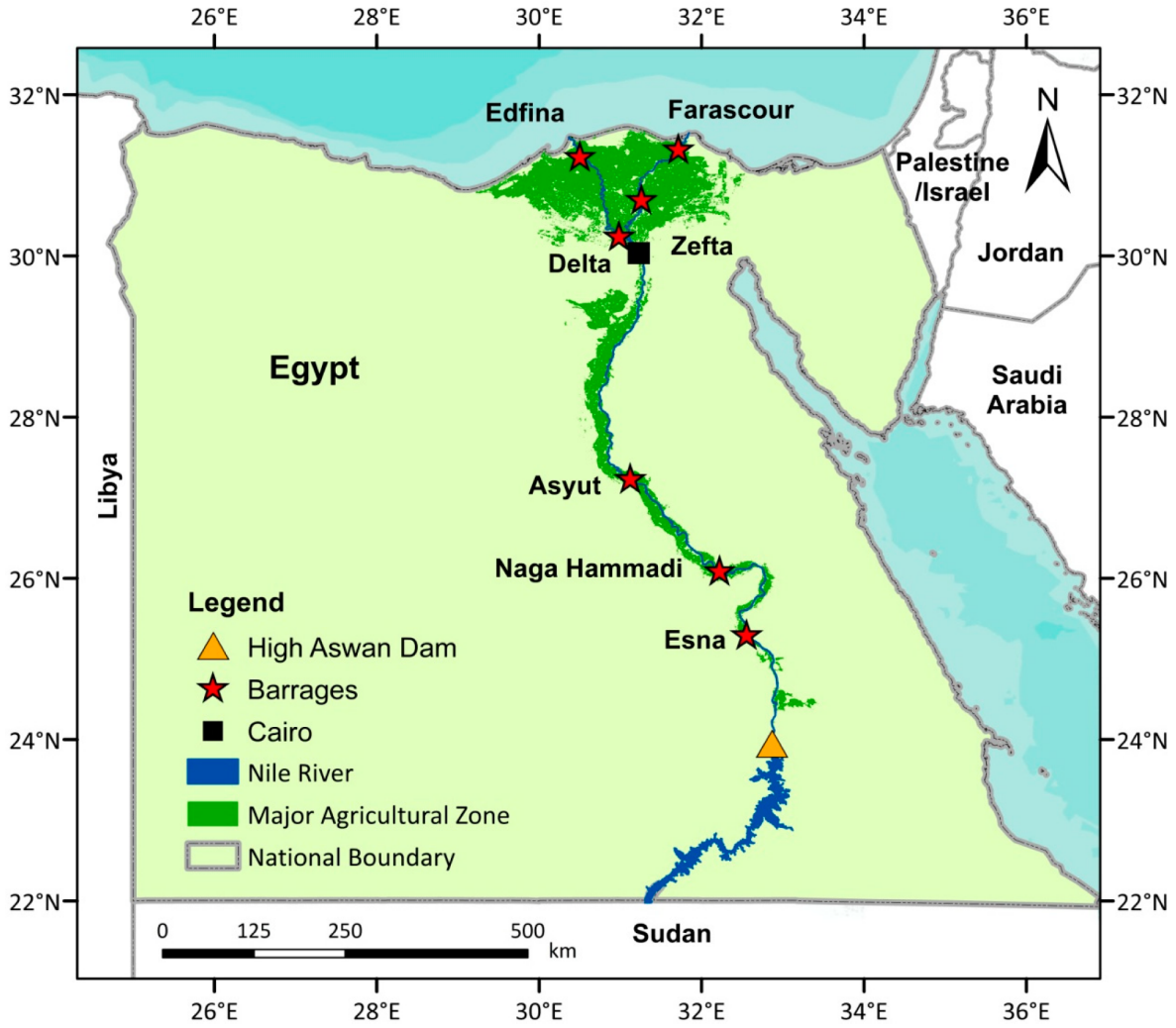
would be so dire for many poor and famished *fellahin* in rural Egypt that riots on plantations in the delta became a common occurrence. The Egyptian government was unable to satisfy the needs of the poorest Egyptians throughout the 1940's, and the majority of the rural population was severely malnourished by 1952, unable to afford food and basic life costs. The high level of malnourishment had a bad effect on the efficiency of the labour force in the agricultural sector, and crop outputs per feddan dropped between 1942-1952.[92]

In sum, the Egyptian rural economy was in a terrible state by the early 1950's, and the government seemed unable to overcome the great difficulties stemming from corruption and mismanagement. From 1942 the government was paralyzed and unable to take effective action to amend the deteriorating situation. In other words, the poor *fellahin* in 1952 was poorer than ever before in modern history. An average holding for the smallholders would be substantially larger in 1700 than in 1952, although decline was not linear but fluctuating, the wealth of the small landowners between 1700-1952 had gradually decreased. In 1951 riots of starved, beaten and displeased *fellahin* broke out on the large estates.[93]

Agricultural developments before the 1952 revolution

Egypt is a place of truly ancient agriculture. Along the Nile river societies of agriculturalists have been flourishing since time immemorial. Under a plethora of dynasties of different cultures, the agricultural traditions of the *fellahin* have developed and persisted. As can be seen in map 1.0 the vast majority of arable land in Egypt is concentrated in the Delta. The Delta is the northern part of inhabitable Egypt, roughly the dark green area north of Cairo. The second most important agricultural area of Egypt lies in Upper Egypt. This part starts where you leave Cairo's southern limits, and then follow the Nile river all the way South, gradually climbing in elevation until you reach the Aswan High Dam in the far South of the country (Dark green area between the black square and yellow triangle).

[92] Saab (1967) p. 6-7, Richards (1982) p. 174-175
[93] Mayfield (1971) p. 51-52



Map 1.0 Outlining the agricultural areas of the Nile Valley.[94]

Developments in the last century had by 1900 led to the predominance of cotton and cereal crops.[95] Cotton was first introduced by Muhammad Ali as an export crop to European markets, in order to increase his revenue.[96] Cotton was a valuable cash crop for the Egyptians, and during the American civil war of the early 1860's several fellahin made it big by exploiting the rapidly decreasing supply of cotton from the slave operated cotton fields of the Southern US, to the world market.[97] This led to a great increase in cotton production, and the crop would remain the major cash crop in Egypt until the 1952 revolution.[98] To increase cotton yields Muhammad Ali had also embarked on a major project of fixing and expanding the old irrigation system, wanting to move away from the ancient basin irrigation system, and towards a large scale perennial irrigation system. This project was continued by the British

[94] Ayyad (2019) p. 4
[95] Cereal crops in Egypts agriculture before 1952 entailed mostly wheat, maize, rice and barley.
[96] Richards (1982) p. 20-21
[97] Mohi El Din (1995) p. 8
[98] Richards (1982) p. 170-171

and by 1914, large parts of the Delta could be farmed throughout the summer months supplied water year round by the new perennial irrigation infrastructure.[99]

The earliest government efforts to create cooperatives[100] were borne to fruition in 1909 by enthusiastic reformer Umar Lufti Bey. Lufti's cooperatives built to emulate the Italian cooperative system failed, but inspired later reformers like Ahmed Hussein. Several hundred cooperatives would come into existence in the period 1922 to 1952, but the cooperative system of the period failed to engage in any meaningful way the masses of poor *fellahin*.[101] Most cooperatives served as an organ for rich landowners to gain easy access to credit, and almost all the cooperatives were dominated by the wealthy landowner class numbering no more than 12,000 individuals.[102]

According to Saab (1967) there were many factors hindering Egyptian agriculture from being of the quality of a 'Dutch-type' system in 1952. The main factors being: Scarcity of good quality arable land, and the low productivity in the agricultural sector, too many mandays of labour wasted because of too much focus on cereals, archaic methods of disposal of livestock, inadequate cooperative marketing channels, bad infrastructure, insufficient understanding and utilisation of newer agricultural techniques, and the absence of agricultural machinery.[103]

The limited in size, but incredibly fertile fields of Egypt, were intensively cultivated by 1952. Yet the land was not evenly distributed amongst the labourers working the fields. Most *fellahin* did not own the land they lived off, and were renting the land from other *fellahin*, or in many cases from wealthy landlords owning massive estates. Those wealthy landlords who did not lease away their lands in parcels to small farmers, used hired labour to cultivate their own crop, and used managers and guards to ensure work was efficient enough to secure the expected returns on their investments. *Fellahin* renting land and hired labourers were mercilessly taken advantage of, and unrest in rural areas was growing in the years after WWII and leading up to 1952.[104]

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[99] Richards (1982) p. 69
[100] A cooperative consists of several farmers managing certain aspects of their farms in cooperation. This could be the shared purchasing of machinery, watering pumps, farm animals, seed, etc. and through selling their crop in bulk to the market.
[101] Johnson (2004) p. 23-27
[102] Richards (1982) p. 55
[103] Saab (1967) p. 3-8
[104] Richards (1982) p. 172-175

Social and cultural developments before the 1952 revolution

The Beduin tribes still present in Egypt in the 1800's were largely settled and integrated into the rural population under Muhammad Ali's reign. Through the use of both carrot and stick the sheikhs and beduin elites were induced to settle in the towns, and gained substantial amounts of land as an incentive to start farming. The common members of the sheiks tribe usually settled in nearby villages and became part of the *fellahin* masses, effectively putting them at odds with their former respected leader, the sheikh, through the changed dynamics of their relationship. As a result the vast majority of the rural population had become settled by the 1850's.[105]

In the period from Muhammad Ali to the British (1805-1952) many Europeans settled in Egyptian cities, especially a large number of Greek and French citizens. British officials and military men, French administrators and bankmen, Greek merchants and other Europeans filling the jobs of running the Khedive and later British dominion had quite some impact on the culture in the big cities. By 1952 western types of clothing like suits had become commonplace to see in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria.[106] The *fellahin* however, was more or less culturally unaffected by the European presence, still wearing their traditional *jalabiya* dress and living by their old traditional ways. An already existing cleavage between centre and periphery had become even greater in the 150 years before the 1952 revolution. The mistreatment of the *fellahin* by authorities continuing since Muhammad Ali's time, had made them weary and highly sceptical of anything that could be identified as government.[107]

The influence the central cities had on rural villages was very limited, and sometimes even nonexistent. Some villages close to urban centres were more influenced by city life, while the *fellahin* in the most remote areas lived highly secluded. The life of the average *fellahin* in the early 1900's was a life of solitude; with the exception of the family and clan members, little or no contact was kept with other villages, and the majority of interaction happened through traders, clerics and a few other travellers.[108] Throughout 1805-1919 the *fellahin* learnt to fear and resent the central authorities. Representatives from the government, whether tax collectors, police men, military drafters, slave drivers for the corvée, or other similar

[105] Baer (1969) p. 214
[106] Baer (1969) p. 192
[107] Mayfield (1971) p. 25-27
[108] Mayfield (1971) p. 57-59

authority figures, used extreme force and violence. The violence and psychological terror perpetrated by the regimes, had a long lasting effect on the *fellahin's* social pattern of interacting with these authority figures.[109]

In 1952 rural Egyptians lived mostly in mud-brick[110] houses, and 9 out of 10 were *fellahin*. Still the *fellahin* encompassed a massive group of people living in several thousand villages, with many cultures and subcultures prevalent, and should not be viewed as an uniform group.[111] The culture formed around life in the Nile Valley predates the Arab conquest by a long stretch. Although Islam is a dominant force in the Egyptian image and reality, with a sizeable Coptic minority, rural folk traditions has survived quite successfully into modern times. While superstition mostly vanished in the urban areas of Egypt, belief in genies, magic, twin ghosts and the evil eye and other folk traditions survived in most rural areas of Egypt up until, and also beyond Nasser's death in 1970.[112] It is still possible to find rural villagers that believe in the old folk traditions of magic in rural Egypt today.[113]

Developments in rural education before the 1952 revolution

A compulsory schools system was introduced in 1925, under the new constitution, but this school system had failed to provide education to most rural villagers in Egypt by the time of the revolution.[114] But during the 1940's government efforts to spread primary school education would ramp up drastically compared to preceding decades.

In 1937 the Rural Social Centres (RSC) program was started up. From 1939 this program was led by the committed and headstrong Dr. Ahmed Hussein.[115] This program sought to establish government funded centres in rural villages, with the stated goal of bringing education, healthcare, modern agricultural knowledge and technology, and other basic services to the rural population of Egypt.[116] Between 1942-1952 this program would start up more than 150 centres across villages in both the Delta and Upper Egypt. According to Johnson (2006) the

[109] Mayfield (1971) p. 23-24
[110] Mud-bricks are a cheap and easily available alternative to other more sturdy brick types. Fired brick houses could be seen in the rural areas of the Delta, but were not common. Ayrout (2005) p. 100
[111] Ammar (1954) p. x-xi
[112] Mayfield (1971) p. 64-65, Fakhouri (1972) p. 90-92, Critchfield (1976) p. 2-4
[113] Raven (2012) p. 11-12, 179
[114] Ammar (1954) 214-216, Fakhouri (1972) p. 101
[115] Johnson (2004) p. xix-xxi
[116] Johnson (2004) p. 68-69

RSC program saw unprecedented success in bringing social services, healthcare and education to the mostly ignored and neglected rural villages of Egypt. The success of the program hinged mostly on the approach of not forcing the villages to accept the building of a RSC, but rather focusing on villager participation in the program, and RSCs were only built in villages showing interest in the project.[117]

Article 19 of the constitution of 1923, presents a declaration that primary education shall be available to all boys and girls in Egypt. The goal of giving primary education to everyone was by no means reached by 1937, when the RSC program was in its infancy. According to Ammar (1954) the compulsory school, set up in the village of Silwa in the 1930's, was functioning in the 1940's. 77 boys and 87 girls attended Silwa's compulsory school in 1944, and 51 boys and 26 girls attended in 1951. From 1948 until 1951 the number of boys and girls attending the compulsory school decreased as a result of the establishment of a primary school in 1948, established under that year's Education Act.[118]

The Nasser regime did not want to prioritise financing either the compulsory school system, introduced in 1925, nor the primary school system introduced in 1948 or the RSC program's schools built between 1942-1952. Instead the regime started up their own education program, which was attached to the Combined Units (CU) program. Compulsory schools, primary schools and education offered by the RSCs in several hundred villages and the 301 CUs built between 1955 and 1967, and the effects these education programs had in the period 1942-1970 will be explored in Chapter 6.

Chapter summary

Major developments had happened in Egypt during the first half of the 20th century. In the beginning of the century cotton was the major crop produced by the *fellahin*, and this cotton was being sold on the global market, Egyptian farmers competing with USA and other major cotton producers. By 1952 the Egyptian economy had become a fully integrated member in the world market, and rapid changes in the world market had profound effects on the domestic market.

[117] Johnson (2004) p. 70-79
[118] Ammar (1954) p. 214-216

The century started with a puppet regime, the royal family and their government, controlled by the British, first changing into a direct protectorate when the British decided on a full occupation in 1914. The British occupation's years of brutal tyranny lead to massive riots and the 1917 revolution, forcing the British to withdraw most of their troops and leading to the Wafd coming to prominence in the 1920's and 1930's. The period 1940-45 was marred by the British again occupying parts of mainland Egypt, but the rural economy, especially real wages, saw an upswing as a result of the massive material and food needs of the British army and empire. From 1945 the British gradually withdrew from most of Egypt (not the Suez area and Sinai), and the frailing remnants of the Wafd regime tried desperately to remain in power, after having lost the confidence of the Egyptian population.

The revolution came abruptly on July 23, 1952, a quick and bloodless revolution, with the result being a full takeover of the country by the conspirators in the Free Officer Movement. Men like Nasser, Sadat and Naguib were now in control of a country stricken by poverty and great inequality in the distribution of land and resources, and an ever growing cleavage between centre and periphery. The challenges this new regime was facing is hard to quantify. Only time would tell whether the new rulers of Egypt, an enlightened dictatorship, could bring Egypt out of the desperate situation under the colonial British system, deal with the pressing social issues and modernise the country.

Chapter 4: Perspectives on Agricultural Reform in Rural Egypt 1952-1970

Introduction

In this chapter I will present research material with varying perspectives on agriculture in Nasser era Egypt. This research material will come from experts within a range of different fields of research, mostly within quantitative research, and will find their commonality in their focus on Egyptian agriculture and the *fellahin*. The source material of this chapter focuses on the agricultural reform programs of the Nasser regime.

Agriculture was the most important enterprise in the Egyptian economy during several hundred years preceding the Nasser regime, and this still held true when the Nasserists came into power. In 1952, the year of the revolution, 70% of the population lived in rural areas, 63.2% of the Egyptian workforce was employed in agriculture and 90% of its exports were agricultural products.[119] In 1974 Egypt became a net importer of agricultural commodities for the first time in its history, as the population was outgrowing domestic crop yields at a rapid rate.[120] This was a development foreseen by the Nasser regime, and measures were taken in order to avoid becoming dependent on agricultural imports. Family planning efforts were established from 1962 onwards, one of its main goals being to dampen the exhaustive population growth.[121] But increases in output would inevitably be necessary in order to self-sufficiently feed the growing masses. Part 1 will present a general look at research trends, and the reasons for why so much research material revolves around the Nasserist agrarian reforms. Part 2 presents the thematics of the source material, the agricultural reform programs as they happened in Nasser era Egypt, according to select researchers presented in chapter 1. While part 3 will delve into a historiographical comparison of this source material, with particular focus on developmentalist ideals such as modernity and progress.

[119] Saab (1967) p. 1
[120] Richards (1980) p. 3
[121] Ayrout (2005) p. xx

Part 1: Factors steering the focus of the research

The amount of research material discussing the agricultural sector of the Egyptian economy under Nasser has not been lacking. This seems to have been the favourite topic of researchers within English literature when discussing Nasser Era Rural Egypt, at least this was my finding. This interest can to some degree be understood through two factors. First, the Nasser regime itself put a huge focus on how important developments in the agricultural sector were for the future of Egypt. Secondly, almost the entirety of the rural Egyptian population in this period consisted of *fellahin*, or people employed in jobs offering services to them.[122]

Looking at the general topics of the mass of research material available on rural Egypt, some things become quite noticeable. The focus in the forefront of the academic world, as pertaining to Nasser era rural Egypt, was the agricultural reforms. As an analogy to verify this finding I tried an experiment. I did a search in google scholar for the following entries:

"rural Egypt Nasser"	with 33,400 hits
"agriculture rural Egypt Nasser"	with 19,300 hits
"rural Egypt Nasser era"	with 23,700 hits
"agriculture rural Egypt Nasser era"	with 23,600 hits
"rural Egypt 1960s"	with 180,000 hits
"agriculture rural Egypt 1960s"	with 194,000 hits[123]

As can be seen from the results above, adding "agriculture" to the search entry yielded similar amounts of hits as excluding it. This suggests that works including the words "rural Egypt" connected with some identifier of the time period "Nasser", "Nasser era" and "1960s", who doesn't also include the word "agriculture" doesn't seem to be very numerous. This is an indication that there is a lot more material on agriculture in rural Egypt under Nasser than any other topic on rural Egypt in the English speaking academic world. In my findings while looking for literature, this seems especially true in the time period 1963-1982 which is the time frame in which the sources who will be compared in this chapter were published.

[122] Saab (1967) p. 1
[123] Date 29.07.2022 at 14:10 Link: https://scholar.google.com/

It is important to understand the research society in the English speaking world in broader terms in order to better understand why development and agriculture were in the spotlight. A majority of the researchers were affected by the ideas of linear progress and development towards an imagined destination. You had 1st world countries and you had 2nd and 3rd world countries. A first world country would be a fully developed and industrialised country, one located in the Western hemisphere. A 3rd world country on the other hand would for example be one such as Egypt; poor, underdeveloped and non industrialised. Also the fact that the Nasser regime in the 1960's intended to 'modernise' and 'industrialise' Egypt along Arab Socialist and sometimes communist values, while gradually aligning itself with the Soviet Union, in other words turning Egypt into a 2nd world country,[124] was of particular interest to developmentalists during this period. For clarification, the ideas of 1st, 2nd and 3rd world countries is not a concept I myself believe in, and not a creed inherent in my beliefs. Developmentalism as a leading dogma has been discussed in greater detail in chapter 1.

Furthermore, looking at the greater picture, developmentalist were paying close attention to the developments happening in Egypt under the young revolution in the 1950's and 1960's. Here was a place, formerly under an imperialist regime led by the British empire, now under the leadership of progressive Arab socialists. The leading figure that Nasser would become in the Arab world, made him and his regime of interest not only on a national level, but internationally as well. As a result a lot of research on the Middle East in general from the time period focuses on Nasser and his regime. Political scientists and economists have in general had Nasserist policies in mind when writing about developments in rural Egypt, and this had the effect of steering the direction of their research.

How the Nasser regimes policies directly affected research

Through this whole process viewed and often labelled by the regime as modernisation, the concept of development naturally finds its place. In a time (1963-1982 in this case) when research on the Middle East was largely focused on development studies, it is no surprise that developmentalists took an interest in Egypt. In the Egyptian case the concept of developmentalism and modernisation was not imposed (at least not in the 1950's and 1960's)

[124] Egypt kept growing closer to the Soviet Union as a result of developments domestically and internationally, and during the 1960's the two countries would cooperate closely, with the Soviet Union taking on a dominant position in the two countries relationship.

on the country by the Western world, it was championed by its own native born regime. Scientists working under such a strong paradigm, as developmentalism was in this period, found a great specimen in the Egyptian case.

Another way in which the regime's policies affected research on the agricultural sector was through statistics. The public statistics bureau, part of the government, was a major source for several of the works under scrutiny in this chapter. Abdel-Fadil (1975) is in parts of his statistical data particularly dependent on public census data. This data was produced and compiled by experts working under the Nasser regime. How reliable and neutral this data truly is has to be questioned. Also what data is available depended solely on what the bureau decided to gather statistics on. Changes in the agricultural sector were of major interest to the regime, and this can be reflected in the amount of data produced on agriculture in rural Egypt by the public statistics bureau.

Almost all the research material used in this whole Master project, be that articles or books, mentions the importance of the agricultural reforms under the Nasser regime. There seems to be a clear correlation between the focus of research material from the late 1950's and beyond, and the focus of major players amongst the Free Officers together with Nasser on agricultural reform in rural Egypt. To say the least, the Nasser regime had a major effect on research material written about rural Egypt in the period, through the regime's control of the spread of information and especially statistical data.

The difficulties of population growth and its impact on research

According to Saab (1967), the population of Egypt was 9.7 million in 1897, and it had grown to 21 million in 1952.[125] With the population to land ratio in mind, and also the extreme population growth Egypt has been faced with for a long period, some of the focus in the research becomes clearer. Abdel-Fadil (1975) for example dedicates most of his book to seeing the problems of poverty and malnourishment resulting in the lack of affordable food and meagre wages as a result of oversupply of labourers, and then discussing the government's efforts to deal with the issue. The topic of overpopulation is also discussed amongst most of the other researchers, and the fact that Egypt had seen a population boom

[125] Saab (1967) p. 1-2

throughout the entirety of the 1900's means the difficulties arising in the countryside as a result had been observed by the government and researchers for a long time before the revolution.

Looking into agriculture and agricultural reform then becomes a natural byproduct of Egypt's circumstances, whether as a tool to grow the economy as envisioned by the Nasserists or as a means to stem the hunger of the rapidly growing masses of poor and malnourished in rural Egypt, a common agenda amongst developmentalist researchers. As we delve into the agricultural reforms, keep in mind that the majority of literature on Nasser era rural Egypt revolves around these reform programs.

Part 2: The agricultural reform programs under Nasser

The subsistence of the Egyptian population has been based in agriculture since time immemorial. As discussed in more detail in chapter 2, Egypt's climate and geography makes it an exceptional place to do agriculture. Furthermore the very limited fertile space available in Egypt, made it infeasible to perform husbandry on the scale seen in other parts of Africa. This means that almost all the arable land within the borders of what today comprises Egypt, was allocated to farming crops to feed humans and draft animals. In other words it is a culture of plowers, not herders.

The Nasser regime saw the major importance agriculture played in the Egyptian economy in 1952, and quickly realised a plan for development towards modernisation which would start in the agricultural sector. The plan was to greatly improve output of crops through introducing some radical changes into Egyptian agriculture. These changes included educating the *fellahin* in modern more effective agrarian techniques, lending of money to stimulate modernisation, meaning the buying of water pumps, tractors and other industrial machinery, and expanding the use of fertilisers. This was to be achieved through lending money to the farmers, giving them ample time to repay their debt, and through the enhancement and expansion of the cooperative systems already put in place by the old regime. Membership in a cooperative would eventually become mandatory. The Nasser regime hoped that the measures taken to improve the agricultural process through modernisation and cooperativization would mean higher living standards for the *fellahin,*

leading to higher outputs and thus more earnings and greatly increased tax revenue from the agricultural sector.[126] This money would then be used to fund the grand industrialisation project envisioned by the Nasserists. Together with the agricultural modernisation project implemented through the agricultural cooperatives, came two other important projects that would have a major impact on the socio-economic landscape in rural Egypt. These were the land redistribution reforms and the land reclamation projects.

The goal of the land redistribution reforms were to seize land from the old landowning elite, and redistribute this land between the poor and landless *fellahin*. This would both deal a major blow to the influence of the old elite, as they were perceived to be a major threat to the new regime, and at the same time be a countermeasure to the already massive problem of poverty in the countryside and the unrest that followed with it.[127] Poverty was a problem for the regime not only because of humanitarian issues and political stability reasons, but also because malnourished farmers are a lot less productive in physical labour. Already in 1952 the productivity of the Egyptian rural labour force had shrinked, and malnourishment amongst the growing number of poor and extremely poor *fellahin* was one of the main causes. The malnourished *fellahin* were a lot more receptive to infection from diseases like bilharzia, which was affecting a large majority of the rural population, further decreasing productivity. Use of narcotics was another factor contributing to the lack of productivity, according to Saab.[128] Educated as several members of the Young Officers Movement were, they saw the importance of eradicating poverty as vital to the success of the revolution and its goal of modernisation.

The goal of the land reclamation project on the other hand was to use the water resources now available through the building of the massive Aswan Dam, and redirect this water out into desert areas and use modern technology to literally turn sandy desert into arable land. The hope was that this would massively increase the amount of available land for agriculture, and hence drastically increase yields. This reclaimed land would also be distributed towards poor and landless *fellahin*.

[126] Saab (1967) p. 119-120
[127] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 7-8
[128] Saab (1967) p. 6-7

The land redistribution program

In the years 1952 and 1961 two large scale land tenure reform laws were introduced. The goal of these laws was to expropriate land from the very rich landholders and redistribute this land to the rural poor. These laws stated that a maximum of 200 feddans in 1952, lowered to 100 feddans in 1961, could be owned by one individual. Another 100 feddans in excess of the 200/100 feddan limit could be transferred to dependents (usually family members) of the owner.[129] Stipulations added in 1958 ensured no single family could own more than 300 feddans total.[130] The goal of the land tenure reforms was twofold:

1. To diminish the power of the old landowning elite, which had dominated Egypt before the revolution.
2. As a measure to reverse worsening trends of poverty and landlessness in the countryside.

Developments starting as far back as under Muhammad Ali's reign (1805-1848) had had dire effects on the rural population of Egypt, and a group of landless *fellahin*, or peasant without any ownership of land, had come into existence.[131] Landless *fellahin* numbered in the millions by 1952. For *fellahin* in Egypt in 1952, having no land meant having no income security and possibly no reliable way to feed yourself and your family. The landless *fellahin* were the poorest amongst the poor in Egypt, and most of them lived in extreme poverty. According to Abdel-Fadil malnourishment was a rampant issue amongst the poor *fellahin* in Egypt in the 1950's and 1960's[132] and this had a crippling effect on the productivity of the labour force.[133] The most severely malnourished part of the labour force were landless *fellahin*, and therefore the new regime had a vested interest in fighting landlessness.

The poor *fellahin* owning small plots of land was also a growing group by the time of the revolution. As many as 50% of landed *fellahin* owned less than 2 feddans by the mid 1950's, barely enough land to feed their families in a good year. According to Abdel-Fadil, these poor *fellahin* were barely better off than their landless brethren, as the need to regularly take up consumption loans lead them to live in perpetual indebtedness.[134]

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[129] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 7-9
[130] Saab (1967) p. 17-18
[131] Richards (1982) p. 39
[132] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 78-81
[133] Saab (1967) p. 3-4
[134] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 41

Wealthy landlords owned most of the land in Egypt in 1952, still the majority of the fields were cultivated by smallholding *fellahin*. This came about as a result of high rents on land,[135] while at the same time real wages were increasing, and the government had started demanding fixed prices on deliveries of several crops in the postwar years, before the revolution. These factors incentivised the landlords to rent out their land rather than farm themselves. In 1949 60.7% of all cultivated land in Egypt was rented out for cash or alternatively shares in the crop.[136]

Some landlords rented away their land to smallholders, but others chose to keep large estates where seasonally hired hands, known as casual farm labourers, did the physical labour. In 1961 approximately 1.2 million were employed as casual farm labourers according to the agricultural census, of which one quarter were female and half were between the ages of 12 and 18 years. These numbers do not include those who were hired as permanent labourers. The other main opportunity of work for the landless *fellahin* came in the form of maintenance work on the canals and other public works. They were hired for this work on a temporary basis, and had to migrate to wherever such employment could be obtained. These workers were known as the tarahil casual labourers, and consisted of mostly adult males. It was not uncommon for the same person to work at times as a casual farm labourer and at other times as a tarahil.[137]

There was really no other work opportunity for most landless *fellahin*, and as a result of oversupply and lack of regulation wages amongst the casual farm labourers and the tarahil workers had plummeted to almost nothing by the 1950's. The Nasser regime tried to implement a minimum wage for casual farm labourers, but this was not strictly enforced and usually ignored by the employers. The tarahil workers were usually even worse off, as they commonly lived in perpetual indebtedness to their employers, lending money to sustain themselves in periods between employment. There were no opportunities for tarahil labourers to lend money publicly, so the contractors that hired them for temporary work were also their source of credit.[138]

[135] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 5-6
[136] Richards (1982) p. 173-174
[137] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p.43-48
[138] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 47-48,

The land reclamation projects

As should be clear to the reader by now, Egypt has a space problem. The country itself is a large one in area measuring more than a million square kilometres. However only 3.5% of its landmass was available for cultivation after the completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1970.[139] The amount of cultivated land in Egypt in 1952 amounted to approximately 6 million feddans,[140] and the ambitious revolutionary government had envisaged to increase this by as much as 50% through land reclamation over the next 25 years.[141] That's a whole 3 million feddans of desert, turned into soil nutritious enough to perform agriculture. This target was in the late 1950s lowered to 1 million feddans reclaimed by 1970.[142] Yet ambitious, this target could more feasibly be achieved.

It's important to state that reclamation was not a new thing in the Egyptian context, and successful projects to reclaim desert lands by private enterprises, were embarked upon already during Muhammad Ali's rule. However by 1952 the interest in reclamation had dried up, as the enterprise was in recent years deemed too costly for net positive returns, and investors had pulled out.[143]

According to Springborg (1979) the reclamation project under the Nasser regime can be divided into three different periods. The period of discovery and expansion, when clay strata were found in the desert area, which were to become Tahrir (Liberation) province, suggesting that the Romans had been farming there. Free Officer Magdi Hassanein convinced Nasser that the solution to the very high population to land ratio problem Egypt was facing, was large-scale reclamation of the desert into arable land. Hassanein then took charge of the newly formed Tahrir Province Organisation (TPO) in 1954, starting the process of reclaiming the desert area of Tahrir Province. Hassanein and his socialist allies favoured using the newly reclaimed land to set up model state farms, and this was done in Tahrir province in the years Hassanein was in charge.[144]

[139] Baker (1978) p. 197
[140] Saab (1967) p. 9
[141] Saab (1967) p. 157-158
[142] Saab (1967) p. 160
[143] Saab (1967) p. 158
[144] Springborg (1979) p. 53-54

The second period started in 1957 when agronomists, civil servants and conservatives, many of whom felt great antipathy towards Hassanein and his state model farms, managed to get him sacked. There was ample evidence of fiscal misconduct and the poor quality of reclamation work in Tahrir Province, and Hassanein was forced to resign. The TPO was integrated into the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, led by Sayid Marei, a trained agronomist and not a military officer. Now out of the hands of the military, Marei started a process of privatisation. In July 1958, 400 *fellahin* families were given land in Tahrir province and by April 1961, the de-collectivisation period ended as Marei proclaimed that all land in Tahrir province was now held by *fellahin* smallholders.[145]

However Mareis work would not stand for long as several former officers in Nasser's regime led by Ali Sabry, would conspire to get Marei sacked. They managed to convince Nasser of how Marei's conservative bourgeois background was making him unfit for the project and that as a result his work lacked the revolutionary vigour needed for such a grand project. Marei's estimate of how much land could be reclaimed (approximately 40,000 feddans) was according to Sabry's people, only 1/4th of the potential of the land. This slandering of Marei coupled with the Cotton worm disaster of 1961, which were irrefutably mismanaged by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, led to Nasser's sacking of Marei that same year. Now in the hands of the military again the TPO started the process of creating large scale state run farms in the newly reclaimed areas.[146]

Saab emphasises the urgency to reclaim land felt by the revolutionary leadership and Nasser in 1959, as the main factor leading to increased output of reclaimed lands in the 1960's compared to the 1950's. The nutritious silt carried by the Nile was crucial to effectively and cost efficiently reclaim the sandy soils of some areas, especially the Tahrir province. This silt had freely flown with the Nile river during the flooding season, but would by 1970 be stuck and start building up at the bottom of lake Nasser, forming behind the then finished Aswan High Dam. The precious Nile silt was thus no longer carried down the river, and the time to use the leftover silt before it emptied was running short.[147] In 1959 important underground water reserves were discovered in the oasis region of Kharga and Dakhla in the Western Desert, and the New Valley project was established. Several other reclamation projects would

[145] Springborg (1979) p. 54-55
[146] Springborg (1979) p. 55-56
[147] Saab (1967) p. 159-160

crop up in the early 1960s, and while only 70,000 feddans were reclaimed between 1952-1959, the reclamation projects of the 1960's would truly be of a different scale.

The third period of the reclamation project (1961-1967) started with the appointment of Free Officer Abdel M. A. el-Nur as the new Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation. Under Nur's regime the military would enforce their views of collectivisation as the way forward. By the end of 1964 more than 400,000 feddans had been reclaimed, quite a vast area of land. The sizable amount of land reclaimed made project management jobs related to the land very prestigious, and the growing bureaucracy surrounding the management of this land was amply stocked with military officers. However Nasser had to secure his power through fine balancing of the opposing interest groups within his regime. He could not allow either conservatives, liberals or socialists to receive too much influence, and therefore the management of the reclaimed land areas was divided up between three opposing factions until 1964.[148]

The influence of the leftist faction would continue to grow. In 1964 Ali Sabry was appointed prime minister and el-Nur was promoted to deputy prime minister. Following this, several of the more conservative ministers involved in the reclamation project would be dismissed, and the leftist would be in full charge of the reclaimed land organisation. This move came as a result of pressure from the Soviet Union, who had helped finance the building of the Aswan High Dam, and paved the way for closer relations with the USSR. Khruschev would visit Egypt that summer.[149] The leftists would gather their support behind Sabry, and he would start the process of collectivisation of all the farms on reclaimed land. This process would go more or less unhindered during the remaining years of Nasser regime, not because of Nasser's support of the project, but because of growing dependence on the Soviet Union due to their supplying of weapons for the war with Israel. Sabry and the leftist faction would be purged with the takeover of power by Sadat in 1971.[150]

[148] Springborg (1979) p. 57-58
[149] Springborg (1979) p. 58-60
[150] Springborg (1979) p. 62

The cooperatives and their purposes

A cooperative is a type of organisation focused on several aspects related to agriculture. The function of the cooperative was: to help the individual members in financing for buying fertilisers, farming equipment and other necessities, storing, transporting and selling the seasonal harvests to domestic or foreign markets, paying the members for their crops after tax and loan fees deductions and organising cultivation according to modern techniques[151] These modern techniques included the usage of a triennial crop rotation system rather than the biennial system commonly used under the British period. In summary the cooperative worked as a benefactor to the *fellahin* providing them security and financing, while also simultaneously providing a way for the government to impose its influence on the cultivation process. The hope was that the cooperatives would stimulate improvement of farming techniques and technology, leading to increased yields and prosperity.

The cooperative system had already been implemented by the old regime, and through making more than 2 million E£ available to the newly transformed Agricultural Cooperative Bank in 1949, numbers had increased drastically by the onset of the revolution. In 1952 as many as 2,103 cooperatives existed in Egypt, with a total of 746,836 members.[152] The hope of the new regime was to expand on the cooperative system to increase membership.

The regime saw the positive effects a well functioning cooperative could have on productivity, but this was not their only reason for wanting to increase membership in cooperatives. The cooperative organisations in Egypt's case worked as an extension of the government, and the Nasser regime liked to have a hands-on approach when it came to effecting their envisioned changes and developments in the agricultural sector and the rural economy. The goal was to increase membership to include most if not all of the smallholders in rural Egypt, and this was necessary in order to effectuate agricultural reform on the scale envisioned by the regime. Membership in a cooperative would be compulsory for every claimant of redistributed or reclaimed land under the two previously discussed reforms, and this group would make up the vast majority of members in the cooperatives until the spring of 1960.[153]

[151] Saab (1967) p. 51-52
[152] Baker (1978) p. 201
[153] Saab (1967) p. 51

According to Saab (1967) there were many problems hindering the efficiency of the cooperatives. There was insufficient number of qualified personnel to fill the administration of the cooperatives, especially educated agronomists: 1 agronomist per 350 smallholders compared to 1 per 93 in Italy.[154] As a result the cooperatives had to have a large number of members, often as high as 300 members, in order to be adequately staffed to perform all necessary functions and an average cooperative were responsible for more than a 1000 feddans. Ideally the size would have been closer to a hundred members per cooperative according to Saab.

Another problem hindering the functioning of the cooperatives was the illiteracy common amongst the staff members in the cooperatives in the 1950's. Illiteracy levels in the cooperative staffs around 25-50% were common in the early years, although this would gradually change. The salaries of the Agrarian Reform staff were also clearly insufficient, most commonly around £E20 a month, leading to aloofness and quick turnover.[155] A third issue with the cooperatives was the rich *fellahin's* dominance over them. Before 1969, 80% of the board members of each individual cooperative was supposed to consist of owners of less than 5 feddans. Yet the rich peasants dominated the cooperative boards. Richards estimates that 40% of the cooperatives had reactionary boards.[156]

The greatest hindrance in the success of the introduction of impactful agricultural reform in the end was the *fellahin's* common mistrust of the cooperatives. *Fellahin* regularly tried to hide away parts of their harvest, to avoid it being sold through the cooperative they were members in, even when this usually would have brought in a higher price for their yield. This was done in order to avoid paying off their debts to the cooperative, which were commonly seen as unnecessary since this was a government organisation and not a private money lender. Evasions would continue to be a problem throughout the Nasser period. Another result of the mistrust was that almost no smallholders living on land outside the partitioned old estates were willing to join the cooperatives. So membership in the cooperative consisted mostly of reluctant *fellahin* forced into the system.[157]

[154] Saab (1967) p. 57
[155] Saab (1967) p. 55-56
[156] Richards (1982) p. 182
[157] Saab (1967) p. 95-96

The fields of Egypt in the 1952 were dominated by Cotton and cereal[158] crops, with little use of more valuable crops, like fruit, flower and medicinal crops. Saab (1967) explains that these few crops (mainly cotton, maize, rice and barley) fail to account for soil fertility, net returns per unit of area or per unit of irrigation water and doesn't fully utilise available manpower and livestock resources. This is because these crops are not very labour intensive per feddan, leaving manpower resources unused and hence making them less valuable than some of the alternatives.[159] Efforts by the cooperatives to change the crops to more valuable alternatives could have made a huge difference. Yet the composition of crops did not substantially change in the Nasser era, cotton keeping its spot as the number one, and many cereal crops being planted often as a means to self subsistence. Generally, inefficiency and corruption within the cooperatives' management, and their inability to induce independent *fellahin* to join voluntarily, left many cooperatives unable to carry out their basic duties.

Part 3: Perspectives on the *Fellahin* and the Reforms

As discussed in part 1 of this chapter, the Nasser regime and their reforms targeting the *fellahin* population of Egypt, attracted the attention of Egyptian and Western researchers. In this part we will take a closer look at the perspectives presented of the *fellahin* in relation to the agricultural reform programs, by researchers both Egyptian born, and otherwise, but generally writing from a western point of view. This is material produced by researchers coming from several different academic fields of research and often very different backgrounds. We will use this information to paint a picture of the *fellahin*, then use the information for a discussion on the empirical data used by the researchers, and how their research fits into the greater historiographical narrative of developmentalism. The researchers whose empirical work will be focused on in this part include Saab (1967), Abdel-Fadil (1975), Baker (1978), Springborg (1979), Richards (1982) and Ayrout (2005).[160]

[158] Any plant in the grass family yielding an edible grain, such as wheat, barley, rice, corn, etc.
[159] Saab (1967) p. 4-5
[160] Arout (2005) was originally published in 1963, and only minor changes were made to the 2005 edition.

What is a *fellah*? Who are the *fellahin*?

It should be clear to the reader by now that rural Egypt in 1952 consisted mostly of farmers, known as the *fellahin*, either cultivating their own land, or more commonly cultivating the land of some landlord. This land was either rented from the landlord at steep rent prices, or the *fellah* was a hired labourer, labouring under the landlord's brutal regime. Those who couldn't find work in agriculture or the few shops and markets where the *fellah* bought his necessities, were forced to work as tarahil casual labourers building and maintaining infrastructure, or alternatively they could migrate into the cities. The big landlords almost always lived in the cities, and cared little of the life and wellbeing of the *fellahin* working his fields, as long as his profits kept coming. Together with these aforementioned groups you also had a small and dwindling middle class of *fellahin*. Usually educated and living in the countryside, supervising their feddans themselves, trying to drive up their profits.[161] There should also be noted that *fellahin* working on *Waqf*[162] lands lived under slightly better conditions than renters.[163] This is the basic demographic composition of the rural population of Egypt. However this rudimentary information barely explains the complexity of the rural population of Egypt in any satisfactory way, as to understand what being a *fellahin* or a rural Egyptian really entails.

According to Ayrout the Arabic word *fellah*, is the intensive adjective of the verb *falaha*, which means to labor, toil or till the earth.[164] In movies, books and cultural expression, the connection between the *fellah* and the earth has often been emphasised to the extreme, painting a picture of a natural symbiosis.[165] In the next chapter we will look closer on the dynamics of interaction between government officials and the villages, and the topic of *fellahin* life and culture will be debated.

[161] Ayrout (2005) p. 17-20
[162] *Waqf* is under Islamic law a charitable donation often of land, of which proceeds should go towards a charitable donation. In the rural Egyptian context Waqf land is almost always arable land cultivated by the *fellahin*, who used to work under the former owner. Now managed either by the government or a private trust, the proceeds do not go to the former landlord but towards charitable purposes.
[163] Ayrout (2005) p. 24
[164] Ayrout (2005) p. 31
[165] Jekanowski (2018) p. 248-251

The urban centres and the elite's perception of the *fellahin*

The perspective of townspeople and the government's perception of the *fellahin* are several times described in the literature, showing how prejudice and contempt towards the *fellah* have commonly been shown by the city elite in abundance. To explain why the Nasser government wanted to have such a strong control over the life of the *fellahin* and their agricultural labour, understanding their perceptions of the *fellahin* is necessary. This is emphasised by several of the researchers. As an example Ayrout explains it in these words:

> *"Contempt for the fellah has become so deeply rooted in the mind of the townsman that the very word has become the worst of insults. Call anyone "fellah" and it is as if you had called him "lout," "scum" or even worse. The rich assume a striking indifference to the fellahin. To them, they are only "things" in which there is no point in interesting oneself and which it is considered good form to ignore. Faced with the simplest queries about them, the rich often display an ignorance which shows quite clearly that such questions have never occurred to them and arouse no curiosity at all."*[166]

The fact that the old regime consisted mostly of wealthy landlords, who according to Ayrout's statement above, commonly showed nothing but ignorance and contempt towards the *fellahin*, helps to explain the general lack of enthusiasm for reform initiatives in the pre-revolution era. Similarly the Free Officers originated mostly from the classes of the well to do peasantry and urbanites, and contempt shaped their perception of the *fellahin*.[167] Nasser was himself the son of a postman from Bakos, Alexandria,[168] meaning he was already accustomed to the anti-*fellahin* sentiment of the big city. The Free Officers who came from the countryside were mostly from the Delta. They would in any case soon grow accustomed to the cities' negative attitudes towards *fellahin*, as their work in government posts after the revolution would lead them to set up residence in urban areas. Ayrout describes these dynamics in the Nasser government's interaction with the *fellahin*:

> *"Since Egypt is essentially agricultural, it follows that almost every organization of government in the long run gives orders to the fellah. In industry and in the town, public services are entrusted to private enterprise; but in agriculture, on the contrary, the government assumes functions which in other countries are often carried on by private persons. The result is that the peasant looks to the government as the Providence which manages and regulates all things, while the government traditionally regards the fellah as a helpless child who must be ordered about to protect him from his own ignorance."*[169]

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[166] Ayrout (2005) p. 19
[167] Richards (1982) p. 175-176
[168] Johnson (2004) p. 163
[169] Ayrout (2005) p. 26

Although not in as great detail as in Ayrout (2005), similar contempt for the *fellahin*, by the government and townspeople, are described by Abdel-Fadil, Richards and others. Such contempt for their fellow citizens in the countryside, helps explain some of the difficulties which arose in the interactions between government officials and *fellahin*. The *fellahin's* experience had been almost nothing but negative in the interaction with the central authorities all the way since Muhammad Ali's rule, and a culture of mistrust and deception had arisen.[170] Although the Nasser government and their rural bureaucracy probably had good intentions with their policies and reforms, the long standing dynamics of the relationship between centre and periphery in Egypt would stand as a major barrier for the implementation of agricultural and other reforms in rural areas.

What empirical data is used, and to what purpose?

There are many ways to research the same or similar topics. Where Saab evaluates technical and social change as it happened in rural Egypt in his day, Richards uses a historical approach to delve into these same phenomena, contrasting Nasser era developments to earlier decades. Abdel-Fadil on the other hand focuses his analysis on economic and fiscal data from the 1950's and 1960's. All three authors use a large set of demographic data on the *fellahin* in their research. Despite their different approach to method, their data have many similarities, and they draw many similar conclusions in their critique of the agricultural reforms. Saab has this to say about his use of data:

> *"It is clear that this evaluation of the various aspects of the Egyptian Agrarian Reform programme during 1952-1962 is not a statistical survey and that it cannot be considered final; the author merely hopes that it will serve as a basis for future large scale research works."*[171]

Saab's arguments are based on available statistical material, and an analysis strengthened by his personal knowhow of agriculture. His work however focuses only to a small degree on social aspects of the agricultural reforms between 1952-1962 and suffers from an arbitrary ending in the year 1962.[172] Saab's data serves the purpose of evaluating technical change in the agricultural sector resulting from the agricultural reforms.

[170] Mayfield (1971) p. 68
[171] Saab (1967) p. ix
[172] Baer (1968) p. 154

Abdel-Fadil (1975) in many ways represents such large-scale research work as Saab envisioned. Although his work later garnered criticism for lack of historical background and some grave errors in his calculations,[173] his work stands as an important first attempt at understanding the socio-economic changes brought about for the rural poor in Nasser era Egypt, and his comprehensive dataset holds great value despite his erroneous calculations. The arguments of Abdel-Fadil are backed up by extensive use of tables and some graphs. The argument rests on the use of statistical data on production yields, commodities, development in agricultural markets, distribution of land between the different classes (old elite, rich, middle, poor) of landholders and changes in these entities over time within the Nasser era. This data is then used to analyse socio-economic changes in rural Egypt, and their effects on the wealth, welfare and consumption patterns of the poor. Abdel-Fadil's empirical data serves to present in a net positive light the Nasser regime's efforts to destroy the old wealthy landowners and improve the life of the rural poor.

Richards (1982) strength lies where we find some of Abdel-Fadils weakness, with his comprehensive historical background. He uses statistical data, especially a lot of economic data, gathered over a long period of time, but focuses particularly on agricultural developments in rural Egypt in the period 1940-1980. His long historical perspective contains the data necessary to thoroughly compare pre-revolutionary economic developments in the agricultural sector, to those that happened under Nasser's regime. Richard's empirical data serves to show how agricultural development in Rural Egypt was a process instigated by several regimes and which happened gradually.

Baker (1978) presents material on the agricultural reforms, but focuses more on the cooperative reform program than the other reforms. In his lead up to the discussion of the reforms he focuses on the Free Officer Movements and their organisational structure, rather than delving too deeply into political, economic and social developments in earlier decades. In one of his earlier chapters he discusses how Nasser dealt with the difficulties of replacing the old regime's political aristocracy. Here the process of hiring staff for roles in the rural administration are described in these words:

[173] Radwan (1979) p. 284-285

"Nasser responded to the regime's need for lower-echelon staff by creating a ruling caste, composed of former military officers complemented by civilians with needed technical skills. The conspicuousness of officers at the Upper levels of government has been noted."[174]

In other words the staff was selected on the basis of their loyalty, more than their technical skills. Baker presents the cooperative reforms as hampered by a self-serving organisational structure, in order to deliberate an argument of the revolution as an unfinished project. Further Baker argues how material gains was the main motivation of officers and bureaucrats for joining the administration, and not a sense of duty towards Egypt and the revolutionary ideals of modernisation.[175] Springborg (1979) takes his critique even further, claiming that loyalty, not organisational operability, was Nasser's main concern in the building of his administration, heavily swayed by patrimonial dilemmas.[176] Springborg's focus on patrimonialism as the main factor steering the policies surrounding the reclamation projects, serves his argument that the agricultural reform program was increasingly overburdened by an uninspired and self interested administration.

Springborg and Ayrout represent two widely different approaches to researching the Egyptian agricultural reforms, than the rest of the researchers. Springborg has an entirely character driven narrative focusing on 'big men' and the patrimonial vying for power. Ayrout strives to tell the story of the Nasser era agricultural changes in the perspective of the *fellahin*. He focuses on one major success in areas were the cooperatives are operative:

"It is every fellah's ideal to own a bit of land, just as it is to marry, to have children, and to own a buffalo. The owner of a small field has the same things to buy as a tenant: seed, manure, animals and implements. Nowadays these are usually obtained through the cooperatives established by the 1952 agrarian reform law. Where these societies are operative, there is an improvement over the situation which formerly prevailed. Because of a law that small holdings could not be seized by banks, the banks refused to give credit to small holders. This threw the fellah into the hands of moneylenders, who lent at 30 per cent or even 50 per cent, in spite of the law forbidding rates higher than 10 per cent. For the fellah must have credit. And often as not, by his own ignorance, he did not know how to make the loan pay. Then he was engulfed deeper and deeper with debt by the harsh terms of the moneylender, and had either to sell the buffalo or hand over all the fruits of his labour, in order to pay the interest."[177]

This gives Ayrout a unique perspective lacking in Saab, Abdel-Fadil, Springborg Richards and Baker, the perspective of the *fellahin* themselves.These other authors focus either entirely

[174] Baker (1978) p. 55
[175] Baker (1978) p. 58-60
[176] Springborg (1979) p. 51-52
[177] Ayrout (2005) p. 50

on what their statistical empirical data tells us about Nasser's agricultural modernisation project, or in the case of Springborg and partly Baker, how political conniving amongst Nasser's men affected agricultural reform policies. Ayrout uses his personal observations of the *fellahin*, and how they themselves describe change in their life, to present evidence of social change resulting from the agricultural reform of 1952 on the ground level. The perspective of the *fellahin* will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The government bank and usury

One of the main goals of the cooperative structure established by the Nasser government was to secure a safe line of credit to the smallholders, the *fellahin* owning small plots. This would help combat usury and stimulate investment into productivity measures and contribute to modernisation. Usury was a rampant problem before the revolution.[178] The practice of usury was witnessed in the village of Silwa by Ammar in 1951.[179] Initially the Agrarian Reform authorities handed out credit to farmers on an individual basis, against the security of the bulk disposal of the farmer's crop at the end of the harvesting season. Eventually however, after the government had started distributing confiscated land from the large estates, and local cooperatives had started sprouting up, the cooperatives became the only government channels to offer credit to farmers.[180] Still the farmer's crop was the only thing demanded as security for loans.[181]

The cooperative credit system certainly minimised the problem of usury, however acquisition of credit could at times be difficult for smallholders and the rich *fellahin* were the main beneficiaries of the short term loans.[182] This mattered as short term loans were really important to poor farmers, who before the harvesting season usually could not afford the acquisition of adequate amounts of fertiliser. The lack of fertilisation could lead to low crop yields, forcing the *fellah* into more debt, and furthering his economic devastation. Therefore the over-cautious attitude of cooperative creditors, forced many poor *fellahin* to get their credit from local merchants, leading to the problem of usury persiting.[183] Poor *fellahin* regularly had to hire themselves out as casual labourers rather than cultivating their own

[178] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 146
[179] Ammar (1954) p. 81
[180] Saab (1967) p. 82-83
[181] Saab (1967) p. 95
[182] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 149
[183] Saab (1967) p. 84-85

holdings, and for this reason cooperatives often offered small cash loans in peak season.[184] Insolvent *fellahin* often experienced their cooperative's creditors being uncooperative in helping to alleviate the burden of lack of capital, and would often turn to local merchants, notorious for their usury, to pay due debts, and so they fell even further into indebtedness.

Although buying of fertilisers and insecticides as well as insolvency were the main reasons for *fellahin* to take up short term loans, the most common type of loan, there were other factors motivating the borrowing of credit amongst smallholders.
Distribution of credit to incentivise the raising of poultry and cattle was attempted. In certain cooperatives such efforts were a success and provided profits to its members, but these efforts saw little success in general, and small in scope, failed to make a sizable difference.[185]
Extended loans were also provided indirectly, through the offering of services such as: watering by motor pumps, shared upkeep costs for irrigation and drainage networks, borrowing of tractors, pest control, and several others. All of which were paid by debit, subtracted from the cooperative member's account.[186]

Many *fellahin* lost confidence in the agricultural reform program due to the often inferior quality of the services provided by the cooperatives and the higher costs of work done compared to privately hired labour.[187] Many turned to the black market to increase their profits, and in turn the cooperatives were reluctant to offer essential seeds at a fixed, favourable rate. Mayfield (1971) describes some great success seen by one particular rural private savings bank established between 1964-1967 to accommodate several villages.[188] However, private banks were not available to the vast majority of rural villagers by the end of the Nasser era, and *fellahin* disillusioned by their local cooperative turned to the traditional money lenders, when in need of credit. The example of the cooperative credit system serves as an example of a system designed by the Nasser government specifically with the goal of progress and modernisation in mind, and how, according to the researchers, this system as so many others fell short of achieving such great change as envisioned by the new regime. These measures were needed if the rural population should eventually be alleviated from poverty, and productivity reach modern standards. Further this example serves to present the topic of

[184] Saab (1967) p. 91
[185] Saab (1967) p. 85-90
[186] Saab (1967) p. 86
[187] Saab (1967) p. 86
[188] Mayfield (1971) p. 230-231, 242-247

credit and debt in the literature, an important topic within developmentalist research. In the topic of credit lending, we see how Saab and Abdel-Fadil use data on government lending as tangible evidence on development towards a modern system, but where corruption and mistrust by the *fellahin* stand as a major hindrance to progress.

The discussion of change, development and progress

According to the literature, what is change, development and progress? As discussed in chapter 1, developmentalism was a leading school of thought in Middle-Eastern studies, and this holds true for the period 1963-1982 when the research material used in this chapter was published. To delve back into the topic of developmentalism and modernism, we should discuss the perspectives on change development and progress present within the literature.

A common trend in the conclusions drawn by most of the authors is the use of their empirical data to support their critical evaluation on the effectiveness of the reform programs initiated by the Nasser regime. This topic is of course essentially presenting the view of whether the reforms should be seen as a great or moderate success, or rather more or less as a failure in the endeavour to modernise. Whether development is described as a success or a failure is a perspective not unaffected by the researcher's understanding of the regime as a force of modernisation and progress or otherwise.

Several views on the reforms are expressed. Abdel-Fadil stresses how the government tried to fulfil the need for modernisation, especially within the agricultural sector, in order to combat poverty, famine and an ineffective labour force, but fell short of achieving significant changes for the majority of the *fellahin*. However the redistribution program did achieve something quite impressive according to Abdel-Fadil, namely the redistribution of 817,538 feddans of land to 341,982 families comprising ca. 1.7 million individuals.[189] These rural families benefited through the acquisition of between 2-5 feddans of arable land.[190] Richards echoes this, stating that: *"Over 300,000 poor peasant families benefited directly as recipients of land, and many others were helped by more secure tenure rights."*[191] Although in the larger picture, poverty was still a rampant problem in Egypt in 1970 this did immeasurably help the

[189] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 10
[190] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 116-117 Most were awarded closer to 2 feddans than 5.
[191] Richards (1982) p. 183

groups of *fellahin* prioritised to receive land by the reform program. The main beneficiaries were the tenants and permanent wage labourers already tilling the land under the former owner, next farmers with large families were prioritised and finally the poorest members of the village were considered. According to Abdel-Fadil the agrarian reforms undeniably lead to the suppression of the power of the wealthy landlords dominating Egypt before the revolution, and the liberation of large portions of the *fellahin*.[192] The conclusions drawn by Abdel-Fadil fit neatly into the common narrative of Nasser era Egypt as a time of modernisation and progress. In contrast Baker does not paint the redistribution program in as positive a light as Abdel-Fadil and Richards, stating that:

> *"The size of the group of landless peasants, estimated in 1965 to be fourteen million or approximately three-fourths of the rural population, thus has not been reduced by the successive land reform measures. Moreover, since the increase in population has been more rapid than the growth in the number of landowners, the proportion of landless peasants in the rural population has actually increased. "*[193]

Baker's analysis does not exactly paint a picture of smooth progress under Nasser, but at times rather a regressive trend towards more corruption and greater poverty. The economic data presented by the researchers suggest the number of poor and starved *fellahin* were on the rise during the 1950's and 1960's, yet, at the same time hundreds of thousands were awarded reclaimed land and better workers rights were secured. Whether this reflects the success or failure of Nasser's agricultural reform programs is not easily determined. What is progress and when can one say a regime succeeded in their goal of modernisation?

If progress is viewed as moving towards equality of wealth distribution, you have Abdel-Fadil's opinion that one of the main shortcomings of the redistribution reforms was that more land wasn't confiscated from the wealthy landowners. Abdel-Fadil argues the ownership ceiling could have been lowered further, ideally allowing a maximum of 25 feddans being owned by one family in the rulings of 1961, rather than 100 feddans. This solution was overruled mostly due to the political and the socio-economic standing of the members of the new regime.[194] This stands in contrast to Saab's opinion that exemptions on the landowner ceiling should have been made for large landowners who ran exceptionally productive farms, showing yields of two or three times the average, or farms with good social

[192] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 22
[193] Baker (1978) p. 204-205
[194] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 116-117

benefits for their labourers. Such exemptions, Saab argues, would have encouraged effective farm operation, and such farms could have served as an example of sound and progressive farm management to small neighbouring farms.[195] Here Abdel-Fadil and Saab's understanding of progress are clearly diverging.

Another issue was the many rich families managing to hide away parcels of their land in excess of the legal limit. The reform program did not always succeed in its mission to appropriate land from the wealthy landlords and redistribute it. Baker (1978) states that a commision formed in 1966 to look into allegations of 'agrarian feudalism', discovered startling evidence of abuses by the remaining wealthy landlords. In one instance they found that one family in Kamchiche had succeeded in retaining 2,320 feddans, well above the maximum limit of 100 feddans allowed at the time. In total the commission sequestered the possessions of 88 large landowners across seventeen provinces, uncovering 25,000 feddans of illegally held land. 239 village *umdahs*[196] were fired for their complicity.[197]

Generally there seems to have been a trend, according to Baker, of umdah's cooperating with local wealthy landlords to undermine or take advantage of the local cooperative. Many cooperatives did not function to the common benefit of all its members, but were rather run as private enterprises on behalf of the wealthy elite, to benefit their personal interests. Corruption in the cooperatives was so rampant as to be the norm rather than the exception.[198] Baker's views here seem to contradict an understanding of the Nasser government as achieving progress through modernisation. After all, if the old elite still controlled the cooperatives by the end of the Nasser era, what had really changed?

Not all the authors view developments in the cooperative systems as negatively as Baker. Richards as well as Saab focuses on some of the successes of the cooperatives. Although the cooperatives did face many struggles, there were some clear positives. As discussed earlier the cooperatives took over the role in many of the villages that had been done or neglected by the landlords, or more often than not intermediary henchmen. The expanded cooperatives facilitated the handing out of fertilisers and pesticides, and their use became more

[195] Saab (1967) p. 18-19
[196] The traditional village leaders and the representative for the government under the old regime's administration, and still an authority figure present under the Nasser regime. The topic of the umdah will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.
[197] Baker (1978) p. 205-206
[198] Baker (1978) p. 204-209

widespread. The two year crop rotation introduced under the British, which had done lasting damage to the soils in Upper Egypt and the Delta was abolished, and a return to a more sustainable three year rotation was made.[199] These and other factors lead to a net increase in the efficiency of the agricultural sector. In 1970 the total yield of cotton had increased by 41%, while the leading cereal crops (wheat, maize, millet, barley, rice) had seen an average yield increase of 50.6%.[200] Saab and Richards here give us the perception that the cooperatives achieved some measurable progress resulting from the modernisation of farming techniques.

Gains in the agricultural sector resulting from industrialisation are by several of the authors emphasised as signs of progressive developments towards modernisation. Here the focus lies especially on the development of domestic production of fertiliser, tractors and irrigation pumps. In the period 1957-1960, 20% of all fertiliser usage was produced domestically, amounting to 38,000 out of 148,000 tonnes. This increased in the period 1964-1968 to 63% of total consumption, amounting to 151,000 out of 253,000 tonnes.[201] 15,000 irrigation pumps necessary to effectively supply the water needed to feed the crops were available in 1952 before the revolution.[202] This number had markedly risen by the end of the Nasser era. Production of tractors had also ramped up in the early 1960's and Abdel-Fadil estimates that approximately 50% of tractors entering the market annually was of domestic origin by 1965.[203] Such details presented by Abdel-Fadil and Saab, are symptomatic of a developmentalist understanding of progress and modernisation. The authors find statistical data on quantifiable changes in production, and present this as achieved progress. In such an abstract understanding of progress, changes in human welfare are not accounted for. Progress comes in many shapes, and for example whether material resources, or alternatively, humanitarian qualities are prioritised can change the perception of progress and modernisation.

The question of humanitarian progress and modernisation comes to light in the form of worker rights for the very neglected tarahil (casual labourers) as well as for the poor *fellahin* who usually rented parts of or all the land they cultivated. According to Abdel-Fadil, the

[199] Richards (1982) p. 181-183
[200] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 120
[201] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 119
[202] Saab (1967) p. 5-6
[203] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 119

major issue with the agrarian reforms was the lack of reform and regulation to protect the rights of the tarahil and the seasonal labourers.[204] Similarly Saab states that no change had happened by the summer of 1961, to secure a minimum wage for the agricultural labourers or to encourage the creation of unions. Conditions for the tarahil were still appalling.[205] Ayrout agrees about the reforms not 'fixing' wages for rural labourers, but states that slight improvements have been made, increasing the average annual wage from £E 33 right before the revolution to £E 39 in 1955.[206]

On the other hand, Saab discusses the improved status of tenants and sharecroppers, stating that the fixing of farm leases at a minimum period of three years, as well as rent control had a generally positive impact on 40% of farms.[207] Even more eagerly Ayrout describes positive developments resulting from the fixing of rent prices this way:

> *"Fortunately the worst features of this system have been done away with by the land reform. Since the rent has been fixed in every case at seven times the taxes, it amounts often to a great reduction of the old rents. It is now usually possible for the tenant to remain solvent"*[208]

Here the conclusions are the same for all three researchers, improvements for poor and landless *fellahin*, but their descriptions of the Nasser era reforms' effect, differs slightly. Not necessarily because of disagreement of realities, but because of differing notions of what constitutes tangible progress.

As a total the issues of the agrarian reforms overshadow the positives in the literature. Richards describes dire neglect of drainage systems by the government in the period.[209] Saab states that reports about the old landowning elite using nefarious means to secure a greater share of the available water resources, supposed to be evenly distributed by the cooperative, were common.[210] Baker focuses on the failure of the cooperatives to represent the smallholding *fellahin*, as the government intended, and how the domination by the richer members lead to rampant corruption.[211] Abdel-Fadil describes the growing masses of poor and severely malnourished *fellahin*, and how their malnourishment in turn leads to lowered

[204] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 117
[205] Saab (1967) p. 146-147
[206] Ayrout (2005) p. 133-134
[207] Saab (1967) p. 143-145
[208] Ayrout (2005) p. 49
[209] Richards (1982) p. 195-197
[210] Saab (1967) p. 73-74
[211] Baker (1978) p. 206-207

productivity in the agricultural sector.[212] Springborg laments the slowing of progress in the reclamation schemes in the late 1960's, arguing that Nasser's massive system of patronage increasingly led to immobility and inaction.[213]

Abdel-Fadil also points out indications that the balance of power had again shifted towards the wealthy peasantry by the end of the Nasser era,[214] an unfortunate development if progress towards a modern system of healthy citizens is the ideal. In the thesis of Abdel-Fadil, modernity depends on greater equality. With greater equality comes healthier workers, leading to an increase in agricultural productivity, which according to developmentalist theory should lead to prosperity.

The question of development and progress are inextricably linked to notions of success or failure. We have discussed how evaluations of the reforms, whether positive, negative or more neutral, are symptomatic of developmentalist literature. But a question looms large. Why is change, development and progress such an essential part of academic understanding in the period 1963-1982? Adams (1985) comes with this definition of development:

> *"In our search for a working definition of development we can be guided by the thoughts of Dudley Seers. According to Seers, development has to do with 'those conditions which are necessary for the realisation of the potential of human personality.' As Seers notes, there is one absolute necessity for the realisation of human potentiality - enough food. In all countries foodstuffs have prices. It therefore becomes possible to express this criterion in terms of income levels. Yet since people, no matter how poor, never spend all of their money on food. any minimum level of income must also take into account basic physical necessities. such as clothing and shelter."*[215]

Adams assesses development in rural Egypt in the period 1952-1980 according to improvements in the criterias of poverty, inequality and productivity. He concludes that developments have taken place in rural Egypt in the Nasser and Sadat periods.[216] Adams presents a very clear and straightforward example of developmentalist research, and the literature on the agricultural reforms are not always as straightforward developmentalist. Yet, if we compare Adams notion of development in rural Egypt to the literature's,[217] we see that although the topics taken up by the researchers vary, and are much more comprehensive than

[212] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 76-81
[213] Springborg (1979) p. 56-60, 67
[214] Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 122
[215] Adams (1985) p. 705-706
[216] Adams (1985) p. 715-718
[217] Literature meaning in the context of this chapter: Saab (1967), Abdel-Fadil (1975), Baker (1978), Springborg (1979), Richards (1982) and Ayrout (2005).

the simple analysis of development offered to us by Adams, essentially their thesis boils down to that development has taken place, how this development took place, and what were the effects of this development.

Essential to understanding research literature of the period's tendency of leaning on a narrative of progress and development, is understanding the context of the time period's geopolitical realities. Research in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's was shaped by a world understood as divided between East, West and the rest. The UN had started several development projects in the 'poor regions' of the world, and young governments were concerned with 'catching up with the West'. Researchers were affected by these geopolitical realities, as well as a general fervour in Western academic circles for contribution towards the human development projects. The tendency then of the human mind of seeing trends, such as development, in a linear fashion, from before and towards the future, from backwardness and into modernity and prosperity, affected the dogmatic language and causally the focus of social sciences towards the topics of modernity, development and progress.

Conclusion

Research into Nasser era rural Egypt has largely been concerned with agriculture and more specifically, progress and development in the form of successes and failures to modernise, resulting from the Nasserist agricultural reforms. In part one I concluded that this was in part a natural byproduct of rural Egypt's circumstances at the time, and the Nasser government's rural policies. The Nasser era agricultural reforms had their successes and shortcomings, and their ambitious size in scope and influence surpassed any former government's attempt at modernisation.

The research material presented in this chapter, discussing the Nasser era agricultural reforms programs, fall to some degree within the category of developmentalism. Some of the researchers fit the description of developmentalist more so than others, but all show tendencies towards it. Developmentalism as a part of the broader topic of modernisation theory, meaning study into development, progress and modernisation, influenced by a dogmatic understanding of these factors as an inevitable byproduct of time passing, and influenced by a Western image of what development looks like, has been identified within the

research literature concerning the Nasser era agricultural reforms. In conclusion we see that the time the research was written, a time when developmentalism was a leading thought within modernisation theory in academia, the aspirations of the Nasser regime towards modernisation and rural Egypt's situation during the 1950's and 1960's, all are factors steering the product of the research. In the next chapter we will delve into the topic of the villagers in rural Egypt as portrayed in qualitative research from the Nasser era period.

Chapter 5: The Social and Cultural Approach to Rural Egypt 1951-1970

Introduction

The first trained anthropologist to write about rural Egypt, Winifred S. Blackman published her work on the *fellahin* in 1927. Her work focused on the social, religious and economic life of the *fellahin* she observed in villages of Upper Egypt in the six years prior to publishing her work. As Blackman herself had urged for[218] there would be academically trained Egyptians that themselves took interest in the topic of rural culture and social structure. In 1954 the Egyptian-born and raised anthropologist Hamed Ammar published research based on his ethnographic case study in Silwa, which took place during 1951. While works like Blackman (1927) and other works published by Europeans during the British colonial period were produced under the banner of colonialism, applying Western concepts to local practices and reinforcing the idea of cohesive cultures as phenomenon in rural Egypt, Ammar (1954) looked at the peculiarities of his home village Silwa, in Aswan Province, trying to understand dynamics of value transfer between generations and observing proofs of cultural continuity.[219] This chapter will feature field research done in rural Egypt in the 1950's and 1960's by the anthropologists Ammar (1954) and Fakhouri (1972), the sociologist Ayrout (2005), and the political scientist Mayfield (1971).

In part 1 follows a description of the works produced by the researchers, focusing on the question of development research, developmentalism and modernisation. Therefore several topics, such as cultural production, musical instruments, and some other aspects of the life of rural villagers have been left out. In part 2 the development oriented ethnographic content of part 1 will be used to discuss interactions between centre and periphery, development, progress and change. The topics of childhood, youth and education are left out here as this topic will be discussed in the next chapter.

[218] Blackman (1927) p. 10
[219] Naguib (2018) p. 40

Part 1: Introducing the Egyptian village

Most Egyptian villages in the early 1950's had some commonalities. If the village was large enough a mosque and possibly a Coptic church could be found in the village centre. Inhabitants of smaller villages had to make do with an imam or priest from another village visiting from time to time for special occasions, or if in dire need for spiritual guidance, sometimes travel far distances in search of help. Before you enter the village the sight of endless fields of planted crops on either side of the road would greet you. Some villages, the larger and more central ones, would have a train track cutting through the fields, leading you to the village ahead. Most villages however would not have such a feature. A *kuttab*[220] was often present, a public school less often but a few of them did exist. The larger villages had a police station and medical facility, but the smaller ones usually did not. If asked about his beliefs a villager would profess he's a devout Muslim and in some instances a Christian. Finding someone claiming not to adhere to one of the two aforementioned religions was unheard of. But as will become clear there is more to the beliefs of a rural Egyptian than what a nosey outsider would learn from a simple inquiry.

This is a description of an early 1950's Egyptian village in the broadest terms, but let us now look at two case studies of two specific villages. Here follows a description of the daily routine of the relatively large village of Silwa, in the far Southern province of Aswan, Upper Egypt as witnessed by Ammar in 1951:

"The crack of dawn witnesses the muazzin calling for morning prayers; youths and men, mounted on their donkeys or camels, call on each other to climb the hills to fetch the fertiliser. By sunrise, most men and boys are heading towards the fields with their cattle[221] and tools; and by broad daylight the village seems almost deserted, except for women going on visits or on business and young children noisily engaged in their games. By sunset the roads leading to the village become busy and crowded with villagers and cattle returning home, who in their hurried endeavour to get their evening meal raise the dense cloud of dust that characterises […] the village streets during this hour. Some time later, the village witnesses the general exodus of women and girls from the village towards the Nile to fill their water jars, while the men sprawl outside the houses or cluster round a wood-fire in the guest house on cold nights to exchange news, smoke their tobacco and engage in gossip."[222]

Fakhouri (1972) presents a very different daily life of a village, experienced during his stay in Kafr el-Elow in 1964-1966:

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[220] Islamic school of learning, the curriculum is the Koran, and the goal is to teach reading and writing as well as good muslim practices.
[221] Cattle as in work animals, used to plough the fields. Usually water buffaloes.
[222] Ammar (1954) p. ix-x

"I was immediately impressed by the stark contrast between the traditional and modern ways of life. On one side of the village the fellaheen (peasants) were tilling their plots of land with the same type of implements as those used by their ancestors hundreds of years earlier, while on the other side, a modern industrial complex was emerging. Similarly, some villagers were riding donkeys and leading water buffaloes to their fields while others were riding bicycles to their factory jobs or were waiting for the buses to take them to work. Moreover, there was an obvious difference between the western-style dress of the younger generation and the traditional garb (jalabiya) of the elderly villagers.[223]

While Ammar's Silwa, although a large village, is at the fringes of Egypt, far away from the central powers of Cairo. Fakhouri's Kafr el-Elow is located in close proximity to Helwan, and the village experienced the impact of development of industry in Helwan during the 1950's and 1960's leading to major demographic changes as a result of new work opportunities for local villagers and the arrival of migrant workers.[224] The differences between Silwa and Kafr el-Elow become clear through these visual descriptions, but at the same time the motives of the authors and the purpose of their field studies seems to diverge. Ammar states as his main motivation for doing his field research in Silwa, is the fact that he grew up there, and hence does not have to build relations with the villagers in order to get access to their private spheres.[225] Ammar continues to state that:

"The choice of such a village was also appropriate as it presents a convenient starting point for a first study of this kind,[226] *as the village is relatively isolated and homogeneous where the traditional culture is presumably better preserved than others in more contact with city life."*[227]

Fakhouri on the other hand, has this to say about his choice of case study:

"It seemed clear that Kafr el-Elow would be a suitable example of the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on traditional village life in Egypt."[228]

The two authors have different, almost opposing interests in their field research. One wants to document a village barely touched in recent decades by the urban centres, the other wants to document major industrialisation as it happens in a village which had already for a longer period been interacting with two nearby urban centres, Helwan and Cairo. Ammar did his

[223] Fakhouri (1972) p. 1
[224] Fakhouri (1972) p. 1-4
[225] Ammar (1954) p. xi
[226] Ammar studied how growing up in an traditional Egyptian village in Upper Egypt, with its traditional upbringing and mixture of traditional and modern education, forms the children and their mentality. Such a study had never been done in rural Egypt before 1954 to Ammar's knowledge. The foreword by Margaret Read also expressed the lack of research into village education at that point in time.
[227] Ammar (1954) p. xi
[228] Fakhouri (1972) p. 1

field research during 1951, while Fakhouri's field research happened in the period November 1964 to May 1966, meaning there is a 13-15 years difference between Ammar and Fakhouri's observations.[229] Mayfield did his field research between 1966-1967.[230] Ayrout originally published a work on the *fellahin* in French in 1938, then later a work in English in 1963 (written in 1955),[231] republished in 2005. The lack of dating of any of his field observations complicates the usage of Ayrout (2005) in comparison to the other researchers.

Tools and clothing of the *fellahin*

The *fellahin*, the main workforce in almost every Egyptian village, is often presented as being 'unchanged'[232] or using ancient tools and methods of irrigation.[233] This is how Ammar presents the *fass*, one of the main tools used by the *fellahin*:

> *"The methods and implements of work are more or less the same traditional ones known to have been used by the Egyptian farmer for thousands of years. The 'touriah' or the 'fass' is the indispensable implement of any farmer."*[234]

Ayrout describes the clothes of the *fellahin*:

> *"This strikingly simple clothing shows a long development and a supple adaptability to climate and to practical needs. The fellah's loose, simple clothes permit him to breathe easily and to move freely. They keep the outlines of the human forms in harmony with the countryside."*[235]

Ammar witnessed the persistence of traditional clothing in Silwa, but noticed a preference of higher quality urban Arab clothing over locally produced equivalents:

> *"No one in Silwa has ever entertained the idea of wearing a European dress. Some of the new generation and those who have been to town might wear a smaller turban, manufactured shoes instead of the hand-made markoob, a manufactured woollen jalabiya, or tob instead of the zabout woven on the village loom."*[236]

Fakhouri on the other hand witnesses the change in clothing coming with modernisation:

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[229] Ammar (1954) p. vii, Fakhouri (1972) p. vii
[230] Cantori (1975) p. 356-357
[231] Ayrout (2005) p. xi
[232] Ayrout (2005) p. 1
[233] Ammar (1954) p. 25
[234] Ammar (1954) p. 25
[235] Ayrout (2005) p. 63
[236] Ammar (1954) p. 76

"Villagers who work in the factories are required by law to wear western-style clothing - a shirt and khaki trousers…because the jalabiya would be too apt to get caught in the machinery and cause an accident. Teachers and government workers also wear western-style suits. The majority of these workers, however, whether industrial, professional, or service employees, wear the jalabiya after returning home at night. One might say that the average male is an urbanite by day and a ruralite during the evening hours…In contrast, younger generation males in the village, especially students, do not wear the jalabiya, preferring western-style clothing which they purchase in Helwan or Cairo."[237]

Generally the tools used by the *fellahin* are portrayed as sufficient to meet the needs of a *fellahin's* everyday tasks, but lacking the efficiency of modern equipment. Their traditional clothes also serve, according to Ayrout, the function of being comfortable and convenient. Fakhouri describes the change to a modern Western dress in Kafr el-Elow, as a necessity arising from practical reasons related to industrial work, yet one should notice how this dress is clearly European in style.

Social organisation, the clan and the family

Family is the most important nominator in the social organisation of the rural Egyptians, and traditional values support efforts to keep the family under the leadership of the most senior male member. According to Ammar the married sons cannot own land as long as their father is alive.[238] This way the father holds the ultimate authority as the head of the family. His rights extend to physical punishment for disobedience, which he can apply to his wife and his sons.[239] The physical punishment of the daughters is usually exercised by the mother.[240] The children learn to avoid the fury of their seniors, fully aware of the physical punishments which usually follows with their ire.[241] Sometimes punishment can be escaped by retreating to the paternal grandparents, who tend to take the side of the children and give them refuge, when the parents try to exercise their punishment.[242]

The family, the *ā'ila* (عائلة), here means everyone under the head of the family, including sons, wives of the sons, grandchildren, as well as daughters and paternal aunts who are unmarried, divorced or widowed. Paternal nephews and nieces who are orphaned and sisters

[237] Fakhouri (1972) p. 20-21
[238] Ammar (1954) p. 23, 42-43
[239] Mayfield (1971) p. 61
[240] Fakhouri (1972) p. 61-62
[241] Ammar (1954) p. 127
[242] Fakhouri (1972) p. 62

who are widowed, might also be part of the family.[243] Family can, in certain instances, also be understood as those living under the same roof, for example two brothers living together and working their fields in cooperation after their fathers death.[244] The nuclear family would be the people living under the same roof, the *bait (*بيت*),*[245] therefore often being a larger grouping than what is generally understood to be a nuclear family in the Western world.[246] Mayfield describes the social structure in this way:

> *"The social structure is hierarchical, with men above women, elders above youth, educated above illiterate, and wealthy above the poor. The individual's position in the Egyptian village is normally inherited rather than achieved. While the Egyptian peasant may work in his field from sunrise to sunset, still his productivity is low and his standard of living even lower."*[247]

However, Mayfield doesn't delve into the intricacies and complexity of the structure of the clan which is an extension of kinship beyond the family. This topic is however discussed in Ammar (1954) and Fakhouri (1972). The clan[248] was important both for the villagers of Silwa and the villagers of Kafr el-Elow. The population of Silwa divided itself up into 9 clans, while the native population of Kafr el-Elow, living there before migrant workers started arriving, was divided into 6 clans.[249] Members took great pride in their family and in their clan, and feared insulting their clan's name and went to great lengths to avoid shaming the clan or family name.[250] A family (*a'ilah*) consists of one or more nuclear families (*bait*). This family then has relatives in the village who trace themselves to the same lineage. All families who belong to the same lineage are then identified as a lineage group (*il al-kabeera*), and are one of possibly several lineage groups tracing themselves back to a common ancestral nuclear family. All lineage groups tracing themselves back to the same ancestral nuclear family, combined make up the clan.[251] Ammar uses the expression extended family instead of lineage group, which I will use from now on.

Which family and clan you belonged to was very important to the individual. The extended family had obligations like hosting fellow members, if for instance a place of stay was needed

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[243] Fakhouri (1972) p. 56
[244] Ammar (1954) p. 42-43
[245] *Bait* is the latin spelling of بيت, Arabic for house or household, but in Upper Egypt often used to refer to the nuclear family, according to Ammar (1954).
[246] Fakhouri (1972) p. 55-56
[247] Mayfield (1971) p. 59
[248] Fakhouri calls this the *hamula* (هموﻻ) while Ammar calls it *kabila (*قبيلة*).*
[249] Ammar (1954) p. 44, Fakhouri (1972) p. 56
[250] Ammar (1954) p. 46, Fakhouri (1972) p. 57 and 64
[251] Fakhouri (1972) p. 56-57

for the occasion of circumcision, wedding or funeral ceremonies. The extended family was responsible for taking disciplinary actions against its own members, who had perpetrated offences against law and order.[252] Pride in the fellowship of the extended family could be witnessed in Silwa through the shared owning of one horse per extended family, representing each of them in races held on occasions of saintly celebrations.[253] The clan was also very involved in funerals and death rites, such occasions serving as a chance to express clan solidarity and sympathy with the deceased.[254]

The clan was often involved in marriage arrangements. A man had the first right to his paternal first cousin, and marriage to her was by tradition preferable. A paternal cousin was usually more cooperative seeing as the groom were a close relative, and large expenses in the form of dowry and wedding gifts could be avoided, and even more importantly this served the goal of keeping wealth in the family. If a man wanted to marry a woman outside his family, inquiries as to whether she had been promised to her first cousin were made before proposing. In Kafr el-Elow, a typical proposal to a girl outside of one's own clan, started with a son telling his mother who he desired. The mother then consulted with the father, and if he was supportive, a mediator, usually a female neighbour or a relative, were sent to the girl's family to determine if she had been promised away to someone else.[255] This protected the clan system, as if clan members had at their own accord married whomever they fancied the clan relations would gradually erode, as happened in the cities.

Polygamy is legal according to Islamic tradition, but only seven out of several thousand men were married to more than one woman in Kafr el-Elow. According to Fakhouri's informants most of these had only two wifes, and the reasoning for getting another wife was the first wife's inability to bear children. In one instance described this was encouraged by the first wife, and she partook in the selection of the second wife.[256] Ayrout addresses the question of polygamy and divorce:

> *"Both [the husband and wife] desire children above all else. To the wife they mean prestige and security, for barrenness is a disgrace and the chief cause of polygamy and divorce…Seventy-five per cent of all divorces are between childless couples."*[257]

[252] Ammar (1954) p. 44
[253] Ammar (1954) p. 46
[254] Fakhouri (1972) p. 87-89
[255] Fakhouri (1972) p. 63-65
[256] Fakhouri (1972) p. 70-71
[257] Ayrout (2005) p. 105

Divorce is legal according to Islamic law. Men divorcing their wife due to her inability to bear him children, is more commonplace than polygamy. A man's status is commonly measured in his ability to produce offspring, and such polygamy and divorce can at times be measures to achieve this goal.[258] Yet divorce could also be the result of prolonged conflict within the couple.[259] In local tradition if widowed, a woman does not gain approval for remarrying, unless she marries her husband's brother or a poor man who cannot afford to pay dowry. This combined with her possibility of meeting unmarried men being limited, led to the number of widows being much greater than the number of widowers in Kafr el-Elow.[260] According to Ayrout the Coptic *fellahin* of Upper Egypt does not accept divorce as a practice,[261] this however does not much affect the populations of Silwa and Kafr el-Elow as these two villages were almost entirely Muslim.[262]

Fakhouri focuses on the clan as central to upholding law. According to *urf* law (customary law) each member of a clan is responsible for the wellbeing of all other clan members. Through practicing customary law, matters of dispute whether trifle matters, theft or murder, were settled either by the use of retaliatory measures or by a tribal court. In any case the clan would be an offender or victim's representative. Kinsmen could also be the victims of retaliatory measures simply because they belonged to the same clan as the offender, exemplifying the collective understanding of guilt in the tribal tradition.[263] Women and children were not considered valid targets in actions of revenge.[264] It is made clear by Fakhouri that the involvement of civil courts was eagerly avoided by all clans in legal matters.[265]

The clan also served many roles in cooperation and identity building. In Silwa cooperation could manifest through kinsmen helping in digging a well, through the lending of money and equipment in times of need, or through hospitality towards kinsmen when a celebration or

[258] Ammar (1954) p. 113, Critchfield (1976) p. 3-5
[259] Fakhouri (1972) p. 73
[260] Fakhouri (1972) p. 71
[261] Ayrout (2005) p. 104
[262] Not accounting for the migrant workers residing in Kafr el-Elow, but the fellahin living there. Also one family running a corn mill in Silwa were Coptic Christians. See Ammar (1954) p. 19.
[263] In one case a man got accidentally shot. The measures of revenge taken by the victim's family were the burning of the offender's crop, killing his livestock and finally beating his father to death in the street. In this case a life for a life settled the matter, and life could go on. See Fakhouri (1972) p. 109-113
[264] Ammar (1954) p. 48, Fakhouri (1972) p. 109-111
[265] Fakhouri (1972) p. 114-115

religious ceremony takes place. On the clan level fellowship shows itself particularly through the many activities connected to the guest house. Imagine a well known religious man pays the village a visit, then one or possibly several clans will rush to invite him to stay in their common guest house, as this maintains the prestige of the clan. During Ramadan the Quran reciter is brought tea and food by clan members.[266]

With the absence of governmental social welfare programs or NGOs operating equivalents, the rural villagers of Upper Egypt could find some social security in their family or extended family.[267] The representation in legal matters, the arbitration of divorce proceedings, as well as settling of disputes and arrangement of feasts, ceremonies and funerals were tasks undertaken by the clan.[268] This led to the clan functioning as an individual's representative in most public matters, making the clan take the form of a higher authority for the *fellahin* on a village level. Cooperation both within the nuclear family, the family unit (*a'ilah*), the extended family and the broader clan, had been the norm long before the 1952 revolution, and the Nasser regime would struggle to implement their social welfare programs as well as their education system in villages with a functional clan system, such as Silwa and Kafr el-Elow. Ammar expresses the strong hold of tradition in Silwa in 1951:

> *"The bond of common descent and family connections is one of the strongest factors as well as the most socially effective force in the social structure."*[269]

The women

It is a clear trend in most of the literature to focus more on the men than the women. This was true for most of the literature in this and the previous chapter, with the exception of Ayrout, who has a substantial amount of observations on the *fellahin* women. In the instance of field research this is natural, as male researchers who try to examine the life of the rural women of Upper Egypt, find major difficulties as a result of the common cultural practice to separate the men from the women in daily life. Further you were not supposed to let a stranger entertain your wife unsupervised as a 1950's or 1960's rural man, and few villagers would allow you to talk to or meet their wife at all, unless you were a relative.[270]

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[266] Ammar (1954) p. 45-48
[267] Mayfield (1971) p. 86
[268] Ammar (1954) p. 44-45
[269] Ammar (1954) p. 48
[270] Ayrout (2005) p. 106

However, this does not mean that the field researchers have nothing to say about the women. According to Ammar, in Upper Egyptian villages the women wore veils and were barred from employment in the fields, while women in the Delta didn't wear veils and were actively employed in cultivation labour.[271] No women worked in the fields of Silwa. Very few women worked in the fields of Kafr el-Elow, and the few who did were hired hands from neighbouring villages, or the wifes of hired agricultural labourers.[272] This does not mean the women of Upper Egypt were not involved in the production of food, as the keeping of poultry, like chicken, geese, turkey and pigeons, and goats used for their eggs and meat, were commonplace. The woman, as the keeper of the home, took responsibility for raising these animals.[273] According to Ayrout rural Egyptian women are less restricted than their urban counterparts:

"She is not hidden from the menfolk, like townswomen, or the wives of the rural middle class. She must carry food to her husband in the fields, then return home with the [buffalo] dung, and fetch water several times. She must go to market to sell eggs, butter and poultry, and buy staples. Tradition and necessity soften the severity of Islamic custom."[274]

However she is not an equal to the man. Her role is in the house, and although she must at times do chores and partake in ceremonies outside, she is in her daily life bound to the sphere of the house. Ammar describes the importance of gender roles:

"A man who does not frequently mix with his fellow man outside the house is branded as the 'man of the oven', while a woman who continually leaves her house is called a 'strayer'. Men meet for their spontaneous gatherings and gossip outside the house, while women meet inside."[275]

Freedom of movement is so restricted for women in Silwa, that many have never left the confines of the village. When asked about the use of the train line (built under the old regime), one of Ammar's informants had this to say:

"Very few of our women have travelled by train, and if so, chiefly to visit relatives in town or shrines of saints, while a much greater number of men go to town on private or official visits."[276]

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[271] Ammar (1954) p. x-xi
[272] Fakhouri (1972) p. 32-33
[273] Fakhouri (1972) p. 37, Ayrout (2005) p. 105
[274] Ayrout (2005) p. 105
[275] Ammar (1954) p. 49
[276] Ammar (1954) p. 21 The words of one of Ammar's informants, Ali.

This restriction in movement for female villagers means those amongst the younger generation that had experienced the different and fast changing ways of the town were vastly young men. There is however one social arena that is as much available to the women as the men. The marketplace holds a very important place in the socialising of rural villagers in Upper Egypt, and in Silwa they held a weekly market every Saturday. A local saying goes '*Even to get the market's dust is better than not going to it'*.[277] Ayrout demonstrates the women's role in the marketplace:

> *"Piece goods and hardware are sold by professional merchants who come from the chief town or make the rounds of village markets. These merchants get their stock from city wholesalers. But vegetables, poultry, butter and eggs are sold by the fellah himself, or rather by the fellah's wife, who is adept at bargaining. When he is forced to sell his buffalo or goat, it is to this market he brings it."*[278]

The life of a Nasser era *fellaha* was mostly restricted to the house, but she also went to get water, sold her wares[279] at the weekly market and partook in the occasional religious ceremony or festivity. Movement was not necessarily unrestricted for *fellahin* men, as they were forced to hawkishly watch over their crops, many a times spending the night sleeping in the fields, and in other villages then Silwa and Kafr el-Elow, where they worked for wealthy landlords, they would usually not have the freedom to leave the village at all.[280] All the researchers agree that in the Nasser era *fellahin* women lived a life with much greater restrictions on freedom of movement then did the men.

Social Class Differences

As discussed in chapter 4 there is a vast gap between rich and poor in rural Egypt. Class differences permeate the villages.[281] In this instance Kafr el-Elow and Silwa stand out from most villages in rural Egypt, because there is no big difference in land ownership, and therefore status of the different fellahin. No one owns more than 5 feddans and few have even that much land in Kafr el-Elow,[282] and Ammar describes Silwa as a "*community of small landowners."* He further elaborates that the village does not divide itself up into 'the rich'

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[277] Ammar (1954) p. 19
[278] Ayrout (2005) p. 93
[279] The fellahin women could claim the livestock they raised inside the house as their own, and they often had the freedom to keep and spend the earnings from selling these at the market.
[280] Ayrout (2005) p. 50-51
[281] Saab (1967) p. 8-9, Abdel-Fadil (1975) p. 4-5
[282] Fakhouri (1972) p. 74

and ‘the poor’. Kinship ties and feelings of brotherhood amongst Muslims are other factors strengthening the sense of egalitarianism.[283]

However, one class of people have a somewhat different position in the village, than the other villagers, namely the *umdah*[284] and his family. The *umdah* was a villager who until 1947 was selected by the central government based on his wealth, who would take on the role of housing officials visiting the village in his guesthouse, and would in return receive tax breaks, and more importantly would take on a leadership role within the village.[285] Ayrout describes these as the *umdah’s* duties:

> *“His principal function is to assure order in the village and its dependent areas, more than it is to watch over cleanliness and sanitation, for which he is rarely more solicitous than his subordinates. He reports crimes, by denunciation, which are committed in his village, assists the tax collector…controls the carrying of arms, reports the outbreak of disease among men or animals, and records births and deaths. If the village is large enough he is assisted by shaykhs, with whom he deliberates before giving decisions.”*[286]

The *umdah* controlled the *ghafirs* (village guards) and his ability to temporarily imprison people for 24 hours as well as threatening people with fines, gave the *umdah* immense power with the other villagers. The *umdah* being a local villager and having interests in local affairs often took advantage of his powers to conceal criminal activities, and generally used his power to give his own family and clan a privileged position in the village. Many violent clan feuds were a result of the vying for this position.[287]

The religion: Islam, Christianity and folk traditions

The two major religious groupings in Nasser era rural Egypt were Sunni Islam and Coptic Christianity. The Egyptian law at the time outlawed any religion not sanctioned by the holy Quran, meaning Islam, Christianity and Judaism.[288] There are no accurate estimates of the number of adherents to either of the two major religions during the Nasser era, but it is safe to

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[283] Ammar (1954) p. 39-40, 44
[284] The *umdah* was the leader of the village, elected based on his wealth in land. By a law decree of 1895 the *umdah* was the official representative of the central government to the village’s fellahin. The Nasser government went to drastic action to weaken and absolve the power of the *umdah* from the year 1960 and onwards. See Ammar (1954) p. 61-62 and Fakhouri (1972) p. 105
[285] Mayfield (1971) p. 80-83
[286] Ayrout (2005) p. 29
[287] Ayrout (2005) p. 29-30
[288] There were very few jews left in Egypt in 1952, and the last remnants were forcibly migrated to Israel after an agreement made between Egypt and Israel in 1967.

say that a vast majority of rural Egyptians were Sunni Muslims and a sizable minority were Coptic Christians.

Although customary law as well as modern civil law existed in Nasser era Egypt, the Sharia laws deriving from the Quran and the Sunna, especially the parts concerning inheritance and marriage, were rigorously followed across rural Egypt. This is exemplified in Ammar (1954), Fakhouri (1972) and Ayrout (2005). There is no hierarchical structure of clergy in the Sunni Islamic faith, rather prayer leaders (*imam*), Quran reciters, *shaykhs* and other holy men share in the task of performing the day to day religious activities.[289] According to Ammar a man gains great prestige through the memorisation of Quranic verses. In fact, being knowledgeable in the content of the holy Quran gives individuals the authority to lead religious ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The status of holy man can be achieved simply by memorising the Quran, and this knowledge being recognised. *Fellahin* do themselves take on leading roles during religious ceremonies if need be.[290] In general the rural villagers held holy men in great respect, and hence such a role came with great prestige and authority, and its functions had to be performed with a certain gravitas.[291] Ayrout has these choice words to describe Islam's role in Nasser era rural Egypt:

> *"The Muslim fellahin, among whom women and children are not counted, observe faithfully the five fundamental precepts of the Koran: belief in one God, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage. In their ignorance, this much at least they know."*[292]

Once a year an important holy man visited Silwa. When this was witnessed by Ammar, the holy man was bombarded by questions from the villagers about the correct position of hands in prayers, the correct way to do this or that ritual, is it good to visit saints' graves or not. The villagers' fervour in interaction with the holy man surprised Ammar.[293] Otherwise prayer is a daily event, several times a day prayer was ceremoniously performed by villagers in both Silwa and Kafr el-Elow. The month-long Ramadan was also another important yearly event witnessed in both villages,[294] which holds great importance in the tenets of Islam. Two other important tenets in Islam is the giving of alms and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Al-Hajj), and

[289] Ammar (1954) p. 48
[290] Ammar (1954) p. 243-244
[291] Ammar (1954) p. 74-75
[292] Ayrout (2005) p. 78
[293] Ammar (1954) p. 78
[294] Ammar (1954) p. 47-48, Fakhouri (1972) p. 76-78

both were witnessed in Kafr el-Elow.[295] In general Islam had a huge impact on the lives of the villagers of both Silwa and Kafr el-Elow.

Spirits, supernatural entities and evil forces

A topic taken up by all the authors is belief in the supernatural and folk tradition surrounding it. Many believe in spirits, In Egypt known as djinn (djinnea[296] if female);[297] physically manifested spirits with immense powers, sometimes good, sometimes bad. Mayfield describe the djinn in these terms:

> *"The jinn are a society of unpredictable, capricious, and tyrannical spirits who live under the earth, yet who in large measure provoke and stimulate the forces of nature that would do one harm. At all cost one must not antagonise the jinn. Since they are believed to be made of flame and love their native element, before you throw anything into the fire you must be careful to say aloud "in the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful," thus giving the jinn due warning."*[298]

According to Ayrout, *fellahin* dread possession by djinn, but does also at times seek aid by the djinn through their spells, for example to make someone fall in love with them, or to secure the birth of a male child.[299] Other spirits do also manifest themselves in the world of the *fellahin*, like the ghost twin (*qarin: aqran*),[300] the evil eye (*'ain al-hasud*) and devils (*afarit*). A woman, whose child suddenly falls sick, might believe a visiting friend or neighbour has cast the evil eye on her child.[301] In any case, action then has to be taken to remove the evil force. The *fellahin* offers up a vast array of remedies for the evil eye, often involving elaborate rituals like brewing of magical concoctions, recitation of prayer verses from the Quran and use of ritualistic objects such as humanlike paper cuttings, cuttings from clothing, dust and charms (*higab*).[302] Handprints were also commonly painted on outer walls across rural Egypt to ward off the evil eye.[303]

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[295] Fakhouri (1972) p. 79-82
[296] Critchfield (1976) p. 6
[297] Also spelled jinn and ginn. Pronounced ginn by rural Egyptians.
[298] Mayfield (1971) p. 64-65
[299] Ayrout (2005) p. 86-87
[300] A spirit doppelganger that existed for every fellah, and possessed by jealousy of the individual. The *fellahin* feared the ghostly twin would lure their children away from them. See Mayfield (1971) p. 65
[301] The evil eye is an evil force that is either consciously or unconsciously inflicted onto others, children and livestock being the main victims. If a woman looks enviously upon someone else's child, or admires the child's beauty without following up a compliment by saying "*mashallah*", the child might fall under the spell of the evil eye. See Mayfield (1971) p. 65
[302] Blackman (1927) p. 218-219, Ammar (1954) p. 78, Mayfield (1971) p. 65
[303] Critchfield (1976) p. 5

Ayrout observes that it was common practice among Nasser era *fellahin* women to hang blue beads around the neck of newborn children as a charm to ward off the evil eye, and edible charms were taken for childlessness.[304] Most of the customers of the magicians (or sorceresses) are women.[305] This is possibly the result of doctors being more available to the men, as well as the lack of authority women possess in the Christian and Islamic religion, whereas the supernatural elements are not monopolised by men. Ammar states that *shaykhs* (holy men) can gain prestige based on their ability to perform magic and miracles.[306] Fakhouri points out that according to Islamic tradition (*Hadith*) the use of charms for protection is sanctioned and were still commonplace in the late 1960's.[307] Belief in the supernatural entities and forces described here were still commonplace in rural Upper Egypt in the mid-seventies.[308]

The health of the rural villagers

The villagers traditional understanding of health is mixed with magical and religious beliefs. God afflicts disease, but can also heal it. Your life span is pre-ordained by God, and cannot be affected by earthly measures.[309] Ammar describes the understanding of disease amongst the *fellahin* of Silwa this way:

> *"Disease, it is supposed, can be caused either by failure to fulfil some religious ritual or ceremony, such as a financially able man not performing his pilgrimage, or the failure to give the promised offering to a saint, or providing a naming ceremony for a new-born baby. If saints are suspected as the cause of the disease, usually a woman known to be the guardian of that particular saint, or upon whom saints descend, would be consulted to tell whether the family has broken or forgotten a sacrificial custom. If no special saint has been offended, then bread could be specially baked and distributed as a 'karama' amongst people after the Friday prayer, asking God to relieve the sick…Moreover, a sickness is considered as God's test for the endurance and patience of the faithful."*[310]

Specific diseases in Silwa are also understood to be caused by spirits. Paralysis is caused by the red wind emanating from the touch of djinn. An epileptic is mounted by a djinn, who often roams in deserted places, wells and mountains. Tuberculosis is caused by pretence and

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[304] Ayrout (2005) p. 107, 116
[305] Ayrout (2005) p. 86, Fakhouri (1972) p. 91
[306] Ammar (1954) p. 74
[307] Fakhouri (1972) p. 91-93
[308] Critchfield (1976) p. 2-8
[309] Ammar (1954) p. 78-79
[310] Ammar (1954) p. 78

social conceit. Amar observes that in the early 1950's villagers were becoming increasingly interested in the health unit established in Silwa by the government in 1936.[311]

According to Ayrout the wife is commonly in better health than her husband, due to him usually suffering from bilharziasis as a result of working in the irrigation canals.[312] Yet, if she's struck by severe sickness, she might still not be inclined towards a visit from the local doctor. Ayrout states, *"She will often die rather than let herself be examined by the doctor."*[313] Fakhouri confirms women's greater unwillingness to go to the doctor, and explains there was only a male physician in Kafr el-Elow.[314] The environment of the villagers as well as their hygiene habits are described as unsanitary. Dust fills the streets of every *fellahin* village and flies and mosquitoes swarm around the food, which is not refrigerated. Fakhouri also describes how villagers in Kafr el-Elow were washing their clothes and utensils in the same canal water where they threw out their waste water. Children and animals defecated in the streets, and there was no sewage system. Tuberculosis, dysentery, typhoid fever, bilharziasis and malaria were common maladies for the villagers.[315]

According to Fakhouri, in 1966 the villagers of Kafr el-Elow still preferred folk 'cures' prescribed by a few elderly women, such as cutting the skin to relieve blood pressure for headaches, or for tonsillitis rubbing the tonsil with coffee and lemon juice, above going to the doctors office. But since a private practitioner set up shop in the village in 1961, some villagers were going to the doctor if the ailment persisted, especially for their children, and gradually people were turning more to modern medicine.[316] Ammar on the other hand had this told by one of his informants:

> *"The second event I remember was my inability to speak for some time when I was fifteen years old. My parents were worried about it, and they took me to various Saints' tombs and religious men for treatment. At last they took me to a Saint's shrine near Isna, Called Sheikh Al-Naggar, who is considered to be the best healer for such diseases, especially when one is "mounted by spirits" (jinn). There, with my mother, we spent a week, and from that time I was cured."*[317]

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311 Ammar (1954) p. 78-79
312 Ayrout (2005) p. 104
313 Ayrout (2005) p. 106
314 Fakhouri (1972) p. 16
315 Fakhouri (1972) p. 15
316 Fakhour (1972) p. 15-17
317 Ammar (1954) p. 243

Rural villagers' belief that problems of the mind and body could be cured by holy men, permeated Nasser era rural Egypt. Turning to 'modern' medicine was not a simple decision, and many villagers stayed reluctant to change their ways in confrontation with new understandings of the natural world and life within it. One major difficulty for the Nasser regime was to incentivise doctors and health workers to live in the rural villages, where they were so sorely needed. Mayfield met a doctor from Alexandria during his field research, who described his first meeting with village life in this way:

> *"[The health unit] was a filthy mess - unfit for my dog to live in. The village itself was dirtier than I had ever dreamed…My room was even dirtier than the reception portion of the health unit. There was no food in the health unit and I didn't dare eat the 'baladi' food offered by the umdah. Being exhausted, I tried to sleep; yet when I turned back the covers, I discovered a scorpion. There was no electricity, so I spent the rest of the night pacing the floor. For the next three days it was like a nightmare - finally exhausted, nearly famished and completely defeated, I left the village."*[318]

It was a struggle to recruit doctors and qualified health personnel to work in the most remote areas. According to Mayfield, villagers' reluctance to accept modern medicine and doctors unwillingness to live and work in rural areas as well as many believing they were wasting their time as the *fellahin wouldn't change*, contributed to the slow progress of health reform in Nasser era rural Egypt.[319]

Part 2: Interactions, development and social change

The topic of development and social change is present in the literature. Whether focusing on one specific village in a smaller time frame (Ammar and Fakhouri), or all of Upper Egypt and partly the Delta (Ayrout and Mayfield), development resulting from interaction between urban centres and periphery is described. The values and way of life described in part 1 serves as a backdrop for the reader to understand the difficulties faced by the Nasser government when it was trying to introduce changes to the villages of Egypt. With the goal being to reach a level of modernity, to use material progress to fund and promote social change, the regime itself was partaking in the process of pushing an identity of 'backwardness' on the *fellahin*. Modernity, in contrast, was the ideal goal, and the only means to eradicate poverty, disease and famine. The developmental policies of the Nasser era government were largely directed at this vague goal of achieving modernity. The question of

[318] Mayfield (1971) p. 220 A doctor from Alexandria's description of his first meeting with village life.
[319] Mayfield (1971) p. 220-223

modernism was of course not limited to the government, but affected researchers, both in their perception of the villages they observed but also in what particulars of the rural society they chose to describe. In this part we will discuss the authors' perceptions on development and change. Interaction between centre and periphery as well as how this interaction changed the lives of the rural villagers will be a key topic. Education reform and rural youth will not be discussed here, but in the next chapter.

Focus on Upper Egypt rather than the Delta

Most of the field research described in the literature originates in Upper Egypt, and not the Delta. This phenomenon seems to have been a common trend both in the decades during and before the Nasser era, as noted by one researcher:

> *"It is in Upper Egypt where the unique and distinctive characteristics of the fellahin mentality emerge the most clearly. This may explain why the best known works on fellahin customs and psychology of this century, such as Ayrout [(1963)] and Ammar [(1954)] have the more traditional village life of the Upper Nile as their setting. In the Delta, both beliefs in the sacred supernatural and superstitious have been much more influenced by modern education, logic and science."*[320]

It is striking that no anthropological works in English pertaining to the Delta in the Nasser era could be located. Life in the Delta is however briefly discussed in Ayrout (2005), and in Mayfield (1971).

Interactions between government officials and villagers

The first major impact by central authorities, felt by the villagers of rural Egypt, was conscription, rigorous tax collection, and registration of land during Muhammad Ali's reign. Such brutal interactions continued in the century long period between Muhammad Ali's death and the 1950's. According to Ammar, such events led the villagers of Silwa to view government officials as agencies of imposition and control, and something to be feared.[321] Interactions in the years between Muhammad Ali and the revolution are described by Mayfield in these blunt terms:

[320] Critchfield (1976) p. 2
[321] Ammar (1954) p. 81

"Government representatives have traditionally cheated, robbed, beaten, and exploited [the fellah's] family and village. He has a keen suspicion for all outsiders and usually considers all individuals from outside his province as foreigners."[322]

According to Mayfield, these long lasting negative interactions had led to great mistrust towards officials and the use of clever tactics of deception by villagers by the time of the Nasser era rural reform programs. Examples of deception could be apparently eager yet insincere clapping at statements made by officials, or a villager untruthfully expressing agreement with any statement made by an official, or telling them what they want to hear, his real goal being that to induce them into leaving his village.[323] Mayfield has an explanation for this behaviour:

"No doubt a political history of exploitation, deception and terror has strengthened this trait in the Egyptian personality, and through a series of historical situations the fellahin have learned to develop and preserve the appearances of goodwill and acceptance."[324]

Other examples of mistrust and deference are presented in the literature. In Silwa in 1951 it was considered a betrayal to report cases of infectious diseases to the authorities, as this could force the parents to interact with government officials.[325] The prevalence of tribal courts ruling by customary law in Kafr el-Elow, rather than reporting each crime to the local police station, shows that even rural areas undergoing urbanisation still by 1966 didn't fully accept the authority of the new legal system put in place by the revolutionary government.

However, some major changes in the authority of the traditional leadership of the rural villages, the *umdah*, are described in both Ammar (1954) and Fakhouri (1972). According to Ammar, the *umdah* in Silwa had lost prestige and authority compared to his predecessor. Silwa's new *umdah* had lost prestige as a result of him not being prosperous enough to house officials visiting the village, as well as the recent building of a local police station as well as quite a few more villagers becoming literate, and such being able to write out complaints.[326] Ammar describes the relation between the *umdah* and the villagers this way:

"In fact, this brings us to the personal qualities of the present umdah who is actually a pleasant and genial personality. But the people think of authority as necessarily involving an

[322] Mayfield (1971) p. 59
[323] Mayfield (1971) p. 68
[324] Mayfield (1971) p. 68
[325] Ammar (1954) p. 81
[326] Ammar (1954) p. 79-80

assertion of power and domination…If one wields power, one must be powerful and forceful, the villagers say, otherwise one would not be respected and feared."[327]

Fakhouri also describes the weakening position of the village *umdah*. After the establishment of a police station in 1960, the traditional village guards (*ghafeer*) had stopped answering directly to the village *umdah*, and now rather worked in connection with the police station. The traditional government was abolished in Kafr el-Elow in 1960, and a new leadership position (the *Sheikh el-balad*) was created. The new government representative was appointed by the Ministry of Interior Affairs.[328] The abolishment of the *umdah* and the traditional government forced the villagers of Kafr el-Elow to deal directly with the central government in Cairo.[329]

In many villages during the Nasser era government officials from the ASU were competing with the village *umdah* for authority. Depending on the village, the *umdah* could have enough authority with the villagers to entirely undermine the government representatives' work.[330] The *umdah*-system was by Nasserists seen as a corrupt system put in place by the old regime, and used as a tool of oppression and feudalism. The gradual replacement of the *umdah* system, starting in 1957, was for them a natural step in the process of removing the traces of the old regime, and uprooting the old traditional leadership, replacing it with a modern system of local government.[331] Mayfield documents the persisting power of the *umdah*:

"The rural village is still the centre of life for over 60 percent of the thirty-three million people living in the United Arab Republic. Of the 4,012 villages only 997 have functioning local village councils."[332]

In one case, Mayfield asked local villagers in one of the many villages he visited why they chose to interact with the local *umdah*, although it was common knowledge amongst them that he had enriched himself through protection of criminals and unlawful acquisition of his feddans (he used to own 2 feddans before becoming *umdah*, at the time of Mayfield interviews he owned 50 feddans). They expressed their willingness to interact with him and even respect for him due to his family's status and his ability to solve their problems.[333]

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[327] Ammar (1954) p. 80
[328] Fakhouri (1972) p. 106-107
[329] Fakhouri (1972) p. 108-109
[330] Mayfield (1971) p. 89-91
[331] Mayfield (1971) p. 83-85
[332] Mayfield (1971) p. 80
[333] Mayfield (1971) p. 87-88

Mayfield concludes that the *umdah's* persisting power in the village comes down to one factor:

"He has the power to settle their disputes, negotiate with the outside world for them, and protect them from 'the government officials'"

Efforts had already started to remove the *umdah* system in the mid 1950's, with the replacement of an *umdah* upon his death with a village council as the preferred strategy of the Nasser government.[334] Mayfield confirms that the Nasser government was unable to undermine the power base of the traditional leadership, at least in most of Egypt's rural villages, and rich villagers continued dominating village politics.[335] In other words, the Nasser government did not entirely succeed in replacing the old *umdah* system with its new village council system. The negative effects of the attitudes local bureaucrats held towards the *fellahin*, were evident to several researchers, quoted by Mayfield:

"There is still plenty of evidence especially in the villages to the effect that officials are resented as such, and are endured merely because of the necessities of the case…[All government agencies] should begin to emphasise and work on the problem of their relations with the entire citizen body…But one has to recognise that a change of attitude has to take place as well as the adoption of special measures to give effect to this new attitude. New steps must be taken to correct the present attitude of officials towards the public."[336]

Mayfield does point towards some success in the ASU party's representatives in the villages, who operated independently of the village councils and government bureaucracy, in taking over the role of the umdah as an arbitrator:

"Although the umdahs and family heads still maintain the role of final arbitrator in the vast majority of villages in Egypt, still the ASU is gradually taking over this responsibility. In the eyes of villagers, where the umdah or family power has been removed, the ASU is gradually assuming the role of a court of last resort in the villages and districts. Thus the ASU [organs] are becoming a ready recipient of complaints or petitions from anyone who may feel that he has been wronged by an administrative agency or wish to call alleged mismanagement or corruption to the ASU's attention. From the evidence gathered, it appears that the ASU leadership treats such complaints and allegations quite seriously."[337]

However the ASU party's gradual gain of authority had not mitigated the problems already stated within the rural administration. The fact that the ASU were forced to make large scale

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[334] Ayrout (2005) p. 30, Ayrout wrote about this in 1955, meaning he could not foresee whether this policy would have success in wiping out the *umdah* system.
[335] Mayfield (1971) p. 92-93
[336] Luther Gullick and James K. Pollock quoted in Mayfield (1971) p. 228
[337] Mayfield (1971) p. 148

bodies for complaints readily available to all villagers, is telling of the major difficulty of corruption and mismanagement by government officials in rural Egypt in the 1960's. The Nasser government had not succeeded in implementing their all encompassing rural reform programs in such a way that the rural villagers themselves could easily accept the changes forced upon them.

Ammar's and Fakhouri's perspectives on development and social change

Contrasting the two case studies of Ammar and Fakhouri is interesting in two main aspects. Fakhouri documents the drastic effects the new revolutionary government's policies have in the urban villages, meaning villages in close proximity to urban centres. Ammar on the other hand shows the limited effect the old regime's policies had on remote villages, up until the 1952 revolution. The 13 to 15 Years of difference in time of observation between these two ethnographic case studies, in theory could be seen as a possibility to compare developments that must have happened in the time that passed between 1951 and 1966. However, the vastly different locations of the studies leads to an impasse in the effort to make such a comparison. How can you really compare the state of development over time in two vastly different villages such as Silwa and Kafr el-Elow. Therefore the developments described by the two different researchers have to be understood as either part of general domestic developments or as instances of local or regional development, meaning something that happened in the village or the region within which the village lays. For example Kafr el-Elow was affected by the industrialisation taking place in Helwan, this would also be true for other villages in the vicinity of Helwan, but not true for Silwa. This means the regional development experienced by Kafr el-Elow in the years 1964-1966 does not reflect developments in Silwa in the same period.

Ammar describes interaction between villagers coming home to Silwa after a prolonged stay away in the urban centres, and their expression of dissatisfaction with the village way of life, further he elaborates the results of urban pressures:

"The impact of urban life with its increasing pressures on the village has resulted in more and more strains in social living. The traditional social structure based on the solidarity of family and clan is losing some of its cohesive forces. The absolute authority of the olds folks had been supreme, and no competition between old and young could ever be entertained. Now, the exception is not rare…One meets, however, those few individuals who have spent part of their life in the city,

criticising some of the village ways of life such as pride in the clan or the extended family; they praise wealth rather than generosity, and individualism rather than family ties."[338]

Here Ammar clearly illustrates the major effects interaction between centre and periphery had on rural Egypt a year before the revolution, and the splitting interests between some of the younger generation and the elders of the village is made apparent. Where Silwa in 1951 experienced only moderate influences by urban centres, Kafr el-Elow during 1964-1966 was a village being heavily influenced by urban centres. Fakhouri describes how fields formerly used for cultivation were now being used to build new housing for the rapidly growing population of industrial workers:

"Additions have been made to many old residential structures and new homes are being constructed on land that was formerly used for cultivation. The former measure is viewed not only as a means of accommodating an expanding household and of maintaining family ties, but also as a status symbol, because such home alterations signify modernisation."[339]

The habits and material life of the native[340] villagers had been greatly affected by the Nasser era developments. Still traditional values prevailed:

"Although one finds that the villagers have adopted certain items of material culture from the town, such as the use of manufactured goods, new types of vegetables, and some medicines, such adoption is a surface substitution. Their ideas about land ownership, the importance of children, family and clan solidarity, categories of respect relationship, sex dichotomy, supernatural sanctions, and the importance of ritual and ceremony in both social and religious life, remain almost unaltered"[341]

The *fellahin* of Kafr el-Elow got their first experience with industrialisation in the 1910's and 1920's when several small factories were established in nearby Helwan. This however did not affect their daily lives in any meaningful way, but the industrialisation of the area truly ramped up in 1952, and by the 1960's, when the field research took place, many had gotten jobs working in nearby factories in Helwan. The population had also grown rapidly due to a large influx of migrant workers from other parts of rural Egypt located further away from Helwan.[342]

The availability of industrial jobs had provided the villagers of Kafr el-Elow with much greater job security, a rarity in Middle Eastern countries at the time. Many villagers were able

[338] Ammar (1954) p. 83
[339] Fakhouri (1972) p. 9
[340] By native I mean the families who lived in Kafr el-Elow before the arrival of migrant workers.
[341] Ammar (1954) p. 79
[342] Fakhouri (1972) p. 37-38

to cultivate their small plots of land when they came home from their industrial jobs, and this gave them a much higher security of income than most other *fellahin*. Free healthcare as part of their work contracts, as well as retirement plans were other benefits made available to the villagers who worked in factories.[343] The agrarian cooperative reforms had not hugely impacted the *fellahin* of Kafr el-Elow by 1966. Only a small minority were members in a cooperative, resulting from very little land being redistributed in the village during the land redistribution programs. The *fellahin* villagers, who before the revolution largely owned the land they cultivated, had mostly not voluntarily joined the state run cooperatives.[344] Hence it was industrialisation more so than agricultural reform that truly 'modernised' the lives of the *fellahin* in Kafr el-Elow.

Fakhouri, similarly to Ammar, expresses how it is the youth who are most affected by social change in Kafr el-Elow. However older villagers' views and values were also being affected to quite some degree. According to Fakhouri, this was a result of the abundance of radios present in Kafr el-Elow. Transistor radios had been sold in the hundreds to the villagers, and music as well as news were listened to on a daily basis. The radios were present in most stores visited by Fakhouri, and many villagers also brought them along when going to work in the factories. Ideas about the need for hygiene and the value of modern medicine, as well as political propaganda were amongst the things conveyed through the radios. The regime was quite aware of the importance of radios in changing the opinions and values of rural villagers, illiterate or not.[345] According to Ayrout, radios were not an uncommon sight in remote villages by 1955.[346]

Ayrout's focus on "changelessness"

The topic of what he calls changelessness takes up the whole first chapter of Ayrout (2005). Here he offers up this description of the Egyptian *fellahin*:

> *"They are not the stuff of which rebels are made. And even in revolt, the mass of the people remained unaffected. They are as impervious and enduring as the granite of their temples, and once the form is fixed, they are as slow to change as were the forms of that art. The glances of their daily life which we get from Pharaonic tombs or from Coptic legends, from the Arab historians or the*

[343] Fakhouri (1972) p. 38-39
[344] Fakhouri (1972) p. 31-32
[345] Fakhouri (1972) p. 102-104
[346] Ayrout (2005) p. 136

Napoleonic expeditions, from the earlier English explorers or the travellers of our own day, seem to form one single sequence. One has the impression that all these scenes, separated by centuries, only repeat and confirm each other."[347]

Another example of the apparent changelessness of the *fellahin,* are explained by their lack of 'inventiveness' resulting from the functioning of their intelligence:

"The fellah preserves and repeats, but does not originate or create. What improvements and inventions have been introduced into agriculture, health and housing are imposed upon him from outside. By dint of accepting, receiving, repeating and enduring, his intelligence has become atrophied and passive. And because it is kept in leading strings, it is not stimulated to innovate, for that would mean running risks and disturbing the torpor which protects him from unnecessary suffering. What one knows is better than what one does not know."[348]

Ayrout reinforces an image of the *fellahin* as passive, patient, obedient and submissive. Change is never something the *fellah* willingly and eagerly partakes in, it is something brought by outside forces, and the *fellahin* submissively experiences. This image reinforces the idea of the rural Egyptians' backwardness, and their apparent lack of political initiative supports the notion that only a strong central authority could achieve progress towards modernisation. It paints an unrealistic picture of the *fellahin* as unchanged by the developments of the past several centuries. Descriptions of the *fellahin* as unchanged is one not uncommon in research from the period.

However, Ayrout's picture of the *fellahin* does not fit with their description of being major instigators of the 1919 revolts against British rule,[349] and the numerous *fellahin* revolts described both by Ayrout himself, Baer and others.[350] Baer (1969) comes with much critique of Ayrout's descriptions of the *fellahin* as submissive, and states in his conclusion in the chapter on *'Submissiveness and Revolt of the Fellah'* that:

"It is our intention to show how misleading the generalisations concerning the "mentality" of any people or group of people can be and on what shaky grounds such generalisations sometimes stand."[351]

The imagining of the *fellahin* as passive members of their society and a changeless mass, serves to misrepresent the *fellahin* of the Nasser period and their realities. As noted by

[347] Ayrout (2005) p. 2
[348] Ayrout (2005) p. 118
[349] Baer (1969) p. 101
[350] Baer (1969) p. 93-103, Ayrout (2005) p. 124
[351] Baer (1969) p. 108

Ammar, Mayfield and Fakhouri the *fellahin* had not stayed unchanged neither through developments before nor during the Nasser period. Ayrout presents a common developmentalist view that modernisation has to come from outside, although it is truly a process of interaction and not a one way street. Ammar, Mayfield and Fakhouri acknowledge the many advances made in the name of modernisation by earlier governments, going back to Muhammad Ali's rule, as well as how the affected *fellahin* usually accepted and partook in this change.[352] This contradicts Ayrout's notion of changelessness.

Developmentalism and modernism in correlation with the West

In Mayfield (1971) we find a striking example of developmentalism:

> *"Poverty, disease, and ignorance are the triple evils of the underdeveloped societies of Afro-Asia. Moreover, they tend to be self-perpetuating and to reinforce each other. The result is physical debility, low productivity, apathy, and the reduction of vast masses of humanity to a subsistence level. The aim of modernization is to break this vicious circle and, by infusion of new ideas, organization, and techniques, to launch a society upon the path of development in which literacy and knowledge will replace ignorance and superstition, health will dislodge debility, and production of goods will meet the material need of civilized citizenry. Among the countries of Afro-Asia undergoing various experiments in modernization, Egypt is one of the most strategic."*[353]

This developmentalist rhetoric, although discussing matters of deprivation and hopeless suffering, ends with a positive spin. Lenczowski expresses that, by infusing new ideas, 'ignorance' and 'superstition' will be overcomed, the needs of 'civilised citizenry' will be met. This quote, part of Mayfield's foreword, is quite on the nose, when it comes to developmentalist ideas and rhetoric. Implicit in the many good notions of fighting hunger, disease and deprivation, is the understanding that Egypt is backwards, and needs to be brought into the fold, so to speak. Further Mayfield describes Nasser era rural Egypts situation in this way:

> *"Poverty is a way of life for nearly two-thirds of the people in Egypt. Poverty means hunger and malnutrition. Malnutrition leads to sickness and general ill-health. Disease, in turn, debilitates and reduces human output, which then aggravates the tendency toward greater poverty. To break this vicious circle requires energy and knowledge and change, aspects of development that unfortunately are lacking in most of the rural villages of Egypt."*[354]

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[352] Ammar (1954) p. 70, Mayfield (1971) p. 55-56, 67, Fakhouri (1972) p. 24, 37-38
[353] Mayfield (1971) p. ix Foreword by George Lenczowski
[354] Mayfield (1971) p. 253

The other researcher's rhetoric is not as overtly developmentalist as Mayfield's, however, developmentalist understanding of modernity is to some degree still present in their research. It is understood that modernity is coming to rural Egypt and this, although a challenging process, is inevitable and also generally the ideal. Ammar expresses his and many Egyptians' feelings towards modernisation: *"The phrase 'modernisation' and not 'Westernisation' of Egypt is in fact a happier term, which is more acceptable to the Egyptians."*[355]

The fact that modernisation here is compared to westernisation is a particularly interesting aspect of the idea of modernisation. To which degree does modernisation really mean westernisation? To answer this question another question has to be answered. Is the process of moving from a traditional, post-modern society to a modern society a process independent of the Western world and Western values in the case of Egypt? I think that there is no doubt that a country can go through the process of modernisation without the involvement of the Western world. However, in Western research the separation of the two concepts have not always been clear. Some of the critique levelled at developmentalist research has been linked to the equating of modernisation with the adoption of western values.

Such a notion of modernisation linked to Western values is not openly expressed in any of the literature. Yet, the examples of adoption of Western clothing by all officials as well as many villagers in the case of Kafr el-Elow, illustrates how the process of modernisation in the case of Egypt did not happen independent of the Western world. Further we know the revolutionary government was influenced by Western political thinkers. The influence Western culture and values held over modernisation efforts in Nasser era Egypt should not be underestimated. Ammar reflects over the continued effect imitation of Western institutions have had on modernisation policies in rural Egypt:

> *"It has been the deliberate policy of the Egyptian rulers, since the days of Mohammad Ali, to modernise Egypt. More often than not, the pursuit of such a policy had led to aping of Western institutions, regardless of the different social, economic and political background…many Western institutions have not yielded the results intended and expected from them in Egyptian society…A critical evaluation and adaptation of borrowings must be always faced; and importations of institutions can only be justified in so far as they could be digested and assimilated by local conditions."*[356]

[355] Ammar (1954) p. 68
[356] Ammar (1954) p. 70

Fascinatingly, this critique made by Ammar, directed at the puppet regime ruling Egypt under British overlordship before the revolution, would still hold true if directed at the Nasser regime which came after the British period. The Nasser regime tried to establish a political movement for change, built on Western institutions. The modernisation project, although spearheaded by Egyptian nationals and Arab socialists, for one reason or the other found Western principles of modernisation escapable. The same way Western researchers in the 1960's until the 1980's could not escape the notion that modernisation in rural Egypt meant adopting Western institutions and values.

Conclusion

Rural Egypt in the early 1950's was a society dominated by traditional values surrounding family, kinship, clan and submission to those who were perceived to be powerful. Blood feuds were still a common problem in Nasser era Egypt.[357] Magical items and rituals were believed to be the cure for disease and jealousy, and God was the reason for all things happening both good and bad. The Nasser era reform efforts were from day one met with major difficulties. Both due to the incompatibility between the 'modern' values championed by the Nasser regime, and the traditional norms and values who still held a tight grip on rural life, but also importantly because of how bureaucrats and other representatives of the central government met the villagers, not with understanding and with a mindset to cooperate, but with great prejudice and contempt.

A greater understanding of villagers' beliefs and traditional values, and a ground level analysis of interaction between village and central government, helps to dispel developmentalist views of rural Egyptians as unable to accept, understand and partake in projects of development and modernisation. Developmentalist views were identifiable in the work of the American state scientist Mayfield. Such views were to a lesser degree identified with the Middle-Eastern born and raised, yet Western educated anthropologists, Ammar and Fakhouri.

[357] Mayfield (1971) p. 18

Chapter 6: Comparison of the RSC and CU programs, and Youth and Education reform

"Despite Nasser's land reform policies, despite Sadat's rhetorical focus on the beauty of rural life, and despite the current government's new economic policies, it was the pre-revolutionary government that enjoyed significant success in its rural development policies - arguably to a much greater degree than any government since that time"

- Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 22

Introduction

The Rural Social Centre (RSC) program was a success story in the 1940's and early 1950's. It would later be phased out and replaced by the Combined Units (CU) program under the Nasser regime, a program starting in 1955, and reaching its largest extent by 1967. These programs both encompassed broader rural reform measures, and in this chapter we will discuss and compare these two programs. I will start in part 1 by presenting the RSC program put in place years before the 1952 revolution, using Johnson (2004) and Johnson & Johnson (2006). I will then use Mayfield (1971) to present the CU program. The more recent perspectives presented by the two Johnsons, is here used to discuss changes in researchers' perspectives on 'progress' and 'modernisation' in rural Egypt.

Education reforms have often been at the forefront in the discussion of development and progress. In this chapter I will focus on education reforms in the elementary school system in the years leading up to the 1952 revolution, especially as it was documented in Ammar (1954) and Johnson (2004), and then during the Nasser era (1952-1970) which is documented by Mayfield (1971) and Fakhouri (1972). I will combine this discussion on education reform with a depiction of life for rural youth in Egypt between 1951-1967 and how urban influences affected the life and values of the rural youth at the time. In part 2 I will use Ammar (1954) as a case example of children's life and primary education in a medium sized village in rural Upper Egypt in the year before the revolution (1951). Mayfield (1971) and Fakhouri (1972) will serve as examples of the life of youth and education reform happening in the Nasser era.

Part 1: A comparison of the RSC and CU programs

The Rural social Centres (RSC) program and the Combined Units (CU) program makes for interesting comparisons. Both programs had similar goals, and the former to some degree inspired the latter. Although the CU program affected a much larger percentage of rural Egyptians, and the RSC did not by its end reach such an all encompassing scale, we will see that the former was no more ambitious than the latter, and in many ways the RSC program saw greater successes in the villages than did the CU program.

The Rural Social Centres program

The Rural Social Centres (RSC) program was a project first introduced by the NGO Egyptian Association for Social Studies (EASS). The main idea of the program was to ensure that reform was integrated with the active understanding, acceptance and participation of local rural villagers.[358] Scientific methods in social work and the use of professional social workers would be features that would enhance the project, and one of the goals of the project was to use this as a trial to discover the most effective method to achieve social reform.[359] The original pilot program, run in two villages in the Delta, was a great success as it managed to show great improvements in living conditions, agricultural productivity and access to quality education.[360]

Ahmed Hussein, the leading instigator of the pilot program in the two villages between 1937-1941 was by the late 1930's considered a leading expert on rural agricultural and social reform, and landed himself the job as the first director of the newly formed Fellah Department in 1939. As part of the government, the Fellah Department worked to implement reform directed at increasing the standard of living for the fellahin population of rural Egypt. The Fellah Department examined the RSC pilot program and this, combined with research into social welfare legislation in India and the Balkan states, was used as the basis for forming a plan for the gradual establishment of RSC's across rural Egypt.[361] After lobbying

[358] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 24
[359] Johnson (2004) p. 33
[360] Johnson (2004) p. 45-46
[361] Johnson (2004) p. 69-71

by Ahmed Hussein, funds for the building of 6 RSC's were secured in 1942, and the centres soon proved to be a great success.[362]

After Egypt was dragged into WWII funding for the RSC program was halted, and the building of 40 planned RSC's were scrapped. By 1946, the number of RSC's had only increased to 11, but from 1946 renewed interest in the program secured more funding. The building of RSC's would truly ramp up from 1946 onwards, and by 1950 the number of RSC's had increased from 11 to 125, each centre servicing approximately 10,000 villagers. After the initial 6 each subsequent centre would only be built upon a village showing interest and requesting the establishment of a local RSC.[363] A system built on active participation by villagers and the introduction of centres of reform on a voluntary basis, was an essential part of how Ahmed Hussein and the Fellah Department envisioned change to be accepted by the rural villagers, and the villagers themselves helping with financing and also providing the labour for constructing the buildings used by the centres ensured that the villagers owned the project and that was theirs, and not something enforced upon them.[364] The goals of the RSC program was not limited to social services as remarked by Johnson:

> *"The goals of the economic services provided by the centres were to increase the income of the villagers, to improve agricultural production, and to provide nonagricultural sources of income for the population."*[365]

Highlighting that the program did not only focus on health, hygiene, infrastructure and education, but also economic growth and long term prosperity, an essential part of development much cherished by developmentalist researchers such as Johnson & Johnson.

Some villages who were not afforded a RSC would instead receive a Rural Reconstruction Society (RRS), which was a cheaper and simpler version of the RSC program. The RRS villages did not receive or gather funding for the construction of RSC buildings, rather hamlets already present in the village were repurposed, and the RRS villages received more or less the same services as a village containing a RSC. One RSC worker considered the RRSs to be more efficient than the RSCs because meetings were held in villagers' homes and they were more participatory than the RSCs, yet this worker admitted the RRSs depended on

[362] Johnson (2004) p. 72
[363] Johnson (2004) p. 74-76
[364] Johnson (2004) p. 78-79
[365] Johnson (2004) p. 86

assistance from the RSCs and could not function entirely on their own. 23 RRSs servicing some 150,000 villagers were built by 1950.[366] By 1950, 126 RSCs were servicing a total of approximately 1.5 million rural villagers, bringing the total services by either RSCs or RRSs to approximately 1.65 million.

The RSC project under leadership of Ahmed Hussein saw great successes in developing rural areas in the period 1942-1952. In the villages affected villager health increased, sanitary conditions improved, illiteracy decreased, education levels increased, agricultural yields and salaries increased and all this was achieved at relatively low costs for the government.[367] Hussein envisioned building a total of 1,200 centres at a rate of 30 to 40 new centres a year, the goal being to eventually have centres in all rural provinces.[368] This means, although the centres built by 1950 only covered a minor percentage of the total population of rural Egypt, the goal was total coverage in the long run. In other words, the RSC program under leadership of Ahmed Hussein was no less ambitious in its coverage than the CU program later established under the Nasser regime.

The Combined Units program under the Nasser Regime

A major part of the reform efforts in rural areas by the Nasser government would be dealt with through the implementation of the Combined Units (CU) program. Each CU would service approximately 15,000 villagers, and would provide social, hygienic and and cultural services to the villagers, similarly to the preceding RSC program.[369] Other functions of the CU's are pointed out by Mayfield:

"*A combined unit in theory aims at providing social, hygienic, and cultural services for rural populations. It also aims at raising economic standards through increasing agricultural and industrial production, so as to increase the income of the fellah while these services are rendered to him. Thus, it is hoped that hygienic, cultural, social and cooperative consciousness will be raised, the general conditions in rural areas considerably developed, and progress achieved in all aspects of life."*[370]

[366] Johnson (2006) p. 83-84
[367] Johnson (2006) p. 85
[368] Johnson (2006) p. 77-78
[369] Mayfield (1971) p. 178, 180-181
[370] Mayfield (1971) p. 180

The major difference was that the CUs would be forcibly introduced by the government whether the villagers liked it or not, and then the authorities expected the villagers to gradually gain confidence in the program.[371]

In 1955 the Nasser government announced that 200 CUs would be built by the end of that same year, and by 1960 a total of 868 CUs, enough to service the entire rural population of 13 million, would be completed. These incredibly ambitious numbers of CUs were never realised, one of the main reasons being the lack of funding[372] and qualified personnel to operate the services provided by the units. 250 CUs had been built by 1960 and this had probably only increased to 301 units by 1967, servicing approximately 4.5 million rural villagers.[373]

Some villages that did not receive CUs rather received health centres, rural health units and social centres. These units would provide some, but not all of the many services offered by a CU. The construction of each CU was estimated by the Nasser government to cost on average 2 to 3 times that of the construction of an RSC in the 1940's.[374] Further Mayfield points out that despite all the different government sponsored facilities across Egypt at the end of the Nasser era only one in three villages had any form of facility present.[375]

What a comparison of the RSC and CU programs tells us about perceptions of progress

The RSC program is described as quite an achievement in the sphere of development and progress according to Johnson (2004).[376] According to Mayfield most contemporary writers and researchers tend to see the CU's as a general success, and the main issue being lack of qualified personnel willing to work in the countryside.[377] Mayfield discovered in his meeting with people working in the CU's in the 1960's, that the overly optimistic descriptions of the

[371] Mayfield (1971) p. 180
[372] Baker (1978) p. 221
[373] Mayfield (1971) p. 175-178
[374] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 46, see their footnote 50.
[375] This included 264 health centres, 304 combined units, 104 social centres, 71 comprehensive treatment units, and 782 rural health units, making up a total of 1525 facilities. Note that the vast majority of these facilities offered only health services, in contrast to the CUs. Mayfield (1971) p. 185
[376] Johnson (2004) p. 85
[377] Mayfield (1971) p. 178-180

program by other researchers did not fit the realities described by the CU workers he interviewed.

The RSC program had faced some difficulty in hiring enough physicians and personnel to man the health services of the RSCs. This problem would only multiply with the CU program. Both because of the larger scope of the CU program, but also because many of the early RSCs had been built in the vicinity of Cairo, and RSC coverage was best in the Delta. The CU program tried to service villagers in peripheral areas as well as the villages closer to urban centres. Finding physicians, nurses and agricultural specialists willing to work in such remote areas, far away from Cairo, was a difficult task.

In general the CU proved incapable of delivering all its services to the 15,000 individuals who were to be served with an array of health, educational, agricultural, veterinarian, vocational, industrial, recreational and other services by the unit. Mayfield has this to say of the success of the CU programs to achieve their goals of modernisation:

"After careful analysis of some 250 interviews with officials, fellahin, and private citizens, I have come to the conclusion that in the vast majority of the combined units, health units, social centres, and other government-sponsored rural development programs, their effectiveness, their ability to stimulate change, and their success in generating enthusiasm and commitment to the goals of development and modernisation have largely failed to reach their projected aims. This rather harsh statement is substantiated by several Egyptian sources who have objectively analysed the rural programs presently functioning in Egypt. Thus, most of the evaluation teams sent out to various governorates generally reached the same conclusion as Ahmad Tawfiq, who laments over the fact the the 'combined unit, which is the centre of all government services for the villagers, rarely has any peasants in it for they never go there unless it is absolutely necessary.'"[378]

He further provides numbers suggesting that with the exception of health and education services, 75 percent of villagers living in areas covered by a CU did not receive any benefits from the other services offered.[379] These numbers as well as Tawfiq's lament over the lack of fellahin visiting the CUs, stands in stark contrast to Ahmed Hussein's description of villager interest in the RSCs in 1950:

"They [the villagers] are now all anxious for the establishment of centres in their areas. They all take their share; some contributing funds, others contributing land; while others give building

[378] Mayfield (1971) p. 184
[379] Mayfield (1971) p. 185

materials and finally the labour required; they all believe that they have an interest in this scheme and hence no canvassing is necessary."[380]

The daycare centres provided by RSCs stand as a unique example of a measurable success story of the RSCs. Through providing education to mothers on the importance of good habits of hygiene and how the bilharzia is transmitted to their children, the cases of bilharzia in areas covered by RSC for a longer period were markedly down. The positive effects of the RSC daycare centres caught the attention of the Egyptian government, who in 1953 expanded the services offered by their own rural social welfare centres to include daycares. The project was also praised by the world health organisation (WHO).[381]

Through a comparison of the RSC and the CU several things have been made apparent. First and foremost that development policies directed at rural areas were not something unique to the Nasser government, and predated the revolution. Secondly, the major success with the RSC lies with how the program actively involved the rural villagers in the planning and implementation of the project. Going as far as demanding that the villagers provide E£ 1,500[382] in financing for the centres to prove their interest, and how the raising of these funds by candidate villages were achieved over and over again. This secured the continued involvement and interest of the villagers in their local RSC. The CU program did not build on the self-help model utilised to such great success by the RSC program, and was rather an entirely central government planned and implemented program without involving the local population in the process. The CUs were many times more expensive to implement than the RSCs and research into their effectiveness suggest the RSCs saw much greater success in achieving positive developments towards modernisation, albeit servicing a smaller percentage of the rural population, 1.65 million (including the RRSs) as opposed to 4.5 million served by the CUs.

The third and important factor that comes to light here - considering my focus on development, progress and modernity - is that modernisation policies under the Nasser government should not be categorised as the first positive step forwards, after a Khedive/British period marred by indifference to the rural subjects. Johnson & Johnson (2006) concludes the RSC was in most aspects a more successful reform program than the

[380] Johnson (2004) p. 102
[381] Johnson (2004) p. 100-102
[382] This was a sizable amount for poor *fellahin* in the 1940's, enough to ensure a village able to collect the funding was seriously interested in the project.

CU program.[383] This conclusion should however not be understood in such a way that the Nasser era reforms were an utter failure. After all, the CU program succeeded in giving access to health services and primary education to a large number of rural Egyptians. If we use Mayfields interviews as a basis, 74% of rural villagers covered by a CU received health services and 29% of male and 12% of female villagers received primary education.[384] This is percentages out of a total of 4.5 million villagers covered by the CU program. A huge upgrade in health and education coverage compared to the coverage in 1951. Yet, the comparison serves to show that, firstly the RSC program was more successful in its implementation and reaching its goals than the CU program, and secondly the notion that development in rural Egypt was totally stagnant in the years prior to the 1952 revolution, a common view,[385] is completely false.

A villager's remark reflects the sentiment of many villagers interviewed: *"The RSC had good health services, but there have been no good health services since the revolution."*[386] Under the Nasser regime the RSC program was gradually discontinued and replaced by the CU program,[387] leaving us wondering what could have been the result if the program continued unhindered into the Nasser era.

How the RSC was overlooked or and the CU overvalued

Mayfield comments on contemporary researchers' acceptance of the CU program as a success story, and their lack of critical examination of ground realities:

> *"The confidence and optimism characteristic of what has been written on development programs in rural Egypt appears incongruous and even ironic when compared with comments and remarks from individuals presently working in the combined units. In theory the combined unit as an approach to rural development is a good idea. When one visits the combined units located in the governorates just outside Cairo such as Giza or Menoufia, which appear to operate primarily as a model centre for visiting foreigners, one gains a completely different picture of these combined units than from a visit to combined units in Kafr al-Shaykh, Dakahlia, Sohag or Qena."*

Johnson & Johnson (2006) describes the trend in scholarly representation of rural Egypt before compared to after the 1952 revolution this way:

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[383] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 33-35
[384] Mayfield (1971) p. 185
[385] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 22-24
[386] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 28
[387] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 30-31

"Few scholars would argue that the pre-revolutionary period was without its problems. But equally few have bothered to go beyond the macro level political and economic issues to examine whether within the disorder and macro level failures of the period, lower level government agencies were actually able to enact policies for the benefit of the nation's population."[388]

Two trends have become clear. Firstly, researchers tend to overlook the RSC program and its prerevolutionary successes, contributing to the myth that rural reform went from barely anything to something. Secondly, contemporary researchers of Mayfield, as noted by Mayfield himself, tend to put the CU program in an overly positive light.[389] Whereas Mayfield does a good job at recognising the failures and shortcomings of the CUs better than his contemporaries, he does not mention the RSC program or the prerevolutionary regime's efforts to errect social service centres.

Part 2: Youth and education reform

Childhood is the most formative period of an individual's life. It is in this period values are formed, traditions learned and culture adopted most readily. This was recognised by researchers focusing on Nasser era Egypt, and is reflected in their research.

The limitations of the field research on education

In this instance we have to be careful comparing Ammar and Fakhouri. Silwa lay far away from any large urban centre, the closest being Kom Ombo. The youth of Kafr el-Elow on the other hand lived a short bus trip away from Helwan and a slightly longer bus trip away from Cairo. Observations done in Silwa in 1964-1966 would have made for great observational comparison to the 1951 work of Ammar, but such field research we do not have. The cases of Silwa in 1951 and Kafr el-Elow in 1964-1966 serve as individual case studies that can supplement the larger data sets on education in Johnson (2004) and Mayfield (1971). However, their value is limited in comparison to each other.

[388] Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 24
[389] Mayfield (1971) p. 178-180

The early research on Egyptian rural children

Ammar's research for his 1954 publication focuses extensively on the childhood of young villagers in Silwa during 1951. The boys and girls of Silwa were expected to work for their parents from a very young age. At age 5 boys and girls were expected to run errands for their parents, and girls babysat younger siblings while mother did other domestic tasks. From 7-12 boys started helping with agricultural work, mainly tending to the animals, and girls now helped mother with food preparation, carrying corn to the mill, fetching water and clay[390] from the Nile, and helping mother tending to poultry, sheep and other animals raised within the confines of the home.[391] At age 12-16 boys started fetching fertiliser, and learning some skilled task, while girls had to go on night trips water-fetching, washing clothes in the Nile and partook in general domestic work. At 16 boys had to partake in heavy farm work using tools, and gained responsibility for sowing, spreading fertiliser and weed control. At 16 girls were now expected to completely seclude themselves from the public whether they were married or not. Some girls married before turning 16, but most after.[392]

Rivalry amongst siblings was actively encouraged and if the parents saw that such rivalry was lacking between the siblings they stimulated it. This rivalry between siblings was described in tradition and folklore as a positive thing, and viewed as part of character building as the children grow up.[393] Children younger than 10 wore shabby clothing, were dirty and the mother did not care to remove nasal mucus from its face. Mothers justified this neglect on the basis that their young children were often out playing, and shouldn't appear beautiful out of fear of attracting the evil eye. However, from the age of 10 the children gained more attention, and the mothers endeavoured to keep them clean and well dressed, otherwise risking disgrace in the eyes of other villagers.[394] When not doing agricultural or household work, or at school, children spent their time playing games and being children.

Circumcision was one of the most importants event in the life of the children, not performed at a specific time as by Jews, and only in some Muslim communities were the girls circumcised. The boy was dressed up before the circumcision in girls clothing, symbolising the last time he could indulge in any 'female' activity. The circumcision ceremony were

[390] Used in construction or repair of ovens, fireplaces, seed stores, bird cages, etc.
[391] Ammar (1954) p. 30-31
[392] Ammar (1954) p. 31-32
[393] Ammar (1954) p. 108-110
[394] Ammar (1954) p. 110-112

attended by the whole extended family, and this ceremony held great significance in Muslim communities like Silwa.[395]

In 1951 the children of Silwa and children of fellahin families across rural Egypt, were actively participating in their parents' livelihood from a young age, but the recently introduced compulsory school system had taken over a good chunk of the youngsters' day. Many children now only partook in agricultural or household work after school had ended.[396]

Kuttabs, the compulsory school and the primary school

Etymologically the word *kuttab* stems from the Arabic word *kitab* (book) and was the only form of public education existing in old rural tradition, only teaching boys. In the *kuttab* the young boys memorised Quranic verses, and learned to read and write through study of the Quran and to some degree works of Islamic poetry and tradition. Examination happened orally in front of an inspector, who tested the students ability to memorise Quranic verses. Most of the old *kuttabs* built before the centralisation of the education system in 1906, were funded through *Waqf* charitable donations. In Silwa in 1951 there was one government sponsored *kuttab*, as well as three unofficial ones run by local clerics. The *sheikhs* who ran the *kuttabs* held great prestige in the village as the perpetuators of Quranic wisdom. Each day most of the boys brought loaves of bread to the sheiks as a form of compensation for their work. The *sheikhs* were also paid for their services in grain by some, as well as regularly receiving gifts from the villagers.[397]

The Egyptian constitution of 1923 stipulated that all boys and girls between the ages of seven and twelve would be provided with free elementary schooling.[398] When Ammar visited Silwa in 1951 there had in recent times (1925) been established a government run school called the compulsory school, which challenged the old *kuttab* system.[399] Boys between the ages of 7-12 had to attend the compulsory school, and hence could only spend part of their day in the *kuttab*. Full time students of the *kuttab* were either younger than 7 or older than 12.[400] The goals of the new compulsory school system was to eradicate illiteracy amongst the young

[395] Ammar (1954) p. 116-124
[396] Ammar (1954) p. 31
[397] Ammar (1954) p. 206-209
[398] Fakhouri (1972) p. 96
[399] Ammar (1954) p. 214
[400] Ammar (1954) p. 211

rural villagers, but this had to a large degree failed to materialise by 1951, as illiteracy was still commonplace.[401]

In the year 1951, Silwa received a primary school, which was different from and should not be confused with the compulsory school already present in the village.[402]
The all male students of the primary school had better prospects for jobs after finishing their education, compared to the compulsory school students, as having gone to the primary school qualified one to move on to secondary school. This opened up the possibility of becoming a civil servant, which was a job highly cherished by rural villagers at the time. Whereas parents tried to avoid their children going to the compulsory school if possible, they strove to get their children into the newly established primary school, showing that the problem with the compulsory school was not fellahin parents apathy to modern education, but perceived lack of work opportunities arising from a compulsory school education.[403] Although the *kuttabs* found in Silwa in 1951 were a common site in rural Egypt in 1951, the compulsory schools were a rarer sight in smaller villages,[404] and primary schools were even rarer in rural areas.

Perspectives on the Nasser era educational reforms

The prerevolutionary government had made efforts to make education available in rural areas through the implementation of a Social Service Centres program (SSC, the prerunner to the CUs) offering an array of services.[405] This program was mostly unsuccessful at bringing health, education, agricultural and social services to the rural areas of Egypt, as only 160 such centres had been built by the time of the 1952 revolution, and they did not see comparable success in implementation as the concurrent RSC program.[406] By the time of the 1952 revolution the vast majority of schools on offer in rural areas was either compulsory schools funded by the government or charitable *Waqfs*, primary schools funded by charitable *Waqfs*,

[401] Ammar (1954) p. 216-217 Ammar estimates that total literacy across Egypt in 1947 was ca. 25%
[402] The compulsory school system introduced in 1925, was found in some but not all rural areas by 1951.
[403] Ammar (1954) p. 218-220
[404] Silwa was a relatively large village, and held the position as a regional administrative centre, as discussed in the previous chapter.
[405] Intending to make the services of agronomists, teachers, doctors and social workers available in one place, in 1946 the government launched the social service centres (SSC) program. This program was similar to the RSC in which services were offered, but was run by the central government, and villagers did not have a say in the implementation process as they did with the RSCs. Baker (1978) p. 220-221.
[406] Baker (1978) p. 220-221

or as was the case for the majority of rural villages, the old *kuttabs*, which had for decades been considered inadequate by the central government. Earlier we have discussed the failures of the CU program, and its inability to provide any form of education system to the vast majority of rural villages between 1955-1970. Looking at the case of Kafr el-Elow, we get a glimpse of education reform as it happened in a village closely linked to a nearby urban centre, in a village which also did not have a RSC or CU established at any point up until 1966, which would be the case for the vast majority of Egyptian villages.

Fakhouri observed that Kafr el-Elow had a compulsory school established in the village in 1933. Located in a private rented home. In 1950, the Portland Cement Company built a second elementary school for the children of employees. After the old compulsory school building was condemned in 1955, the Company school was converted into a primary school serving all the villagers' children, and the Ministry of Education in Cario took over the job of appointing the schools two headmasters and fourteen teachers. When Fakhouri visited the village in 1964-1966 the elementary schools had mostly taken over the role of education. The two local *Kuttabs* only being seen as a supplementary education to the public school, and childrens attendance was irregular and only for a few hours at a time. The *sheikhs* running the two *kuttabs* were mostly paid in cash by the parents, and only a minority paid their dues the old way, in grain or other agricultural products. The children were regularly beaten by the *sheikhs* if failing to recite their Quran verses correctly. Fakhouri lamented the primary schools bad effect on the children's health, as the school building was located adjacent to the Cement Factory, and the playground was always covered in thick cement dust.[407]

Other than teaching the children every morning the teachers of the primary school inspected the students for cleanliness. Those who failed the inspection were shamefully sent home to their parents, and this combined with the constant reminding of the importance of hygiene through government channels on the radio, saw standards of hygiene greatly improved in the village compared to pre revolutionary conditions. Children who graduated could continue their education at the secondary school located in the nearby industrial town of Helwan. Vocational schools existed for further education for those who failed the graduation examination. Only very rarely did female students proceed for further education after graduating from primary school. One example of a man sending his daughter to secondary

[407] Fakhouri (1972) p. 96-98

education, and then to college, was attributed by Fakhouri to the fact that the man had liberal views on education, and the fact that he had no sons. Attendance of the primary school increased from 292 students in 1957, to 480 students in 1966.[408]

Year	1937	1947	1960
Male literacy	21.6%	23.7%	45.8%
Female literacy	6.8%	7.3%	7.9%

Table 1.2 showing literacy rates in Kafr el-Elow for people over 10 years for 1937, 1947 and 1960.[409]

The impact on literacy of education reform in Kafr el-Elow in the period 1937-1960 can be seen in table 1.2. The numbers show a marked increase in male literacy between 1947 and 1960, the percentage almost doubling in the period. However, the numbers for female literacy show only an insignificant increase in literacy. In conclusion, Nasser era reforms greatly affected the literacy of males in Kafr el-Elow, but not so much the literacy of women. Fakhouri's findings in Kafr el-Elow during his research in the period 1964-1966, suggest that education reform during the Nasser era had clearly affected the village, bringing education to ever more boys, and for the first time opening up the possibility of education for the village girls. In the short run girls had largely not benefited from the newly gained access to primary education. Literacy rates were however disappointing, falling far short of the Nasser government's stated goal of full literacy across the country. Ammar's numbers show that for a village like Silwa, large but remotely located, education in the form of several school systems was present before the revolution. Ammar's information tells us nothing of changes resulting from education reform during the Nasser era, but it proves that education reform did take place in rural areas right before the revolution, even in villages not directly affected by the RSC program.

Parents motivation for educating their children

The authors present differing perspectives on parents' motivation to educate their children. According to Ammar, the main motivation of fellahin parents were to make sure their children would in the present or future participate in the agricultural labour:

[408] Fakhouri (1972) p. 98-101
[409] Fakhouri (1972) p. 101

"Parents who have land afford their children no other opportunity but of working on it, and they endeavour to keep them on the farm."[410]

This sentiment however does not reflect Mayfield's findings over a decade later:

"During several interviews with various fellahin, I was surprised by the number of village adults whose major vocal aspiration was to see their children obtain a modern education."[411]

This is one of several changes apparent in attitudes amongst rural Egyptians before the revolution and after more than a decade of revolutionary government. Another major difference shows in the ever increasing generational gap and the conflicting views of the young and old.

Young villagers' impressions of urban life and governmental youth initiatives

A major change between young and old villagers is noticed by several researchers. The youth who have visited or lived for a period of time in an urban centre have become aware of the major differences in city and village life, and some have changed their ways.

In Silwa in 1951 a common saying amongst youth had become: *'If you want wealth and elevation, go and live in the cities, for poverty is the heritage of rural life'*.[412] Clearly rural youth had already become aware of the major differences between centre and periphery by 1951, however more drastic changes and an ever growing generational cleavage would develop during the Nasser era. Fakhouri expresses how the younger generation does not fear God the same way the elders do:

"On one of my regular visits to the tailor shop, I was asked by the tailor's nineteen-year-old son for for a ride the following week to Cairo, for he wished to attend the celebration there commemorating Muhammad's birthday. Although his father objected strenuously…the son insisted on going to Cairo. Finally, his father suggested that his son should say, 'I wish to go to Cairo, next week, if God wills it.' However, the son insisted that he was going to Cairo regardless of circumstances, and his father shook his head and told me: 'These days, young people have no faith in God. My son insists on going to Cairo even against God's Will, not realising that God could strike him dead at this moment if He wished.'"

[410] Ammar (1954) p. 21
[411] Mayfield (1971) p. 67
[412] Ammar (1954) p. 76

Fakhouri's experience illustrates the lesser adherence to traditional values amongst the youth of Kafr el-Elow. This observation fits the findings of Mayfield, concerning change in values amongst rural youth in the 1960's. Mayfield discusses the changed political landscape of the 1960's, were the younger generation have different expectations and are disloyal to the old traditional ways of the older generation:

> *"The whole process of modernisation has created a generation gap nearly as broad as that between the elites and the masses. The accompanying social conflict resulting from these incompatibilities increases when different socialising agents seek to condition the same individual toward different, mutually exclusive norms."*[413]

According to Mayfield, youth members of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU)[414] were important drivers of change in rural areas, and the importance of the new generation was not lost on Nasser who stated this in a pamphlet describing the ASU's at the time new youth organisation:

> *"The main task we must put before our eyes in the next stage is to pave the road for a new generation which would lead the revolution in all its political, economic, and intellectual spheres. We can not say that our generation has done its duty unless we can be sure, before and after all the achievements, that progress would continue. Otherwise, all that we have accomplished would be liable to become, despite its brilliance, a mere beginning that progressed then stopped"*[415]

In their effort to indoctrinate young villagers to the party values and policies the ASU had sent more than 100,000 youth to intensive training courses by July 1966. During this 12 days long training course the youth were taught the achievements of the revolutionary reform programs since 1952, and the 'old ways' of the traditional villages were firmly ridiculed. After attending ASU sponsored lectures stimulating conformity to revolutionary theory for 12 days, as well as partaking in sports activities like football, basketball, volleyball and table tennis, many of the youngsters have been thoroughly convinced of the backwardness of their village, and stimulated to be a force of change within their home community. Mayfield does however question how the lessons taught to the youth in such a short intensive course, survives the youth arriving home to the strong influences of their families traditional ways. Yet according to Mayfield's observation in 1966 the ASU succeeded in creating many young

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[413] Mayfield (1971) p. 79
[414] The Arab Social Union was Nasser's final and most successful attempt at creating a party for mass mobilisation of support for the regime and its reform efforts. The ASU operated from 1962 to 1978.
[415] Mayfield (1971) p. 153 Nasser as quoted by Mayfield.

Nasserist idealists.[416] Some of these enthusiastic youth probably did stimulate change in their villages, still the hold on power by the wealthy families still the norm in rural Egypt in 1966, and the persistence of traditional values irreconcilable with the goals and aspirations of the ASU youth members, were still a major hindrance and led to great discouragement amongst many indoctrinated rural youth.[417]

Mayfield observes how the government builds its legitimacy through their teaching of the importance of modernisation. Through school propaganda and the ASU youth camps, children were taught how the government's efforts to change the village community was a necessary and important step towards achieving modernity, and this was perceived as a positive development by Mayfield. Further by indoctrinating the children into the importance and necessity of modernisation and reform, the legitimacy of their project, and by extension the government itself was secured.

Mayfield does not afford the education on offer in the CUs a lot of attention. One of the major findings of Mayfield is the use of primary education as a means for political socialisation and teaching regime and party propaganda. Primary schools visited by Mayfield in the 1960's were plastered with posters showing Nasser or ASU party slogans, children would shout "Nasser" or "freedom" when ordered to stand by their teacher. One teacher made their children memorise and recite parts of Nasser's speeches. Mayfield witnessed children playing in the schoolyard singing a song praising Nasser, ending with the shout "Nasser! Nasser! Nasser!". This shout was commonly heard across the Delta and Upper Egypt.[418]

Where Mayfield, in discussing the CU program, does to some degree delve into the educational services of the program, Baker on the other hand, when discussing the CUs, only focuses on the health services offered. Especially the failures of the rural health care program under the Nasser regime as a whole is discussed by Baker.[419] When educational reform is discussed most of the researchers measure progress in the increase of literacy. This is somewhat natural, as few other statistics on teaching other than literacy rates were available at the time. However, the increase in literacy does not tell us anything about the changing or

[416] Mayfield (1971) p. 154-158, 160
[417] Mayfield (1971) p. 162-163
[418] Mayfield (1971) p. 152-153
[419] Baker (1978) p. 221-225

'unchanging' views of the young rural villagers, as well as to what extent the education system serves to further development and change in any tangible way.

Conclusion

The RSC and CU comparison serves as an example that development is not a linear process going through steps A, B and C, but a process hinging on continued active focus on the issues at hand, and intelligently designed solutions for successful implementation of reform. Sometimes progress is made in earlier decades, and then these developments are to some degree reversed in the affected areas at a later date.[420] The modern day ideals of rural development have sometimes been naively focused on development measured in time passed and the quantity of individuals affected by progress on paper. However, modernity is not paved in straight progress, but through ups and downs. Many researchers, fooled by their own optimism as well as a Nasser government portraying themselves as the new infallible force of progress and modernity in comparison to the old regime, furthered a narrative of Egypt going through a process of modernisation fitting into the common narrative of a developmentalist understanding of the world starting in the 1950's, and remaining only to a small degree challenged until the 1990's.

The common notion of progress as an universal denominator, to be expected and found within the development processes taking place in 'underdeveloped' countries, were not truly questioned by Mayfield or Fakhouri, when discussing programs of rural education reform in Nasser era Egypt. Johnson (2004) and Johnson & Johnson (2006) highlights a change in perspective on education reform by developmentalist research into rural Egypt in the Nasser and prerevolutionary periods happening in the early 21st century.

[420] Some of the areas that had an active RSC in 1955 did not receive a CU and villagers interviewed in areas still covered by and RSC in the mid to late Nasser era expresses a sharp decline in quality and amount of services offered by the local RSC as the program was down prioritised and neglected, and finally discontinued by the Nasser government. See Johnson & Johnson (2006) p. 29-31

Thesis Conclusion

In this master thesis we have seen how the agricultural reform programs of the Nasser government were focused on by a majority of research on this era for rural Egypt. These reform programs were labelled as efforts to modernise Egypt. Progress and development were the major issues taken up by researchers looking into rural Egypt in the Nasser era. The agricultural reforms programs were scrutinised based on their ability to introduce progressive development and modernisation to rural Egypt, and their success or failure in this process. In essence the reform efforts are viewed by the researchers as lacking in many aspects, but essentially being an important step in the right direction. That 'right direction' being towards a modernity cast in the shadow of the Western world. English research material discussing the Nasser era agricultural reforms, representing most English research into Nasser era rural Egypt published between 1963-1982, seems to clearly have been influenced by the developmentalist dogma dominating social scientific research into the Middle East in the period. At least that is my conclusion based on the selected material presented in this thesis.

Whereas a vast amount of research has been done on the Nasser era agricultural reforms, there has been relatively little research done on the rural population's culture and tradition in the 1950's and 1960's and their personal meeting with progress and modernity. The topics of development, progress and modernisation is present within most of the qualitative research we have discussed, but the works do not emphasise development, progress and modernisation as much as the research into the agricultural reform programs does. Interestingly the field research done during the Nasser era by Ayrout, Mayfield and Fakhouri focus a lot more on modernisation and progress than Ammar's field research taking place right before the revolution in 1951. With such a small sample size, this is not provable as a systemic trait of field research done in rural Egypt during the Nasser era, but suggests modernisation was becoming a more attractive topic to field researchers in the 1960's compared to the 1950's.

Too common a trend in research looking into development, progress and modernity during the Nasser era has been to downplay or ignore developments happening before the revolution. This was an issue taken up by researchers in the early 21st century, such as Johnson & Johnson (2006). Their work shows how developmentalist research has changed with the

years, and that what were common research trends in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's would later be questioned, and a shift would take place within developmentalist research.

I think the power of scientific research is often overlooked. A common conception of power in modern societies, is that power executed by governmental bodies, as well as the power of interest organisations, media and corporate business. In defining development and modernisation based on an understanding of Western values as developmentalists usually did, and this taking place in an international economy dominated by the US and European blocks until the 21st century, modernisation and Western values have been intertwined. Developmentalists focused on human suffering and the pressing need for haste in change. The fact that technical and social change was intertwined with Western cultural values, was mostly overlooked or accepted as unproblematic. That the reform programs pressed through in rural communities by the Nasser government, was not planned and implemented in cooperation with the villagers were described as a necessary byproduct of the villagers' backwardsness, ignorance and clinging to traditional norms and values. With the example of the RSC program discussed in chapter 6, we see that such notions don't necessarily hold merit.

The period is not as well documented as some might suspect, from a qualitative perspective. It is surprising how little research into rural Egyptian life and culture during the Nasser period has truly taken place in Western research. This is partly a result of the restrictions on research put in place by the Nasser regime, but also a byproduct of what and which parts of the world field researchers chose to focus on at that time. It is my belief that much history can be discovered if today more efforts are made to interview and document the memories of old Egyptians who lived and grew up in rural Egypt during the Nasser era.

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