Women between economic liberalization and social deprivation: a case study in rural Egypt

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ABSTRACT

After a century of colonial domination, followed by a period of national liberation, Egypt in the late 1970s has undergone new basic changes in its economic system. While most of the recent research on Egypt is related to the analysis of mere economic changes occurring in the period of the "open door policy", little attention has been given to the tremendous problems caused by these changes to social relations and to rural social life.

This study, in analysing a specific case of a local setting in the eastern region of the Nile Delta, attempts to shed some light on the question of how changes in the 1970s and 1980s have reshaped gender relations in the Egyptian village.

The study develops its specific scope alongside its concern with five basic problems of change in rural social life:

The 'traditional feminism' of peasant women might decline (1) while nevertheless non-monetarized relations in agriculture might continue to exist (2) Male migration to oil countries promotes a new process of 'feminization of agriculture'. (3) Modern Islamist images of the 'moslem sister' might lead to a general devaluation of the new spheres of women's public activities (4). The persistance then of 'magic' and popular culture might be a tool for the mastery of life for peasant women in their new marginal social positions (5).

The study then draws evidence in three main domains: women's extended economic activities and labour relations - women's new extended spheres of social life, - peasant women's position towards popular culture practices.

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To Erica, and George in memory of a magical day at Seaham.

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WOMEN BETWEEN ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION: A Case Study in Rural Egypt

by

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INTRODUCTION

An interesting new literature has emerged in the social sciences during the last decades, characterized by an increased concern with global systems analysis. This arose as a reaction to the lopsided perspectives which modernizing theories have maintained for decades.

These modernizing theories attempted to explain the "backwardness" of the so-called traditional societies through the cultural dimension which has seemed to be rather related to personal behaviour, than to structure. Both Lerner (1958), McClelland (1961) and Rostow (1962) analyze the problems of underdevelopment as an isolated internal question of history and tradition, as a mere burden of the past.

As a critique of the unrelated dichotomies of the modernization theory (ascribed/achievement, traditional/modern, rational/habitual society), in the sixties appeared the dependency concept, which related the issue of underdevelopment to the wider frame of the rise of capitalism as a global system. Perhaps too, Rosa Luxemburg's "Accumulation of Capital" has to be considered as the pioneer work in consolidating the idea of core-periphery relation, the author arguing that Capitalism "needs non-Capitalist social strata as a market for its surplus value". (Luxemberg, 1963: 368). There, she ends up with the statement that Capitalism needs a non-Capitalist surrounding for its development and the empirical part of her work clearly demonstrates some basic traits of the reproduction of Capitalism within the colonies. (Luxemberg, 1963 see section three: the historical condition of accumulation, specifically chapters 24 to 32).

Underdevelopment for the dependency school was explained as a product of the relation between the peripheries and the centre, which structured the evolution of the Capitalist system on the world scale. (Amin, 1982) (Furtado, 1971) (Frank, 1970).

Amin for example, uses the term of unequal development for a phenomenon which he locates in the transition to capitalism between different regions in Europe. Unequal development takes a definitive form on the level of accumulation of capital in the nineteenth century, in dominant centre formations and colonial dominated peripheries. (Amin, 1982: 112).

Wallerstein on the other hand, defines Capitalism as a world system which is articulated through an international division of labour. Within this system of labour divisions 'natural' units are maintained insofar as there exists a power hierarchy between strong "core" states and weak "peripheral" states. There Capitalism is not only limited to the appropriation of surplus of the whole world economy by core states. Wage labour remains only dominant in relation to the core areas, while elsewhere various forms of unfree labour continue to be utilised, or merely imposed as in the plantation systems created by agricultural Capitalism all over the world. (Wallerstein, 1974: Vol. I, 86, 87).

From the macro level to the micro one, the relationship of centre-periphery was extended by Wallerstein to study the processes and relationships between the local institutions, households, or communities, and how they are reshaped and affected by the world Capitalist economy (Smith, Wallerstein, Evers 1984).

Although the household approach offers an important contribution to understand social changes on the micro level, the aim of this study is not to analyse changes of household structures in contemporary rural Egypt, but to show rather how "gender relations" among the Egyptian Peasantry are reshaped on grounds of basic economic and social changes in the wider frame of Egyptian society.

Egypt's increasing integration in the world Capitalist system by shifting from a state central planned economy with a dominant Public Sector in the sixties, into a free private enterprise economy in the seventies coincided with an increasing dependency towards the west. During the seventies Egypt witnessed the disintegration in the functions of the state which represented the key binding structure in the society. The sanctity of the state was dilapidated, leaving the citizens to seek for individual alternatives, such as migration, or refuge in religion.

This integration into the world Capitalist system has consequently led to the increasing capitalisation of agriculture launched by the Sadat regime. However, these new dynamics did not systematically lead to the marginalization and proletarianization of the small peasantry.(Taylor, 1984), On the contrary, recent studies concerning the changes in rural Egypt tend to reveal that there has been a relative improvement in the economic conditions of the small peasantry through migration, monetarization and small scale mechanization. Furthermore, agricultural wages have impressively increased during the last few years. (Richards, 1980: 11).

In recent years there has been a growing interest among western feminists concerning the domestic labour debate, as well as the non-remunerated work of the housewife in the capitalist system. (Gardinier, 1975), (Secombe, 1973).

These debates pointed to the process of devaluation of women's work which resulted from the fact that they mainly worked in private spheres versus the industrial world. On the other hand, it has been argued that Capitalism brought forth an increased stratification of access to the labour market, specifically related to gender. This stratification process obviously coincided with an ideology of equal rights for both sexes. (Wallerstein, 1984: 19).

Another perspective was raised through debates related to the "women's culture" issue. Rosaldo for example emphasized that women's reproductive functions led to a dichotomy between "public" and "domestic" roles which confine women's power to the latter spheres. Thus, the exercise of Public power by women is very often seen as illegitimate. (Rosaldo, 1974: 23, 24).

Ortner sees that the universal devaluation of women could be analysed in terms of women's associations with the domestic circles which are closer to nature and associated with 'lower' social and culture organisation (Ortner, 1974: 77). Males are rather seen to be related to culture as the 'natural' proprietors of the 'higher' aspects of cultural thought manifested in religion, law, politics etc. (Ibid, 1974: 78).

My argument starts from a different perspective. In the village I have studied, which I name El Warda, the overall socio-economic changes, led to a sexual redivision of labour, together with a new 'reshaping' of what is meant to be public

as well as private spheres. In recent times, the majority of peasant women have been increasingly contributing to production in public spheres, as well as dealing with state administration. However, they are still socially devalued by males. The reshaping of the private/public spheres is occurring on the level that the "local spheres" of the village are being socially devalued as the private spheres of the 'left behind women'. Whereas males' public spheres are changing to become the outside world through migration through non-agricultural spheres, reference to state and religion. i.e. the high culture referred to by Ortner.

Another important aspect of these dynamics of change is the fact that the social spheres became more and more divorced from the economic spheres.

Thus, social change caused by the open door policies of the seventies could not be merely analysed in terms of growing poverty. That consumerism among peasantry is 'negative' and dangerous, is an argument that entails biased and racist implications against one of the most productive classes in Egypt. There my thesis attempts to show that the rural society in Egypt today is not shattered by proletarianization and poverty, but that it is shattered by a destruction of "social order" and the rise of contradictions between sexes, and tensions that were unknown to the society in previous periods and specifically in the period of national development under Nasser.

It has been suggested by some Egyptian writers, in analyzing the changes imposed by migration, that women in

becoming heads of households would acquire new power of action and decision making in public spheres. (Hammam, 1981) (Khafagy, 1984). To try to understand, from this perspective, that women's social position as a whole, and specifically their stand towards their husband would have strengthened is misleading and untenable. These authors do not consider the 'traditional strength' of women and their rather autonomous stand in action and decision making. Furthermore, they do not take into account how the process of migration itself devalues the spheres now left over to women, namely agriculture and local dealings.

Further to Illich, this thesis attempts to reveal that today more than ever the "feminization of poverty" (1983: 69-66) - which in my study would include all the left-behinds, such as old males, children and women - is tending to take a socio-cultural shape. Migration leads to the divorce between the economic and social spheres and accordingly it creates a gap in gender relations. For instance, migrant peasants from the moment they start preparing their papers to travel, up to the humiliating conditions of living in the receiving countries, turn into a new type of unfree labour (passport taken away, contract tied labour), which is there maintained through the "new international division of labour". However, when they return they gain a new social status. Through bringing commodities and cash they appropriate a new position. In dressing up as state employees, or in *galabeyyas* (traditional peasant dress) similar to those of the traditional village leaders (*'umda*), they resemble in attitude "people of class". While they are treated as slaves in the outside world, they want to resemble "kings" in returning to their local villages.

Women on the other hand are "queens" and have all sovereignty in action as long as their husbands are away. However, they are turned into "slaves", the moment males return. They then tend to be subject to all types of coercion, while their cash money and the value of their labour is in continuous danger of being taken away from them.

This is one example of the cynicism which the dynamics of the global order impose on the local one. There, women serve as producers of the "necessary conditions of reproduction" (as Rosa Luxemberg once put it). However, they also maintain and recreate these local structures as a whole. That these local structures become so abominably devalued is out of their control.

This study attempts to investigate changing forms of social life among ordinary rural people, and specifically of rural women. One major field of my investigation is how changes in economic relations and specifically in work relations coincide with frictions and struggles alongside the line of separation between sexes. There, migration of males to the oil producing countries is only one, though the most decisive factor of change emerging in this period of Egypt's economic liberalization.

On a second level however, it has been convincingly argued that the strengthening of economic and social relations between town and countryside in 19th and early 20th century Egypt, has not automatically bridged the historically deep rooted cultural contradictions between the Egyptian Fellah and urban citizens. (Baer, 1982: 49-78).

In other words, Baer pointed to the interesting fact that modernization and westernization (i.e. "capitalization") of Egyptian agriculture did rather reinforce prevalent cultural gaps between peasants and townsmen in Egypt.

Migration of male peasants is a new decisive factor in the "modernization" of the Egyptian countryside. Does it lead to a sharpening or to a dissolution of cultural contradiction alongside the traditional urban rural fringe? To what extent do the prevalent disjunctions between typical rural and typical urban cultures in Egypt today determine the type of frictions and struggles occurring alongside the gaps between sexes? To what extent do the images of the "good housewife" or the "untouchable moslem sister" (El Guindi, 1983) emerging in rural everyday life today, contradict the image of the popular peasant woman, the Fellaha, which today might resemble also features of "Bint al balad" (El Messiri, 1978), the women of popular Cairo resisting male domination?

This study attempts to shed some light on these questions in analyzing material that has been collected in a small Egyptian "village", El Warda in the year 1983-1984. Chapter I will attempt to set a frame of analysis for my study. There, I stress the essential issues of debate to which this study refers to:

a) the role of traditional feminism in Egyptian peasantry;
b) the increasing role of women's participation in agricultural production;
c) women's contribution through non-monetarized relations;
d) the image of the "moslem sister", versus the popular Fellaha;
e) forms of women's cultural resistance through informal channels of religious and magical practice.

Chapter II will explore the effects of the open door policy in the wider frame of the Egyptian society and will also look at the basic changes occurring in agrarian relations. A specific account will be given to the evolution of the "Izba System" in order to understand the specific case of the "village" studied.

In Chapter III, I describe the local setting of the "village" in which the limitations and specificities of the case studied here will be made clear. Then, in Chapter IV, I will explore the major transformations that were enforced on women's labour in El Warda, thus describing the character of women's new economic activities. In Chapter V, I will then deal in detail with the effects of women's increasing social participation in public spheres. While describing some aspects of women's everyday culture in Chapter VI, I will attempt to show how women culturally respond to the threat of "urban" behaviour of returning males.

This study would be incomplete if it would have deleted an event that happened in 1975 at a time when expectations for change in El Warda might have been high and the burden of the past might have been present, and in a way unexpected to be dissolved: the killing of a "strong" woman, mother of four sons, and the subsequent task of revenge. With the description of this vendetta I conclude my study. However, I attempt to show that the event and its effects have to be understood as a key to the interpretations developed in this study.

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CHAPTER I: RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR POSITION IN WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE: APPROACH OF THE STUDY

A stimulating literature has emerged in recent years exploring the increasingly worsening position of both rural and urban women in third world countries. (Boserup, 1970) (Illich, 1983), (R.D.W.A-I.L.O. 6-11 April 1981) (Remy, 1975) (Rubbo, 1975).

Although these studies differ in scope and methods, they all seem to agree that social change brought forth by colonialism, modernization and the penetration of capitalism has more than ever led to the deterioration of the position of women. It has been argued that with the penetration of capitalism in certain regions in Asia there has been a strengthening of the patriarchal family. Modernization led to the polarization of class and sex. Women were in general devalued in terms of agricultural wages which were always lower than males'. Moreover, they always received smaller quantities of food within the family. With impoverishment, and male migration, there was a noticeable increase in divorce. At the same time, the increase of dowry contributed further to the lowering of the status of women. The green revolution on the other hand led to males appropriating the knowledge, and skills of the new agrarian technology, leaving women to do primitive, non-technological and non-wage subsistance tasks (see: R.D.W.A., 1981).

On the other hand, Maria Mies has argued that capitalism is solving its global crisis by creating types of individualized household industries, such as housewives making lace. Women as actual producers have become socially invisible. Their men on the other hand have acquired a new socio-economic status through trading their wives' products. However, despite women's integration

in the world capitalist market, they have not become free labourers, since they remain as housewives working in houses. (Mies, 1978).

The following study in attempting to avoid interpretation leading to the conclusion that there has been "worsening" or "improving" conditions in the life of the Egyptian Fellaha will focus on the following aspects:

1. The popular culture of the masses, as well as the relation between sexes, were always affected by the changes that took place on the level of the wider frame of the society. The state, the capitalist mode of production, the post colonial period of nationalism always reshaped and still affects social relations in immediate everyday material life.

The new forms of economic changes based upon the "green revolution" and migration, however lead to the undermining of what has been called "Traditional feminism" of the Egyptian fellaha and of gender (as an understanding of complementary relations).

There, with this destruction, the rise of new gaps between the sexes both in economic and social roles can be observed, which were non existent in previous periods.

2. If one looks closer at Egyptian history, one would realise that coercion of both female and male fellahin was an essential factor in labour organisation. The construction of the Suez Canal would not have been possible without the use of peasant labour which was achieved by the massive eviction of peasants from their villages. Through starvation and supra coercive mechanisms many paid with their lives. Tarahil migrant labourers are another example of peasants who underwent the most inhuman conditions. (see 'Atia El Sairafi 1975). Peasant women and children's forced

labour were an essential component for cotton production in big plantations. Since the creation of the Egyptian Modern state, under Mohammed Ali, up until the 1952 revolution, the history of the peasantry is depicted as the most miserable and wretched of all classes in Egypt.[1]

Compared to the old drudgeries of the colonial system, both males and females in the Egyptian village have seen an improvement in their material conditions. Nevertheless, the village remained a world of mud brick huts, of bad hygienic conditions, without running water or sewerage systems etc. Practical and material conditions of life differ by far from those of the urban world, and of course more specifically from the one of the urban middle classes. It is however exactly on the material level that we can observe new forms of women's commitments. Migration at large, but also men's stronger relations to state and towns, and thus new professions offered to them, had left the women behind as the peasant proper. This 'feminization of agriculture' does however not mechanically lead to what Illich called 'the feminization of poverty'. There however, it is not "economic discrimination against women (that) appears when development sets in" (Illich, 1983: 65) it is rather the socio cultural patterns of valorization of different spheres of economic activities. Originally operating against the village as a whole, today apparently against the women as the left behind.

3. If I speak here about the re-creation of non-monetarized relations, I mean a quite recent phenomena of cooperative use of female self-employed labour. Perhaps too, one could relate this phenomena to a process that Illich calls

the export of shadow work from rich to poor countries (Ibid: 64). However, here it takes the shape of cooperation of women on land.

4. Islamism arising as a new state ideology in Middle Eastern countries recreates and purifies the image of the muslim woman. This image is linked to "tradition" through its reference to the veil and a "female modesty code" (Antoun, 1968). It is linked to modernity in its reference to the middle class image of a housewife. It is this "muslim woman" with which the returning migrants attempt to socially seclude their women.

5. While El Messiri refers to the bint al balad as the urban folk women who wears the *"milaya laff"* (a black cover for hair and body, and as the one who still practices folk remedies, believes in Jinns and Saint's miracles, and who attends *"zars"* (a spiritual rite) (El Messiri, 1978: 522), Ayrout also links the fellaha to certain practices of popular rites. There a certain continuity of "traditional feminism" on a cultural level can be observed by women persisting on old rituals and magical practices in looking to their own way of what might be called cultural resistance against new forms of domination.

1. The Role of Traditional Feminism

Henry Habib Ayrout's "Fellah d'Egypte" is a master work in not only describing the material conditions of the Fellah in the thirties, but he was also among the few writers to emphasise the powerful position of the "Fellaha". For, she seemed at that period of time much more independent from her husband than he of her, through controlling the household budget and petty-trade as well as exercising authority through her personal belongings.

Ayrout writes the following:

> "Another thing that binds the husband to his wife is her wisdom and authority, often greater than his wisdom. A fellah says: man is a river and woman is a dike. But unlike the "Alawite" peasant woman, for example she does not do heavy labour. Moreover she is busy at home ..." (Ayrout, 1963: 121).

In another passage, Ayrout mentions a very important observation concerning peasant women, which is the very potent traditional feminism of the Egyptian peasant woman, and here I quote:

> The women are more keen witted than the men. Sir William Wilcocks, whose great achievements in irrigation by no means prevented him from studying the fellaheen, explained the difference thus: "A bad government, when passively accepted by men, who are naturally active, will sooner or later demoralise them. The same government, passively submitted to by women who are naturally passive, will tend to develop their intelligence. That is why the fellah women are not only more intelligent but more trustworthy than the men." This reasoning is open to discussion. That it is trying to explain a fact - (the traditional feminism of Egypt) is quite clear. The fellaha is also more cunning than her husband, which is saying a good deal. (Ibid: 139).

The phenomenon of "Egyptian traditional feminism" can be identified within the debates developed by some western feminists concerning the power of peasant women in European peasant societies. (Harding, 1975: 284).

Susan Harding for example, in her study of the conditions of peasant women in a village in north eastern Spain, has pointed out the male/female differences in language, where a clear sexual division of labour is manifested. (Harding, 1975: 284). Furthermore, the author demonstrates the informal mechanism of women's powers that are developed through language, as well as decision making through women's networks for distribution of information (Ibid: 306). Thus, if in appearance it is males who would seem to dominate, in reality it is women who have more power.

> In this context, the ideology of male dominance becomes a myth which appeases men and obscures the real power situation. (Ibid: 306)

Following a similar logic, Ivan Illich provides us with a stimulating study concerning gender relations that were influenced with the rise of capitalism. He argues that economic growth led to the destruction of vernacular gender and the exploitation of economic sex (1982: 5). In no industrial society are women the economic equals of men, moreover "of everthing that economics measures, women get less". (Ibid: 4).

By redefining pre-conceived sociological concepts, Illich argues that in pre-capitalist societies, gender relations seemed to be more humane, whereas sexism and the increasing degradation of women has occurred in genderless society.

The gender divide created a function of putting order in non-urban society. While gender coincides with subsistence economy it was however lost with the rise of commodity intensive society. (Ibid: 94) Gender implied different usages of language, tools and functions in specific time and space.

> Gender not only tells who is who, but it also defines who is when, where, and with which tools and words it divides space, time and techniques. (Ibid: 99)

Clear cut male/female functions and roles in rural societies very often implied an interdependent and complementary relationship between sexes (Ibid: 108-109). If women might still be subordinate under vernacular gender relations yet under any economic regime, and specifically under capitalism they are only the second sex. (Ibid: 148).

To illustrate his argument, Illich offers an example of a study of a Lutheran village in Württemberg between 1800 and 1850 by David Sabean. This village underwent various economic transformations with the construction of a railroad, the alteration of tenancy and the production of cash crops. These changes affected women in that they were required to work more and faster in the kitchen as well as having to join their men in their work. Ultimately these changes led to an increase in divorce rates.

> Women complained that men suddenly ordered them around at work, a totally new experience for them. No matter how much the gender defined work of women might seem subordinated to that of men, the notion that men could direct women in the work itself had so far been unimaginable. (Ibid: 174)

Borrowing from Illich's conceptualisation of gender relations to draw a similarity with the village studied in Egypt, my argument is as follows: The "Modernization" that resulted from the Macro-change in Egypt is tending today to undermine the image and reality of the popular and peasant woman i.e. the 'traditional

feminism', which is nothing else but the destruction of the gender relations among peasantry in the Illichian sense. A destruction that certainly affects females to a deeper extent since they are loosing a position of power they used to have in old times without being given other alternatives.

2. The Feminization of Agriculture

Another factor which has affected the powerful position of women in the village has been the process of "feminization of agriculture". One can trace the causes of this phenomenon to the increasingly omnipotent role of the state policies of Nasser, which created a compulsory education system, and recruited a huge male population in the army and state jobs. For instance government expenditure in education increased from 23 million in 1952-1953 to 280.3 million in 1976 (Ikram, 1980: 125) Nevertheless the other side of the picture reveals that despite the fact that the number of females attending primary and secondary school has more than tripled during the last 15 years, illiteracy among females as compared to males is still very high (71.1 females to 43.1 males) (Ibid: 130).

On the other hand, empirical evidence concerning El Warda provides us with the fact that there is a pronounced discrimination in education against females, for small peasants cannot afford to educate all the young children.

Migration to Iraq, Jordan and the Gulf countries was one of the most salient features of Sadat's liberalizing policies. The impact of such migration has been particularly profound in the last 7 or 8 years. (See Chapter II p.58,59,see also Appendix II).

Thus, all of these reasons, together with the proliferation of the informal sector (construction, carpentry, motor vehicle driving, "Hashish" smuggling, keeping small shops, black market in foreign currency etc...) are not only economic but social reasons that have contributed to the fact that males are offered better chances in different non-agricultural sectors. They can afford to refuse toiling the soil while their wives remain as the left behind, with a very limited or no chance at all to leave village life. If despising agricultural work can be afforded by males, in my case, the consequences could only be paid by females. Whether they are given the full responsibility of toiling the land while males are away, or whether they remain in toiling the land while their husbands shift to non-agricultural activities, this does not alter the fact that their labour is devalued. Women's increasing participation in the public spheres through production, in this context is devalued on the level that toiling the soil remains the work of the "ignorant" and undignified. Thus, more than ever it is women (with the remaining old men and children) who are then socially stigmatized as the "fellah".

3. Women's Work and Non-Monetarized Economic Relations

For Illich a rather balanced relation of power, and complementarity between the sexes is related to symbolic exchange, and subsistence. In the following case, however, we find a rise of sexism, while various forms of subsistence production and symbolic exchange continue. Here sexism arises through the fact that subsistence and relations of symbolic exchange become exclusively related to women while males execute their economic functions entirely within the field of capitalist relations.

An explanation of this phenomenon lies in the nature of peripheral capitalist development which is a characteristic of many third world countries, among which Egypt is a case to be studied on its own. Debates on the persistence of non-capitalist relations, subsistence production, or the household as a unit of analysis view capitalism as a mode of production in which forms of production and exploitation prior to capitalism remain an essential pattern in shaping social relations as a whole. Wallerstein argues that once a relation is capitalist, forms of non wage relations such as coerced cash crops labour or slavery (which are exclusive to peripheral areas, while not in the core), should not be viewed as remnants of a feudal economy. They are rather a new form of social organisation, which are redefined in terms of the governing principle of a capitalist system. (Wallerstein, 1974: 92).

On the other hand, Evers, Clauss and Wong argue that there is practically no "subsistence economy", since the "natural economy" was destroyed by the expansion of capitalism on a world wide scale, but rather a "subsistence production" which is clearly interrelated and mutually determined with market production. (Evers, Clauss, Wong, 1984: 29).

Similarly, but in a different direction, Claudia von Werlhof argues that the household and kinship structure is the means by which the control of women is reproduced. In the capitalist mode of production the institution of the family becomes vital for furnishing labour power. The domination of women by men in the capitalist mode of production, in addition to the use of non wage female labour to reproduce men, and cheap male labour are essential for the re-production of the capitalist society. (von Werlhof, 1979).

P & K Glavanis on the other hand, pointed to the persistance of small family farm enterprises and peasants' forms of production, despite the fact that Egypt has been integrated into the world capitalist system since the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. To consolidate their argument, they emphasised two important empirical details. First, non commodity relations are still crucial to understand peasant reproduction and more specifically the various forms of access to land in rural Egypt, despite the fact that there has been an intensification of commodity relations in the last 25 years (Glavanis, 1983: 63)
The second important point stated, in favour of the continuation of non-capitalist relations under capitalist domination refers to the important continuing role of co-operative forms of production.

> Similarly several general but indicative references and results of field work suggest that informal co-operation between households and within the village has been and still is a significant facet of peasant reality. This is an aspect of non-capitalist agrarian socio-economic relations which have held the Egyptian small peasant household to withstand and survive to a certain extent the exploitation of landlords, village notables, the central government, vagaries of the market and personal disasters, both before and after the revolution. (Glavanis, 1983: 65)

However, due to the changes mentioned in the process of feminization of agriculture one is tempted to tackle the following problematic: that the economic form of peasant family work mentioned in Ayrout's book and Glavanis has been gradually substituted by women's work. This peasant "family work", that Chayanov on the other hand has theorized about, relies basically on the peasant family as a self-exploitative unit.

> The peasant by providing simultaneously land and labour, does not differentiate the value created in the process of production between costs and production and surplus value. All the value thus created returns to him to be used as a whole and is the equivalent of wages and the capitalist surplus value. This is why the idea of surplus value and interest on capital is foreign to him. He considers his net income as a product of his own labour. (Kerblay, 1971: 150).

Migration and the general decrease in the number of males from agricultural labour and village life are all factors that are leading to the weakening of the family enterprise as a unit of production. (What is in fact meant here is that the male presence is increasingly disappearing from family work on the land, this however, does not mean that the family as an institution is disappearing).

It must therefore be stressed that males generate income from non-agricultural activities (state jobs - informal sector) and migration while kind relations are basically maintained through women. In our case here cooperation in land which is a non-monetarized form, turns out to be basically maintained by women's networks in the village, It should be taken into account that cooperation under these changing social conditions becomes purely a matter of the ability and capacity of peasant households to exchange sufficient women for labour. Family ties and fights between neighbours about space in housing and land, therefore become decisive factors in terms of labour organisation. Furthermore, agreeing with Wallerstein (1974), one should see cooperation here as a newly recreated non-wage relation. It was non-existent in former times for these women were working as permanent wage labourers in a big estate.

Family farm enterprise in our context here and in the surrounding villages of El Warda, was created and enforced when the Nasser regime guaranteed small plots of land to landless peasants in the late sixties (private ownership, and tenancy), as a means of dismantling the power of the former large capitalist farm enterprises. (This point will be discussed in Chapter II).

Another important factor is that peasant households are pooling various resources of income from socially rather separated spheres of activity:

a) male wage incomes deriving from migration and non-agricultural jobs - these incomes are related to capitalist relations;

b) income related to the sale of produce - this cash income is in great part a result of self-exploitation on small plots of land and based upon women's work;

c) income in kind generated through individual womens' work, or through cooperation, and consumed by household members.

These different sources of income are related to activities in separate spheres in which also the sexes appear to be separated. Thus, males become increasingly affiliated to cash, to "outside", non-agricultural incomes, whereas women are more and more bound to "kind activities" which only find their cash value in an "outside" market place. The structural dichotomy here stems thus from the fact that males are increasingly appropriating cash incomes for their own expenditure, while at the same time maintaining their land through the non remunerated work of their wives and children. Furthermore, they interfere in the "outside" dealing of their women in the market place.

4. Islamism; The Image of the Moslem Sister

The history of the Egyptian feminist movement is interlinked at large with the history of the formation of the nation-state. This history of course has nothing to do with the "traditional feminism" as it occurred within the popular strata and as previously illustrated. The modern state and the modern feminism are interlinked to the extent that social life in the lower strata today is being confronted with and ideologically attacked by a new form of state ideology. Thus the new Islamic feminism, as part of the Islamist discourse arising in the dominant state ideology today, also plays a role in the social life of the village. In fact, it affects the balance between the sexes on a new level; that is on the level that males use the dominant ideology as a tool to exercise power over females.

(i) Origins of the Early Feminists

To trace the history of the creation of the Egyptian feminist movement, it is important to focus upon the policies of the founder of the Egyptian modern state - Mohammed Ali Pasha. The modernization of the state at that time required the involvement of Egyptian professional women and he encouraged upper and middle class women to participate in public life. (Mikhail, 1979: 49). Clot bey, who was a French administrator under the reign of Mohammed Ali, attempted to integrate the urban woman, through education, by creating the first formal school for midwives. El Tahtawi, an intellectual and reformer among the first generation of Egyptians to be sent by the state to study in France, also campaigned for women's education:

> Not so much because it was their (women in general) inalienable right, but because it was for the good of the Egyptian society as a whole (Mikhail, 1979: 48).

Thus, the logic of modernization and the creation of civil servants under Mohammen Ali also required that their wives received a certain degree of education.

Later on, the school of midwives would graduate women who would play an important role in the early feminist movement organised by Huda Shaarawi at the beginning of the century. The movement played an increasingly important part when "women of class", during the time of 1919 anti-colonialist revolution led by Saad Zagloul demonstrated in the streets of Cairo. Huda Shaarawi's contribution to the upper class Egyptian women was that she was to be among the first Arab women to remove the veil in public. However, the concept of emancipation for these "women of class" was restricted to the training of women to become "modern" and successful wives, as well as good mothers in raising children and specifically males. (Gran, 1977: 4).

If one carefully reads the biography of Huda Shaarawi, one of the most striking features is that these early feminists were also wives of important figures, who were members of the Egyptian parliament and also big landowners. For example, it is interesting to note that the first Egyptian feminist committee created on 8 January 1920, was called the "wafd" committee of women, as a solidarity act with the Wafd party of Saad Zagloul, which was mainly concerned with expressing the rising nationalist feeling. (Sha'arawi, 1981: 203)

More important though, were the multiple cultural influences of which Huda Shaarawi was a product - influences which represented a general trait of the westernized upper classes in Egypt. For example, half of the family of Huda Shaarawi lived in Istanbul where the mother tongue in the house was the Turkish language, as a means of distinction from Arabic. Later on as a feminist leader, she was influenced by

some French feminist women, who lived in Egypt because they were married to Egyptian Pashas. (Shaarawi, 1981: 98, 115).

The expression of feminism and anti-colonial feeling by the bourgeoisie at the beginning of the century was ambivalent. On the one hand this class embraced the values of the West incorporated in political liberalism and universality of morals, which required knowledge of the language and symbols of the colonial rulers. In other words as Albert Memmi puts it :

> Just as the bourgeoisie proposes an image of the proletariat, the existence of the colonizer requires that an image of the colonized be suggested. (Memmi, 1965: 79).

On the other hand, this encounter led this class (and specifically in the case of women) to discover the necessity of their own emancipation, both from colonial domination as well as from traditional patriarchy.

(ii) The 1952 Revolution

The logic of Nasser's development policies entailed nationalization, industrialization and the expansion of the public sector, within the frame of the 'socialist path'. This required an increasing demand for personnel recruitment. The regime thus provided free education for both sexes and equal rights and salaries were guaranteed for women. "In 1956 the constitution provided voting rights to hold elective offices to women, and women were elected to the peoples' assembly for the first time". (Mikhail, 1979: 52).

The regime found its biggest support among the petty bourgeoisie who benefitted greatly from free education and guaranteed employment for all graduates.

Nasser's regime thus created opportunities for the lower and middle classes. This 'professional liberation', among the lower middle classes did not however lead to "social and sexual liberation as defined in the west"[2] (Ibid: 6).

> In the scientific and technical faculties, which are the most prestigious and require the highest score, the proportion of women is impressive by western standards. In 1970-71, the percentage of women students in the faculties of medicine and pharmacology (the two with the highest entrance requirements) was 23.6%, which is close to the overall proportion of women students in all university faculties in that year (26.1%). (In comparison, the percentage of women students in US medical schools in 1970 was about 11%. (Gran, 1977: 5).

Nevertheless, in neither phases the early bourgeois feminists or under Nasserite policies, altered the social status of the urban popular, or peasant woman. It is important to note that both these manifestations of women's emancipation, through the state or the rising bourgeoisie, did not reach the lower classes of women. Not only because they lacked any type of mass mobilisation movement, but also because the sphere of 'traditional feminism' which is strongly embedded in the peasant, as well as popular culture does not require in its own rationality, the formal[3] or the state discourse of which feminists are a derivation. In other words, why should popular and peasant women "bother" about middle class emancipation?

(iii) The Phase of 'Infitah'

Ironically enough the phase of economic liberalisation coincided with a regression in women's position in terms of state policies.

On the official level, it is interesting to note that although women had won many advantages under the Nasser regime, when the constitution was ratified by Sadat in 1971, emphasis was given to women's duties towards their families without altering the laws of Islamic Sharia. (Gran, 1977: 6).

With the strengthening of the Islamic Movement, the issue of women acquiring state functions and going into Public life was requestioned, on the basis that women face great humiliation in public spheres, and that their main role is to safeguard the Moslem family. (El Ghazali, 1983).

On another level, the phenomenon of modern veiling seems to have given rise to different interpretations, such as being a reaction to the whole process of westernization, or being the safest means to avoid harrasment in public spheres. Since economic conditions have become very severe, particularly for the middle and lower middle classes, veiling became one solution to the dilemma of the "realm of necessity" enabling women to continue to frequent the public space.

> Removing the veil in the first case (meaning the early feminists) is humanizing in that each woman's individuality will be expressed and women's participation in public affairs will be realised; adopting the veil in the present case is humanizing in that it elevates women from sex objects to dignified women who fully participate in public life. (El Guindi, 1983: 83).

Thus, the image of the "untouchable sister" (Ibid: 84) that is transferring segregation into the public spheres, can be seen as the possible moral solution to cope with economic necessity.

However, two questions come to mind. First, if modern segregation constitutes a "progressive" solution as El Guindi has argued in her article, what would occur to the non-veiled women when they are present in public spheres? Second, what happens if the prevalent public and official image becomes one of the "moselm untouchable sister"? It is suggested that the resultant image would be of "the unveiled woman, whore, who should be raped".

One point that the author has probably missed in her analysis is that modern veiling is the typical integration within the actual state ideology. For example, the state has lately been enforcing covering hair in public schools. There is such a social tension at public functions that covering women's hair becomes a "must" for women to look respectable. Since the assassination of Sadat, it is noticeable how the mass media has increased its "doses" of religious programmes. This can be seen for example in television debates organised between opposition religious groups (who were linked to Sadat's killers) and the official religious institution of "el Azhar". According to a journalist, these programmes resulted in giving a better picture of the religious opposition. (Rouleau: 23 August, 1984).

Therefore, it is possible to suggest that in order for the state to escape the crisis it is facing, it is attempting to appear as "more movement, and religious" than the Islamic groups which oppose it.

Is this not the best tactic - to calm down wrath and general frustration by integrating opposition within functions of the state? This also helps to explain why such an issue as applying the Islamic Sharia law has been discussed lately (August, 1984) in the Parliament. It also helps to explain why all parties (Nasserites and liberals - the new wafd, and leftists - the progressive assembly party) flirted

with the Islamic movement and have not manifested any type of opposition to such an idea. (Only the underground Communist party opposed it). (Ibid).

Let us now return to the initial question, why refer to the Islamist discourse in this context, that is a study concerning a little "village" where women do not seem to know a great deal about veiling or formal religion?

The answer lies in the fact that, religious discourse, which is already a major tool of legitimation of state power (while it is still a manifestation of a political opposition against the regime), becomes today a tool used by males to distinguish themselves as urban educated. The males' appropriation of the state discourse, forms the background of their cultural distinction against women who remain the real producers, and who are 'forced' to deal in public spheres. In this way women are alienated merely through the fact that they do not dispose of formal mechanisms of defense (language - religion).

5. Women's Counter Culture: Women and Magic

If one follows the argument of Ortner (1974), that women are seen to be related to 'nature' as a consequence of their reproductive functions, and males to 'culture', then we may gain some insight into why women's specific psychology and emotions are associated with the lower orders of socio-cultural organisations (Ibid, 1974: 79). Witchcraft, traditional forms of healing may in many ways represent these lower cultural orders.

While Ortner's explanation of the universality of women's sub-ordination is very appealing there are significant difficulties with it.

First because:

> It is difficult to believe that societies have timelessly and universally interpreted women in the same nature/culture dichotomy (Turner, 1984: 117).

More importantly, though, is that if women do tend to relate to emotional or 'irrational' spheres, it should be rather analysed as a social problem due to women's oppression by both males and society. In other words, it is rather because they can only express their culture, through informal or as socially deviant channels.

Thus, it is possible to explain the witch hunts against women during the puritan period in England as a social problem. Turner suggests that widows were considered as dangerous, in that they had to rely on neighbours, instead of relatives, since they were detached from the framework of the household. (Turner, 1984: 132-133)

Similarly, it becomes possible to explain contemporary women's complaints such as hysteria, melancholy, menopausal depression etc., although entailing biological symptoms, as rather ideological constructions revealing social problems of women (Ibid: 201).

To make the point clearer, Dwyer for instance explains the relation that Moroccan women have towards sufism and devotion to particular saints, as providing communal and informal channels of religious expression, since formal channels are restricted to males. Thus, through sufism women can play an important role in decision making, in influencing their children, as well as being "the transmitters of a resilient and distinctive religious system that is largely their own making". (Dwyer, 1978: 598). Thus women's relation to nature as Ortner puts it, is rather a result of a re-integration of women's world.

To return to our case, under the condition of social deprivation, and as a consequence of their marginal social position, women do create marginal strategies of survival, or - if one may call it so - a counter culture. If on the material, everyday level of life this is manifested in co-operation among women, on the cultural level women are left to reproduce, and stick to certain peasant traditions[5] such as celebrating the anniversaries of Saints, maintaining links with magic and perpetuating informal and medical practices. Here again, it is noticed that women more than males are the ones who end up insisting upon such practices as being the "belief of the ignorant". While women are confined within the rural setting, remain less educated, bear the burden of reproduction and the blame for it - sterility and infant mortality - they must join together to create their own associations and cultural identities

'Iwais, in his analysis of the contemporary social position of Egyptian women, has pointed to the fact that women more than males perpetuate old pharonic traditions in relation to death, to ceremonies related to the visiting of tombs and sacred places, or writing letters to saints as intermediaries to solve their problems. This very specific relation to sorrow and complaint, this physical behaviour in mourning and the act of weeping excitedly to the extent of fainting is rather more specific to popular and peasant women than to middle class urban women.

In his study of El Imam El Shaffei, 'Iwais has noticed that this Imam who has been dead 1158 years is still receiving letters of complaint and conditional wish "Nadhr" from all over Egypt. What is interesting is that letters which entailed complaints were much higher among females (48.1%) than males (46.3%).

Complaints against males who beat women, or took their belongings by force totalled 144, whereas complaints against women numbered 67 (I'Iwais, 1977: 109). The same applies concerning the phenomenon of *Nadhr*, which refers to promising a saint to perform an act such as fasting or distributing money, when the wish is realised. The ratio was six women to three males to one unidentified letter. (Ibid: 154). 'Iwais argument regarding this phenomenon is that it is the consequence of the humiliating social conditions that the lower class women suffer in everyday life. (Ibid: 157).

On a second level of analysis, if Egypt's economic liberalization brought a shadow of "Modernization", popular and peasant traditions seem to have been reinforced in general.

For example, by advertising the anniversary of Saint *Mawaled*, in official newspapers, the State reinforces such religious traditions. Al-Khuli argues that the press has contributed enormously in the last 15 years to dispensing a "distorted" and "filtered" representation of popular culture. This apparently intentional state policy is carried out to legitimise magical rituals, false conceptions of popular medicine and the prevalence of metaphysical thought. (Al-Khuli, 1982: 207, 208). This argument reinforces the notion that the state is attempting to enforce religious ideology on a wider level and is thus encouraging institutional Islam as well as sufi orders. For example, from time to time, the official press publishes biographies of famous *"Sheikhas"* (women who are magicians) who live in remote villages and have "found all solutions for all illnesses" (Ibid: 294, 392). Sufi orders seem to have proliferated in recent times. In 1910, there were 19 sufi orders

in Egypt; by 1976 they numbered 76. (Al-Khuli, 1982: 364). All these phenomena illustrate how the spheres in which peasants, but more specifically women, circulate and are identified with. These spheres are even maintained by the state to justify the failure of modernization in a poor country such as Egypt.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Concerning the deplorable conditions of the fellahin at the beginning of the 19th century see (Lane 1944)- As for the corvee labour and the introduction of long staple cotton in Egypt see (Owen 1969). For an interesting description of the effects of British colonialism and mechanization upon peasantry at the end of the 19th century see (Luxemberg 1963: 435). Moreover, Judith Tucker in "Egyptian Women in the Workforce" provides interesting material, arguing that female labour and specifically fellaha was of a great importance in various productive sectors all through the history of contemporary Egypt. Fellaheen women seem to have always worked in the fields alongside their husbands. They worked as merchants and traders when males were drained to the army under Mohammed Ali. They also constituted a great part of the workforce in spinning and weaving and in textile industries in general. (Tucker, 1976: 7-8).

2. Deniz Kandyoti in her analysis of the condition of the Turkish woman argues for a similar idea. According to the author, the Turkish woman has been emancipated but not liberated. This is due to the fact that their emancipation was linked with the Kemalist state formation. For upper class women, education for instance did not lead to social mobility, but rather class consolidation since they were much less radical than males coming from lower classes. (Kandyoti, 1982: 3-6).

3. Even a figure like Nawal El Saadawi (who is an eminent contemporary Egyptian feminist), when referring in her writings about contemporary conditions of the peasant fellaha, the issue would be raised on the level of non-remunerared work (El Saadawi, 1979: 125). However, the author has never referred to any type of empirical research, or how and what are the changing gender

relations among popular and peasant classes in Egypt. [see also An Interview with Nawal Saadawi, by Graham Brown (1981: 24-27)].

4. Judith Gran argues that the petite bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia in Egypt adopts the most misogynist attitudes and gives very little importance to women's issues. (Gran, 1977:6). Veiling in the popular context could be viewed as a sign of social mobility, urbanity, and adoption of middle class behaviour. However, if one follows Gran's argument, it certainly means a loss of liberties for many women.

5. In this context it is interesting to mention that the religion of the fellah was since long ago perceived by townsmen as heretical. In analysing the historical difference between town and village in Egypt, through the book of Yusuf al- shirbini's Hazz al quhuf fi sharh qasid Abi- Shaduf, (Published in A.H 1274/1857 - 8 C.E), Baer points to the fact that the fellah was protrayed as ignorant in religious matters. He ignored all formal prescriptions of Islam, did not practice ritual ablutions, did not dress properly during prayer etc. (Baer, 1982:10).

> "...Fellahs, says Shirbini, are known of 'paucity of religion' (*qillat al-din*) and for ignorance. Nobody instructs them in prayer and worship, and therefore they don't care for prayer or religion (5:16, 10: 24-25). None of them genuflects or prostrates himself in prayer and they do not know the difference between the customary and obligatory prayer (*la ya 'rifuna al-sunna min al-fard*) (6:17, 5:26). In Shirbini's stories one fellah while praying complained in a loud voice of a headache; another asked god in his prayer to preserve his animals; dogs, cats, donkeys and his son, and when a knowledgeable Muslim rebuked him he replied that this was the custom of his father and grandfather..." (Ibid).

Fellahs were related to sufi sheikhs, to dervishes, fuqara' rather than formal 'ulama who were accused by Shirbini (who himself was an 'alim living in town, but coming from a rural background) of heresy, and heterodoxy (Ibid: 18).

Such distinctions, which are prevalent in Egyptian society, reshape the patterns of cultural discourse within the frame

of migration and the feminization of agriculture. This difference is turning to become a pattern of women's culture, which remains stigmatized as heretic, vulgar impure and basically rural as versus the urban, educated following formal prescriptions of Islam.

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CHAPTER II: EGYPT AND ITS AGRICULTURE FROM NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION

1. Egypt in the Seventies and Eighties, Economic Opening and Structural Changes

During the last 15 years Egypt has witnessed a growing dependency on foreign capital. The 1973 war led to a relative strengthening of the Arab political position. However this new situation can not be understood without taking into account the restructuring of the world economy and the rise of a new international division of labour. (Frobel, Heinrich, Kreye, 1980). In terms of internal politics the new international situation and economic order brought an end to the period of anti-colonial liberation and national state economy which was once encouraged by the Bandung Conference. (see Bennabi : 1956).

There Egypt tried to develop a new independent economy in reaction to the long history of colonialism. However, the rise of a 'new state class' which generated consumption interests, made the new regime vulnerable and dependent, in attempting to operate with autocentric models of economic development. (See Amin, 1976 Chapters 2 and 4; for a summary on models of autocentric and dependent reproduction, See also Amin, 1972).

The ideals of the nationalist and socialist regime of the fifties and sixties, gave way in the seventies to an increasing dependency vis-a-vis the world economy. Sadat replaced the old regime in his 15 May 1971 coup d'Etat and then followed new paths of development oriented to a stronger association with the international markets and financial systems. Sadat's visit to Israel, and the signing of the Peace treaty could only be understood

as a consequence of such a dependency towards the west and specifically the U.S.A.

To a casual observer it would have seemed that the turnover witnessed in the seventies meant a shift between two extremes based upon apparent irrationalities in decision making as a follow up of colonialism and responding to foreign capital pressures. However, a closer look at the internal structures of Nasser's regime makes clear that this shift had deep based grounds in the type of economic relations by which the 'autocentric' economy of this regime remained embedded within the international economy. Egypt already revealed a structure of dependent reproduction as Samir Amin has described it.

Measures of economic change have been taken only after the 1973 October war. Laws concerning the open-door policy 'infitah' were officially issued in 1974 Law No. 43 and were reformed in 1977 Law No. 22. These laws basically aimed at encouraging western and arab capital investment in Egypt and at the creation of free trade zones. The implementation of these laws could be summarized as follows:

- they gave tremendous opportunities to private, arab and western capital to invest without any limits or restraints, while the state gave direct support to private capital to invest in the economy.
- they eliminated the control over currency flows and abolished all restrictions on money transactions.
- they limited the activities of the Public Sector and furthermore, encouraged the sale of the Public Sector firms (since they were considered as a burden and were unable to generate profit). Thus private capital was welcomed to buy Public Sector companies with the advantage of tax exemptions.

- they altered laws concerning work organisation. Increasing rights were given to entrepreneurs to evict workers who were estimated to be in surplus or non-productive. (Shuhaib, 1978: 26-28).

Almost ten years have elapsed since the issuing of these laws. Apparently, they failed to achieve the purpose of raising productivity. Sadat's policies were seen to lead to the strengthening of a 'parasitic Compradore Bourgeoisie' which mainly benefitted through the expansion of the import-export sector, illegal transaction and growth of the private sector which expanded in tourism and construction (Tucker, 1978: 4) (concerning the private sector see also Shuhaib 1978: 49). The word 'infitah' for many Egyptians, and specifically for those who rioted in the streets in 1977, symbolised unrealised dreams. (For a full account of what occurred in the January riots see 'Abd al-Raziq, 1979). It also meant overflowing markets with Pepsi-Cola, 7-up and mineral water while a huge sector of the population had to struggle for its own survival. The seventies witnessed an increasing disintegration of state power in the Public sector, and more importantly was the decline of the state legacy.

The main sources of income in Egypt shifted from the state controlled spheres to sectors that were considered by many economists critical of the 'infitah' policies to be very vulnerable vis-a-vis western influence. For example, oil revenues, i.e. industries controlled by multinationals, tourism, remittances of migrants, the Suez Canal and foreign aid. (See 'Adel Hussain, 1982, on what he calls the leading sectors in the contemporary Egyptian economy and how the policy priorities of these sectors could only lead to direct dependency on the west).

The disintegration of the state was to be observed on many levels. The collapse of the economy seemed to be evident when the Egyptian pound was devalued to 60% in 1977 under the policies imposed by the I.M.F. This was seen to be one factor in creating the popular riots of 1977. (Aulas, 1978a: 3). The Time Magazine stated in the same year that inflation reached 25% while subsidies on essential goods such as bread, tea, sugar etc. had decreased from 642 million pounds in 1975 to 465 million pounds in 1978. (Shuhaib, 1978: 141).

Furthermore, Sadat's policies were seen to impose a strong burden on the country. According to the World Bank report, the global debts of Egypt, excluding the military debts to the west, reached, in 30 June 1982, the sum of 30.8 billion U.S. dollars (Sid Ahmed, 1984: 3).

It was also observed that the Public Sector, which represented the predominant share in national industry, and specifically the steel factories at Helwan, suffered greatly from the fact that the basic infrastructure was not maintained. Some factories for example, relied on machinery installed before the 1952 revolution. (Mursi, 1976: 60).

Due to the fact that the Public Sector remained tied to the old laws and the lack of investment, some factories such as the Kima fertilizers functioned at 25% of their capacity. (Aulas, 1978a: 4).

State policies implemented very little regulations to control the "laissez-faire" economy it created. The boom in the private enterprise brought the economy out of the hands of an over-

bureaucratized and corrupt state administration. This contributed further to the traditional ambiguities between formal and informal, legal and illegal, public and private activities and entrepreneurship; for instance the programme of U.S. aid entailed an official share to be allocated in form of commissions for Egyptians. (Hussain, 1982: 132). In other words, there was an official regulation for the distribution of tips. These tips would take a legalised form and were distributed through the U.S. agency itself. Corruption became an issue of foreign policy and of western strategies towards Egypt. It was made public with the support of U.S. administration in foreign newspapers. Thus, for example, the bribery of an Egyptian minister by the "Westinghouse" Company. In fact, the American government was not so much concerned about the bribery itself, as by the fact that the Minister contacted the company mentioned, without getting the consent of the U.S. agency aid (Hussain, 1982: 133, 134).

The extent to which the state had lost control over economy became most obvious in matters of customs and taxes. Imported commodities in 1976, 1977 from Port Said (which is a free zone city) reached 106 million pounds while taxes were levied upon only 6 million pounds. It was estimated that in 1977-78, 90% of the overall imports were smuggled (Hussain, 1982: 552, 553) (concerning the overall social change of Port Said city due to this new mode of importation see Mursi, 1976: 133).

As the main social effects were due to the increasing state disintegration, one could similarly observe the appearance of a kind of duality in all sectors of the economy. The formal and informal, the legal and illegal, the private and public turned

out to be different sides of the same coin. For example, the salaries offered by the private sector during the last decade, became highly incomparable with the salaries offered by the Public sector. Payment of salaries in hard currency became a widespread phenomenon in foreign banks and enterprises. State employees were tempted to work in multiple informal activities besides their formal function. Thus driving a taxi or running a shop in the afternoons, became an important source of additional income for small state employees.

This informalization process has been labelled as 'Economic Apartheid' (Aulas, 1982: 5), meaning the imposition of a split through the whole social structure of the country. As a journalist observed:

> "In every social class, among the peasant, among the workers, the bank employees, or the professor, each of these had an example of a parent, a friend or a colleague who became suddenly rich." (Aulas, 1982: 5).

While different strata of the Egyptian society have benefitted from 'infitah', it has also meant social deprivation to formerly powerful groups. The society witnessed the emergence of a new strata which was called 'fat cats' meaning the 'nouveaux millionaires' of Egypt. This strata liked to exhibit its wealth on public occasions. But on the other side of the picture, poverty was seen to increase.

One common denominator in almost all literature analysing the social effects of the open door policy is the 'vagueness' in the definition of who are the new classes in contemporary Egypt.

Simple questions such as who are the ones who became wealthy, and how they became so are probelmatic to answer. (Perhaps the fact that 'infitah' is the logic of the illogical explains the heterogeneity, and inconsistency in social terms of the rising classes). Thus, for a common observer 'infitah' appears as if 'everybody could make it'. There are sons of Pashas who in the last few years have shifted into the American type of businessmen. There is also a certain strata of bureaucrats and technocrats who during the previous regime, have accumulated wealth through the state and maintained strong ties to the apparatus. (Mursi, 1976: 250) (Shuhaib, 1978: 196). Entrepreneurs were another strata which flourished under Nasser. (Shuhaib, 1978: 173) Finally there is this undefined strata which consists of "Thieves and gangsters... who are armed with gangs of criminals and who have accumulated an incredible wealth". (Mursi, 1976: 252).

Thus, the image of the illiterate and practical leader (*ma 'allim*) who becomes a millionaire, is dominant within society and specifically in the public context. This might help explain certain public behaviour that did not exist in the Egyptian street before. For instance, it was estimated in 1983, that 6.5 millions pounds were spent in expensive 'weddings' in big hotels (Rouleau: 21 August 1984). The public hedonism, permissiveness and the exhibition of this strata was copied by the popular masses.

On the other side the popular "opportunist", became also the hero of national politics. For instance, Sadat encouraged populist attitudes and symbols, by appearing on television wearing peasant dress (*galabeyya*). He often emphasized his peasant origin, through speaking in the dialect for whole political speeches.

Indicators of social status, such as descent and family *aila*, the possession of land, or education qualifications which were one of the most significant achievements of the Nasser period) are still persistent and maintained in the society. However, with the new values introduced by the market and the media, social status (in its ideal form) became more and more dependent on achievement (money). This contradiction between underlying values of status and new ideals of economy were leading to a social mix-up, and to increasing conflicts both on the micro and on the macro level of the society, and to a confusion of norms and values which are rendered more chaotic with the decline of the legacy of the state.

This section provided an overview of the general changes that occurred in Egyptian society as a consequence of the open door policy. The following section will focus upon the basic transformations in agrarian social relations, that will help the reader understand the specificity of the case studied.

2. Egypt's Agriculture

(i) The Rise of Private Land Ownership

In reviewing the economic history of Egypt, various authors have pointed to the overwhelming structural fact of the absence of private property, and the existence of the collective responsibility of the peasant village communities for tax and public works. Furthermore, the fact that the state appeared as the general proprietor of land and as the organiser of water supply has been seen as a key factor in explaining agrarian relations, as well as in discussing the problem of security or insecurity of private property with its rise in the nineteenth century. ('Abdel Malek, 1968:50-57) ('Amer 1958: 51-58) ('Auda

1979 Chapter I) (Baer 1969:17-19) (Girgis, 1958: 11-17) (Stauth, 1983 Chapter III).

These basic structures of rural social relations in Egypt were transformed by the early industrialisation and modernisation projects under Mohammed Ali. These implied the destruction of the prevailing subsistence economy, and coincided with the reinforcement of state control over agriculture. In fact Mohammed Ali managed to get rid of the old landowning class, consisting of the mameluks in the citadel massacre of 1811. Later on he abolished all privileges given on land in the name of the sultan to various officers and high officials, and also the religious donation land, the *waqf* land, was abolished. (Crouchley, 1978: 47). Thus by 1814 Mohammed Ali was to be considered as the sole owner of Egypt's land. (Ibid:48).

Mohammed Ali also modernised the system of land tenure. Tax farming was abolished and peasants now paid their taxes to the government officials (*sarraf*) instead of the tax-leasers (*multazim*) of the old mameluk regime. Communication to facilitate foreign trade developed, and thus ports were constructed. Moreover, a system of state monopoly in trade of agricultural crops was imposed upon the peasants, supplying tremendous profit to the state by buying the crops at low fixed prices and selling them to foreign traders. (Issawi, 1963: 22).

Together with the modernization of agricultural production related to the introduction of long staple cotton in 1821, the state implemented new methods of irrigation. With the utilization of an army of peasant labourers, coerced from the villages, Mohammed Ali started to transform the old basin irrigation system into perennial irrigation by constructing numerous canals to hold the water in summer (Crouchley, 1978:54).

He also built barrages and regulators across the water canals to raise the level of the water (Ibid: 55).

The flood dependent, basin irrigation system allowed annual redistribution of the land among the peasants, with agricultural production and social relations based on collective cooperation within the village community. Perennial irrigation, while bringing more land into cultivation and allowing year round production of crops, resulted in an allocation of private plots. (O'Brien, 1966: 4).

The creation and the consolidation of the private property mainly originated in the state policies and, later, on British intervention. For example, Mohammed Ali started distributing land to Turkish officers and state employees during the late phase of his rule. It was estimated that by 1844 one million feddans were owned by the family of Mohammed Ali and the remaining land was distributed among state employees. (Barakat, 1977: 38).

In 1858 Khedive Said decreed the law of 24 Dhu al Hijja 1274, consolidating private land ownership, which led to the increase of the *'Mulk'* (full private property) land in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Baer, 1969: 66) Thus, private property expanded: "... from less than one seventh of the total area in the 1850s, it increased to more than one quarter in 1875, and it was approaching one third in the 1890s". (Ibid: 70).

With increasing British intervention in the Egyptian administration and specifically after the failure of the 'Urabi revolt, private property was secured and the market in land increased with the establishment of foreign mortgage companies (Crédit foncier Egyptien and the Land Mortage Company) which led to an incredible increase in the price of land (Owen, 1969: 241). Owen argues that in the 1890s, there was a rise in money rents which led big landowners to rent their land. In fact, it guaranteed them profits as high as if they farmed by themselves. With the rise of cash incomes and provision of credit facilities, new methods of renting were created. Land was rented for a fixed sum and a certain period of time (Owen, 1969: 243).

Both the introduction of cotton production and the transformation in property rights altered the social structure in the village.

> Peasants lost land to pashas, village sheikhs, and money lenders, either through flight, forfeit for failure to pay taxes or foreclose for failure to pay private debts. (Richards, 1980: 4).

Inequality between the large landowners and rich peasants on the one hand and the small and landless peasants on the other hand continued to increase, up until the 1952 revolution. One of the reasons was that the peasants relied upon money lenders who lent money at 20% or 30% interest, whereas the large landowners, during the interim period had access to a rural system credit lending for 5% interest. Thus, these latter ones seem to have had no problems in acquiring fertilizers and adapting to cultivate cotton earlier to prevent insect attacks. This was more difficult for small peasants, for it would mean less clover, since it is cultivated earlier, and less

food for animals (Richards, 1980: 4). All these reasons led to the increase of landless peasants who had to seek for wage labour as a result of land fragmentation and debts which intensified the class conflict. It was estimated that in 1952, 4,000 landlords owned the same amount of land as 2.6 million peasants, while the landless counted for 1.2 million labourers (Ikram, 1980: 170).

(ii) The 'Izba' System and its Decline

Together with the process of capitalization of agriculture and the production of cotton for exportation, a new type of plantation system appeared. This was 'Izba', a large farming unit that is comparable to the Hacienda and other agricultural estate systems of the colonial period. (Richards, 1979) (Stauth, 1983a).

Richards has mentioned that these estates probably emerged with Mohammed Ali's decentralization of the agricultural administration during the late period of his reign (Richards, 1982: 34). Ayrout, furthermore, points to a second usage of the word, that of little villages of landless peasants serving as permanent labourers were established on the estate, which then took for themselves the denomination of 'izba' around 1830. These villages then (accordingly called 'izba') were legalized in 1913, with modifications in 1933:

> No Izba may be established on any estate without the consent of the provincial council, which shall take into the extent of the land belonging to the petitioners' estate, its distance from the village, and the number of cultivators to be lodged. (Ayrout, 1963:18).

The phenomenon became quite widespread at the beginning of the century, it being noted for example, that before 1952 there existed around fifteen thousand such small villages and predominantly in the Delta areas. (Ibid: 18). Sometimes we find 2 or 3 on one estate (all equally called 'izba'). Stauth in a footnote elaborates on this double meaning of the 'izba' which means the big estate which was owned

> ...by the "state class" which had its base of wealth and status in the military administrative ranks of the capital rather than social ties with the rural communities (Stauth, 1983a: 286).

At the same time it provided the huts of these 'labour camps' which have turned today into small villages (Ibid: 287) and are still called 'izba'.

Richards on the other hand, points out that the original idea of the establishment of the village on the estate was to grant peasants small plots for their own subsistence in return for their labour in cotton (Richards, 1982: 34). This is because the landlord had more interest in growing cotton than any other crops except wheat (Ibid: 64). However, these two theses are questionable: first whether Richards' model was a prevalent form, or second, whether there were different ways of administering an estate. On the estate studied in this thesis it was found that the landlord never guaranteed any type of land for subsistence to the permanent labourers, who Richards refers to as *Tamalyia* (to be paid by awarding a plot of land). In the case of the village studied these permanent labourers, called *mawazzafin*, employees, were paid in cash. They were thus wage labourers who were forced to buy their subsistence food from the estate. Moreover, and again in opposition to Richards, the landowner remained interested

in the cultivation of other crops. In the 30s and 40s there already existed the traditional crop rotation. Livestock figured in big numbers in such estates, thus requiring a great amount of fodder. I was told that supervision on rice or wheat fields was as hard as supervision on cotton fields. Stealing any of these crops, whether it was the wood and other remains of the cotton fields, or rice, maize, and fodder, in any case led to very serious consequences. The logic of the estate system entailed rigidity and coercion all year round. The permanent labourers seemed to have served both in domestic and agricultural functions, forming a hierarchical apparatus of supervision and control of labour and land. The estate used coercive means for labour control and was managed on the basis of a sophisticated accounting system in which the remaining accounting diaries give a vivid example. Consumption of the landowner's house in Cairo, as much as presents to state officials formed a big item in the books, revealing the importance they played in the economy of the estate. Richards also argues that:

> In general they (the permanent wage labourers) do not seem to have been forced to remain on the estate, labour mobility was therefore much less inhibited than under European feudalism. (Richards, 1982: 65).

This thesis is also questionable for through peasants interviews about "old times" it was revealed that they were forbidden to work outside the estate, since wages offered in the neighbourhood were higher. The night guards *(Ghafirs)* used to encircle the village or wait for peasants along the road to stop them from running away and beat them. In case of small fights between peasants, eviction was immediate and once this was done peasants could not return and live in the village.

The estates were destroyed under Nasser's agrarian land reforms, leaving behind the former 'izba villages and their peasants as the new tenant of the estate's land in the early seventies. The production system of the estates however, with its various forms of labour use, continued to be applied on the lands that remained in the hands of old owners or on other big and middle-sized farms which were not subject to Nasser's reforms. (Stauth, 1983a: 288-291).

(iii) Impact of Nasser's Land Reform

One of the major achievements of the 1952 revolution was the annihilation of the power of the landowning class, and the royal family which represented the interests of British colonialism. However, one cannot deny the fact that this class of Pashas survived, since it reappeared again under the Sadat regime as the new Wafd Party.

The agrarian reform only covered 12.5% of the cultivated land that was distributed to 341.982 families or 1.7 million persons (Richards, 1982: 177). Agrarian land reform was accomplished in three phases: In 1962 land ownership was limited to 200 Feddans. In 1961 it was again limited to 100 Feddans and finally in 1969 it was limited to 50 Feddans (Appendix I). It is often argued that the strata of medium sized peasants (those between 5 and 50 Feddans, which is entailing indeed a great variety of landowners)[1] are the ones who profitted most from the social change brought by the Nasser regime. This class was labelled as the "rich peasants" according to Mursi (1976: 266) and also represented the backbone of the Nasserite regime. This class mainly emerged with the sale of large landowners' land after the revolution. They were, moreover,

more privileged than town capitalists, because they never underwent any type of state sequestration. (Ibid: 265) During Nasser's period they were given a free hand and in fact the 'revolution' never launched any small peasant mobilization. The rich peasant class used the state apparatus and specifically the cooperative system, to play the role of the mediator in defending their interests in the village. If middle peasants (5-10 Feddans) decreased in number after the first Five Year Plan, 1960/61 - 1964/65, from 2.8% to 2.5% they seem to have increased in number to reach later on 3.5%. Rich peasants owning more than 10 Feddan grew after the Five Year Plan from 2.9% (old large landowners included) to 3.1% (old large landowners excluded in this number) (Mursi, 1976: 265:270; see also Appendix II). Moreover, it would seem that this class also profited from avoiding state regulations and laws in areas where the agrarian reform laws had not reached them.

> Landowners would simply evade the laws, or could shift to direct exploitation of the land using wage labour: the percentage of the cultivated areas which was leased declined from roughly 60 to 50%. Minimum wage regulations were similarly evaded. One could argue that although some of the government's regulations irritated the rich peasants, the regime strengthened them more than any previous modern Egyptian government (Richards, 1982: 179-180).

o/ The cooperative system which was created in the early sixties, played the role of providing cheap credits, inputs and supervising the agricultural operations of small peasants. However, it is often argued that the cooperatives were used by rich peasants, by creating a black market in selling animal feed, fertilizers and seeds which they acquired through the credit system. In fact one condition for cooperative credits in the sixties was to own not

less than at least 5 buffaloes or 15 Feddans as insurance. Only owners of 15 Feddans or more could have acquired selected seeds (A.N.S.U.P., 1982: 43).

On the other hand the phenomenon of non-traditional crop cultivation led also to an increasing differentiation. It was estimated that the surface of cultivated fruit increased from 195 thousand Feddans in 1966, to 313 thousand Feddans in 1976. Vegetables increased from 652 thousand Feddans in 1966 to 913 thousand in 1976 (Abd al-Mu'ti, 1979: 34). Geographic factors also play a role in determining non traditional crop plantation. For example, in the district of Guizeh which is considered a wealthy area, vegetable cultivation was 11.77% of the overall cultivation. In Assiout and Sohag where the region is poorer, vegetable cultivation reached only 1.9% and 1.3% in 1976. (Ibid: 51) Small holders could not shift so easily to non-traditional crops, since it requires the investment of a large amount of capital for many years before getting any profit return, thus limiting the operation to mainly large landowners (Abdel Fadil, 1975: 35-38). This is apart from the fact that even today small peasants in the village studied are [annually] fined when they break the traditional crop rotation (and whose products have low market prices) while the later crops enjoy all the freedom of prices and markets.

In terms of the problem of landless peasants in Egypt, land reform in its early stage managed to decrease the phenomenon but could not prevent it in the future. Statistics reveal that the ratio of landless families seemed to decrease from 1950 to 1961, due to land distribution and the success of the first agrarian reform. Other factors, such as rural migration to the

cities and the increase of urban activities played a great role in decreasing the phenomenon. Unfortunately, landless families increased very quickly afterwards, more specifically in the period of the sixties and seventies, due to the concentration of land by medium and large size holders. Increase of population played another role. (Radwan, 1977: 22). While Radwan argues that landless families and poverty has increased in the late sixties and seventies (Radwan, 1977: 22) Ikram points to the fact that one of the most important social effects of Nasser's reforms had been the consolidation of the position of small peasants. Thus through tenancy they numbered a million. The area cultivated in tenancy is actually estimated to have reached around 40% of the total land.

> By 1970 about 940,000 Feddans had been distributed to more than 362,000 tenants and small farmers. In addition, the government laid down strict conditions of tenure and payment for leasing and initiated the multi-purpose cooperative system, which enabled groups of small farmers to pool their work on fragmented parcels of land and provided a reliable channel of credit from the banks. (Ikram, 1980: 212)

These are thus in very brief terms the major changes that took place under Nasser. Let us explore the major changes in agriculture during the seventies.

(iv) Infitah Policies: Towards the Consolidation of Small and Middle Peasantry?

Sadat's policies towards agriculture, like his general policies, aimed to increase private initiative(mainly by large owners) and to liberalize state control in agriculture placing the emphasis on further capitalization.

In fact, the alteration in laws in favour of the rich peasantry started to take shape in 1969, when two new conditions were imposed upon 4/5 of the members of the committees of the cooperatives: The first new condition was the ability to read and write, which excluded a majority of the peasantry who were illiterate. The second condition was that the members of the committees had to own not less than 10 Feddans instead of 5 Feddans. In 1973, the marketing system of cotton was re-opened to free markets which led to the reappearance of entrepreneurs and agents (Mursi, 1976: 278). In 1974, the sequestration laws were abolished, and some old Pashas received again the land that was once sequestrated. In 1975 a law on tenancy was discussed favouring the old landowners at the expense of evicting the small tenants (See Appendix III). This law was never applied in reality. Since the number of tenants -

- had reached a million or more (Ikram, 1980: 212), the application of this law could have easily led to serious peasants' revolts. What happened in reality was that the discussions in the parliament led to the raising of rent in the last 10 years. (In El Warda rent has reached 60 LE per year).

In the seventies the state created the new system of the village banks which were mainly based upon profit making. They were allowed to import inputs and machinery without state intervention. So far these institutions have mainly financed agribusiness projects, on what in Egypt was called the "food security projects" at an interest rate that reached 6% (Sainte-Marie, 1984: 39 - 41).

The food security programme mainly encouraged projects such as chicken and meat production, mechanized bakeries, and refrigerators, fruit and vegetable production and honey production (No 'man no date:8). This project was encouraged while Egypt was importing

two thirds of its wheat for consumption which is creating an incredible dependency on the west. (Goueli, 1978: 28).

Cultivation of "hard currency" crops such as medicinal herbs or orchards were encouraged since they would "lead to the development of the village" (Hussain, 1982: 471) which of course implied the exclusion of the majority of small peasants.

At the same time that it was observed that rice production had decreased during the last years, the production of fodder crops maize and sorghum increased (for animal feeding). It is estimated that 30% of agricultural production today is directed towards animal feeding (Sainte Marie, 1984: 59-64).

In 1978, the Minister of Planning of Egypt declared that "cotton was not anymore to be considered as a source of national wealth, but rather a burden for the Egyptian economy ... that Egypt should get rid of" (Hussain, 1982: 454). However, such a declaration raised many negative reactions in both official and non-official circles. Since 1820, many industries have developed around cotton production. It has been since the sixties that cotton figured as the main crop by which Egypt acquired its hard currency.[2] The logic behind attacking cotton production aimed at two points: first , the destruction of an infrastructure linked to such a type of production; second production has decreased the role of the central state in cooperative marketing and exports. In real terms, cotton production decreased by 600,000 Feddans since the policy of the open door was launched (Hussain, 1982: 485). American involvement played a role, too, in decreasing the production of long-staple cotton fibre, and replacing it with the short staple fibre cotton; additionally an attempt was made to introduce

textile production. With Egypt changing its political orientations from being an ally of USSR in the sixties to an ally of USA in the seventies, the conditions of US aid forced Egypt to shift from exporting to socialist markets to European ones. However, the situation of Egyptian cotton exportation worsened from 1976, 1977, 1978, since European markets could not consume all Egyptian cotton production (Hussain, 1982: 486). The dependency of Egypt reached its culminating point when the Egyptian government imported from the US in 1977/78 478.00 quintars of short-staple cotton. In 1978/79 cotton imports of short-staple were expected to increase to a million quintars. The intention was to limit the Egyptian cotton export to socialist countries and to increase local textile production. What occurred in reality was that the national textile industries were seriously damanged, specifically by the introduction of short-staple fibres which could contaminate the quality of the Egyptian cotton. In addition, the introduction of polyester fibres through the 'Amereyah project'[3] represented a serious threat to the existent industries related to cotton. This was aimed at the marginalization of a whole sector in order to reorganise the operations of production under a foreign US sponsored administration (Hussain, 1982: 469). Thus, the state policies towards the agricultural sector could be labelled as being the ones of conscious negligence. Investment in agriculture, drainage and irrigation in the agricultural sector had fallen from 25% in the mid sixties to 7% in 1975 (Ikram, 1980: 216).

More important, though, was the increasing problem of the drainage system.

> By the mid seventies, some 80% of the most productive land in the country had been affected. A soil survey revealed that roughly 50% of the best lands had deteriorated to the extent that they are now classified as medium or poor soils. (Richards, 1980: 10).

The construction boom has created another problem, namely the swallowing of agricultural land. It was estimated that 60.000 Feddans have been used for construction during the last decade. At the same time, factories of red brick have proliferated at the expense of endangering the fertility of soil (Amin, G. 1982: 96-97). All these are facts revealing that the state laissez-faire policy can only increase anarchy on the macro level.

Interestingly enough the trend of increasing capitalization of agriculture did not systematically lead to the marginalization of small peasants. To summarize this argument, one can witness two trends in Egyptian agriculture: first there is a consolidation of rich peasants, and agribusiness which is a feature of absentee capitalists (Richards, 1980: 12) One can also include the huge land reclamation projects launched by the state. Second, on the other hand, these changes did not lead to the marginalization but rather to an economic stabilization of the small land holders. Glavanis and Glavanis for instance argue that by ensuring the sanctity of private property, the state has reinforced "small peasant production as the predominant form of production within Egyptian agriculture". (Glavanis, 1983: 48).

Perhaps the most dramatic phenomenon in contemporary agriculture is migration. Birks and Sinclair's statistics (1981) reveal that Egypt is by far the country with the highest labour exports to the Arab countries, not only among all Arabs but also among Asian,

European and Africans. (see Appendix V). A journalist mentioned that in 1978, it was estimated that the official number of migrants in the Arab countries have reached one and a half million; the non official numbers reached around 3.5-4 million migrants (Aulas, 1978: 6). The World Bank report states that workers' remittances reached, in 1977, 1,000 million U.S.D. (Ikram, 1980: 139).

A study of the impact of migration in two villages of Dahshur (45 km south of Cairo) revealed that migration and the new policies had not led to the marginalization or proletarianization of the small peasantry (Taylor, 1984). Returning migrants were re-integrated in the land while cheap agricultural labour had migrated, or was working in the construction sector of the village. Accumulation took place in livestock or irrigation pumps. (Taylor, 1984: 7).

> As a result of the profit squeeze imposed by 'high' wages, Dahshur's capitalist farmers are increasingly renting out their land to peasant sharecroppers to farm by means of household labour. In this way the amount of village land worked by peasants has increased. (Ibid)

Richards (1980) furthermore observes new types of rapid mechanization of the small holders, in which he includes landholders from 2-8 Feddans . According to the author this is due to the fact that while interest rates on loans reached 8-11%, rural inflation has reached at least 30%, and additionally fuel is heavily subsidized. (Richards, 1980: 11).

Tarahil - seasonal migrants (the old cheap peasant labour brought by contract) seem to have disappeared from many villages, as is the case in the Mansoura area, where the study was undertaken.

Up to the present time, very few studies attempted to give an overall evaluation of the implementation of *Infitah* policies and specifically its social effects on the rural society. The works of Hussain, Shuhaib and Mursi, aim at demonstrating the economic deficiencies in terms of a new world market dependency or of social irrationalities like corruption and glamour. They also point to the negative effects of consumerism related to migration and in terms of a so called unproductivity. (see also the argument of Dr. Galal Amin, who was commenting in the B.B.C serial called "The Arabs", and specifically the programme on Egypt, which was meant to overview the socio-cultural traits of the middle eastern countries. It was shown on British television during November/ December 1983)

However, these critiques are biased since they refer both to prejudices of the landowning class, as well as of the urban state employee middle classes.

In these studies, which nevertheless remain the main sources which deal with the changes during the Sadat period, one is provided with material pointing to the decline of state revenue and state control through the devaluation of state posts both by underpayment and loss of authority. In many instances statements are made which lament the increase of agricultural wages and the scarcity of agricultural labour due to migration. That these factors also impose pressure for mechanization is generally neglected.

In looking to the practical situation of the peasants' lives, I cannot see a basic negative impact of such economic change in mere economic terms. For on the other side of the social ladder, small scale mechanization and monetarization of social relations in general have led to a liberation of peasants from bondage to landlords, and from coercive domination by state officials.

However, coinciding with a destruction of state authority and the social devaluation of state functions, a fragmentation of state power through corruption and foreign dependency can be observed. There, the 'laissez faire' policies of the new regime imposed a problem of guidance and order which until now had not been solved. This problem which became most evident in the event of the murder of the late President of the republic by Islamic radicals, is also present on the micro level in rural life. It is on this level that manifestations of violence might be occurring in the future.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Both Richards and Mursi include in the category of medium sized landholders, those owning (5.50) Feddans. (Mursi, 1976:268) (Richards, 1980:7) However this is due to the fact that they rely upon the available data of the ministry of agriculture which categorizes those owning 5 Feddans, and those 50 in the same box. Richards has pointed to the fact that these statistics ignore the fact that there is a great number of peasants owning less than three Feddans, and agricultural proletariat is very large. (Richards, 1980: 6). Another criticism to be added, against these types of categorizations is dividing up peasants into rich, middle and poor, is that these categorizations do not represent a universal tendency in capitalist transformation (see Goodman, Redcliff, 1981: 95, 96).

   Perhaps to give a clearer picture of the social rural map, one should study whether or not these medium sized holders have shifted to non-traditional crops, and which ones (for there is still a difference between shifting to fruits, or vegetables). For instance, it was observed that in many neighbouring villages of El Warda, many holders of 4.10 Feddans managed to transfer plots of their land into vegetables, while keeping another plot for "subsistence" crops.

2. 'Adel Hussain made a comparison between oil and cotton revenues in 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 (1982, Table: 542) where he demonstrated that cotton production and industries related to it, brought in 1977, 1978, 1979 higher revenues than the net revenue in the oil sector. However, remittances of migrants in 1979 (see Appendix IV) seemed to figure as the highest number among the main sources of income in Egypt. It probably increased in the eighties.

3. The Amereyah project was launched in the late seventies aiming at building a huge industrial complex of synthetic fibres, and cloth, near Alexandria. The project

was created by a joint venture between some multinationals and the Egyptian government, which would have cost an investment of 1.5 billion US dollars. Before it started functioning, Misr Bank had invested 167 million L.E. However, this project was never completed, because even among official circles it was perceived that such a project would directly threaten national industries, and cotton production. (Aulas, 1978: 4).

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CHAPTER III: THE CASE: 'IZBA EL WARDA AND ITS SOCIO ECONOMIC FEATURES

1. A Short Note About "Peasants" as a Social Category

In the following case I deal with a rather specific setting of peasantry in rural Egypt. The land reform laws of Nasser provided land (as permanent tenant) for a previously landless category of permanently employed wage earners of a former large estate. It also gave these workers the opportunity for a variety of small state posts (night guards, policemen) which were offered within the process of the destruction of the estate. These "newly" created "peasants" becoming tied to a small plot of land through a government scheme, self-employing family labour in tilling the soil, and occasionally confronted with state posts opportunities cannot be defined as "peasants" in terms of traditional anthropological concepts. (Silverman, 1979) One could argue that they rather belonged to the agricultural proletariat.

Nevertheless if I speak of "peasants", I refer to a concept of cultural anthropology. These people do maintain a peasant culture, and would be judged by city or town dwellers as belonging to the "peasant class". In other words they are still culturally stigmatized, and treated as peasants.

Wolf gave a broader definition of peasantry as agricultural producers, who control their land, aiming at subsistence. This conceptualization of the relation of peasants to civilization is a structural one, rather than a particular cultural content where the state plays a decisive role (cit, Foster, 1967: 6). However,

within the debates on the role of peasantry in modern society it has become as commonplace to criticise such cultural concepts of peasantry as a class (see Ennew, Hirst, Tribe 1977) (This is a point which requires a research on its own).

Although in the cultural sense, El Warda villagers are defined as peasants since they share a rural local context, yet due to the macro-structural changes described in Chapter II, many of the males are not anymore peasants in the economic sense. The majority of those who have shifted to non-agricultural activities, work all around the year. Here one should note that there is a structural difference between traditional peasantry, when slack seasons allowed a multiplicity of activities, beside toiling the soil as the basic one, and the contemporary situation created with migration and the expansion of the informal sector. In this situation males can "help" in toiling the land but it is no more their main functions.

2. Methods Used and Forms of Data Collection

This study presents the story of the life of peasant women in a small village, a former workers' camp of a former capitalist farm (*'Izba*). It seeks to analyse the changing social patterns and conditions which strongly effect the life situation of these women. The perspective given by the study depends largely upon the descriptions and interpretations given by the people met in the village. The field work on which this study is based was carried out during three and half months, comprising week-ends in February 1983, in long stays in mid-June - mid-July 1983 and in February-March 1984 and mid- September - October, 1984.

During February 1983 I mainly conducted interviews with migrants, both from the village and its neighbourhood, who were returning from the oil countries. My initial contact with the peasants consisted of asking precise questions about incomes and conditions of labour in the oil countries. These interviews were the starting point which helped me to understand the overall changes through migration. Although the results of these interviews do not appear directly in this thesis, some of the information from them has been used.

In June-July 1983 I returned to visit the wives of the migrants with whom I began my research and commenced by chatting and remaining with them for long hours. My point of departure was to first ask questions about womens' life stories: their conception of their immediate surroundings, their labour and their lives. I included both the old generation of women as well as the young generation of 15-35 year olds in my enquiries. I did not develop a systematic questionnaire, for in many instances responses depended heavily on the attitudes and reactions of the informant. Poorer women tended to omit much economic information. Life stories were gathered through chatting and gossiping as well as by studying relationships between neighbours, family ties and observation of the relationship between the sexes.

The method by which I recorded information was to write down what peasants said, and the comments they made. Contrary to the notion often reported - that peasants tend to hide information - after the first week of my stay (in June-July) every woman wanted to talk to me. It was part of their amusement and social life in the village to see an outsider come in. Many

peasants wanted their tales to be recorded:"we have many stories to tell about our past and sufferings". In many situations, peasants stated that they would not like such information about them to be transmitted to the press or the mass media or to Europe even though they knew I was collecting information to write my thesis in England. They often said "we know that if you show this 'abroad' they will make fun of our poverty".

On a second level, to develop a more objective picture, I carried out interviews on budgets of households as a unit of analysis as well as collecting details on incomes from land. It was much easier to gather information of this nature from male informants, because although I noticed that women gave me very precise details of prices, they very often tended to omit the cost of labour brought in the previous year to carry out a certain agricultural operation. They would also often omit to count the cost of their own labour. However, this does not deny the fact that women had very precise memories concerning finance, as well as exact details related to agricultural operations or the purchase of particular commodities.

Moreover, another problem which I faced with women was that they were busy most of the time, either with children or working. This made it a very difficult matter for accounting and budgetting to be completed. Thus, it was easier to gather information through the process of observation. Alternatively, male informants were more precise concerning incomes from land, in global terms.

To develop the historical evolution of the area I interviewed old employees who previously worked in the estate. I also interviewed some cooperative employees about the introduction of new techniques in agriculture.

I interviewed a total of 33 houses and these differed in the quality and nature of information gathered. From some households I managed to gather only small amounts especially if the information related to fights, or labour or kin relations. Other interviews yielded very detailed observations about everyday activities. The amount of information divulged depended upon the want of both males and females to talk. Peasants made it very clear when they did not want to give information.

During peak seasons such as June-July and September-October it was practically impossible to hold long interviews with either males or females as everyone in the village was working. Thus, the alternative for me was to remain for long hours in the field or in the villages during threshing and transportation of the crops from the fields.

3. Local Setting

(i) Historical Background of the Village

The women of the village studied (El Warda) belonged to a village which was originally established as a workers' camp *('Izba)* which is located in the region of Dakahlya, in the governorate of Mansoura. The village near the centre town of Sinbilaween, is situated about 129 km north east of Cairo. It can be easily reached by travelling along the road between the two district towns of Zagazig and Mansoura.

The whole Mansoura area was famous for the high quality of its cotton and El Warda itself once formed part of a huge property involved in the production of cotton at the time of its historic rise as an international commodity exported mainly to England.

The labourers' camp (*'Izba*) was created in 1927. At the same time the landowner constructed his house, for use as an administrative centre for the plantation as well as to serve his political ambitions. Constructed beside the camp were the rest-house, its administration (*dairа*), the garden and the stables located outside the gardens. The labourers' camp provided the permanent wage labourers - gardeners, cooks, servants, guards, animal guards, water and machine keepers and servants to be sent to work in houses in Cairo. This camp consisted mainly of several mud-brick houses constructed in the style of Fellaheen. The camp originally comprised six or seven families of permanent wage labourers which constituted the 40 houses studied. The total population of the village is 281 persons - 84 males, 110 females and 87 children.

While the resthouse, its gardens and the stables of the estate were maintained by the permanent wage labourers, the agricultural work cycles on the land of the estate were carried out by a labour force hired from surrounding villages through the contracting system, or by seasonal migrant labourers brought in from different villages of the region as migrant labourers (*tarahil*). Thus, the permanent workers of the camp were not involved in proper agricultural work, but work which in the main related to the domestic functions of the estate or even in supervising migrant labourers in the fields. In old times there were three systems for payment of wages:

1. Monthly wages were paid to the *muwazzafin* (employees) of the estate, who were the *qateb* (clerks), the engineers and technicians who maintained the machines, *ghafirs* (night guards), *khulis* (supervisors) and *Ustah* (drivers, technicians).

2. Daily wage labourers were paid for the category *shaghallah*. These were mainly women and children who cared for animals (donkeys, buffaloes, cows and horses) or worked in the fields. This category also included the *tarahil*.

3. Contractors who were paid an amount according to "heads" of peasant tarahil they brought to the estate.

The majority of the males of the village considered themselves, and were paid as, employees rather than peasants. The monthly salary did not exceed 3 L.E. and remained stable for many years even after the 1952 revolution. Meat was distributed to every household on feasts. The costs of burials, marriages and illnesses were met by the landowner. Twice a year cloth, which was sufficient for one *gallabeyya* per head, was also distributed. Grains (wheat, rice and maize) which were the staple diet of peasants had to be bought from the estate, and the price was deducted from workers' salaries. Males and females of the camp were forbidden to work outside the estate although wages were higher elsewhere in the neighbourhood. The working discipline was very strict and formally ordered. Both males and females had to attend in front of the administrative offices at 6.30 in the morning. Those who came late were turned back. Coercion and beating were normal occurrences for women and children during work in the fields. Working hours were from early morning until sunset, with a pause of an hour at noon. The hierarchy of the estate was very coercive. Those who disobeyed the rules could be beaten by the guards. I was told that there were many killings, by the guards, in order to terrorise the whole village. Joseph Nahas provides this very illuminating description concerning peasants who underwent this type of labour organisation:

> Le fellah dans ce mode d'exploitation, gagne moins que ceux qui travaillent à la part. Il est nonobstant, soumis à une discipline très sévère, la moindre negligence, la moindre désobeissance lui coute le salaire de plusieurs journées de travail. (Nahas, J. 1901: 141).
>
> ... aussi dans les domaines exploités à la journée y-a-t-il de veritables brigades d'employés dont l'unique occupation consiste à surveiller les journaliers, à tout instant et de la façon la plus étroite et la plus rigoureuse. (Ibid) (Translation - see footnote)[1].

The peasants of the village when evoking this phase of their lives, would label it as the "black days when we used to starve from work, fear and hunger".

Little by little, like many estates in Egypt, and with Nasser's agrarian reforms, the estate diminished in size with land sequestration; its administration slowly collapsed and with it, the hierarchy. Nevertheless, even under Nasser's regime, these permanent wage labourers were closely tied to the estate in terms of labour, or distribution of food, clothes and meat during feasts. It was not until the 1968 agrarian reforms concerning tenancy that these employees were given land to exploit for themselves for the first time in their lives.

In 1968, a hundred Feddans of the remaining estate were distributed among every house . It was mainly distributed among males. Widows and divorced females with children were not allowed to receive land . Distribution was determined by the old clerk and the state did not interfere with the decision of who took what amount of land. At that period of time 38 families

benefitted from tenancy. The yearly rent of the Feddan cost 30 L.E. Until that period of time none of the peasants of the estate had benefitted from any type of land distribution among peasants by the state.

With the Islamic law of inheritance, the records of 1982 reveal that the number of tenants had reached 52 (among which there have always been 4 tenants living in neighbouring villages). There are 8 tenants who exploit less than one Feddan, 20 tenants exploiting one Feddan and between 6 to 12-16 Quirats, 11 tenants exploiting between 2 Feddans and 2 to 12-16 Quirats and 7 tenants exploiting 3 Feddans. Discussions in the parliament have led to the raising of the yearly rent of land (see Appendix III), and today annual rent of the Feddan has reached 60 L.E. In addition 12 L.E. for irrigation and 3 L.E. for cleaning the water canals are paid to the landlord of the former estate annually. These sums are paid to the landowner after the cotton season and after payment of the cooperative.

I was told, that when land was distributed among the peasants of the estate, many of them refused to take it. Perhaps, more than anything, they feared the debts, besides, they seldom had cash-money to cultivate the land. Many of them preferred to remain as "employees", fearing that change would threaten them. Two years later the situation had changed. Those who did not have land began to fight within their families to have a share. In the seventies, peasants started to buy land available from the agrarian reform (near the neighbouring village of Balamun). There are 10 peasants who bought plots of between 10-20 Quirats to one Feddan. Only one peasant bought 2 Feddans for which he has not yet paid. In the eighties, five of these peasants sold their

land before repaying all their loans. The original ideas was that the state had distributed this land as tenancy, but later, in the seventies, peasants reported that the state had forced them to buy this land but at lower than market prices and that credits had to be repaid within four years. The Feddan was offered for 2450 L.E. The peasants who sold their land reported that this was due to the very heavy bureaucratic cooperative administration which distributed inputs and also held the account credits. Some peasants reported that interest rates over the years were getting higher. The price of land also increased in the intervening 5-6 years. Thus, the sale was a profitable affair. (Notice all those who sold their plots of land were still tenants of the former estate. Thus, none of them were landless).

Finally, it should be noted that the "specificity" of the *'Izba* as being a former workers' camp tied to the agricultural estate is underestimated in literature on rural Egypt. Aryout (1963), Nahas (1901), Richards (1979) and Stauth (1983) refer to the conditions of work in the former estates. However, the role of these villages within the agricultural land reform of Nasser in destroying the old estates is not elaborated upon in this literature.

As my case demonstrates, land was not distributed among peasants in general, but by and large among the permanent wage labourers of the estate who were partly now transformed into night guards. The coercive political administrative apparatus of the estate was appropriated by the Nasserite state, and thus loyalty for the new regime was settled in terms of police and administrative relations, as well as land distribution to the new state.

officials. Conversely, we find that many *ghafirs* (guardsmen) of the estate were transformed into state *ghafirs* receiving a monthly salary from the state and playing a coercive role within the village itself.

Moreover, since 1969 no house within the village remained landless. This reveals a type of a counter- example, and specificity of my example, in opposition to the traditional village community. This however, is of a general significance in Egypt, since Nasser's land sequestration, land tenancy laws and the destruction of the old large estates affected rural Egypt as a whole. Thus the *Izbas* (the former workers' camps of the old estates) were put into a rather privileged position as compared to the traditional Egyptian village where we find that landless families in Egypt in 1972 totalled 45% of all agricultural families (Radman, 1977: 23) (See slso Appendix VI).

(ii) Regional Integration

One cannot study the local setting of El Warda without linking the village with its regional surroundings and with its wider relationship with the other villages, for there is a dynamic interchange and mobility between villages. Markets, religious feasts, visits of relatives, weddings, exchange of labour and most specifically women's and children's labour render isolation impossible. A factor which has made mobility easier in recent times is the tremendous proliferation of "service" cars (Japanese and Peugot) throughout the countryside. Such types of cars are today found in every village of Egypt. In every district town there are cars which travel to Cairo and vice-versa. Every twenty minutes there is a car which passes by the village to travel to the centre *markaz* of town for the price of 10 piasters. These

cars, which are mainly designed to transport goods, carry 15-20 persons per journey. Due to the lack of space, the passengers have to stand on top of the car or hold on to it with their bodies outside the car. Travelling time has thus been shortened and the donkey is now mainly used for transporting sacks and goods.

The village of Balamun, which contains many state facilities, is located four kilometres south of El Warda. Peasants never use cars to reach this village - they walk or ride donkeys. They usually make this journey once a week, if not for the cooperative, then for the Monday market. In Balamun there is one cooperative, one village bank and a medical unit which all constitute one complex which was built during the Nasserite period. A few metres away from these buildings, there is one primary and one preparatory school. The cooperative distributes inputs, and markets cotton and rice. The cooperative registers deal with six villages among which El Warda is included. Balamun also has an *umda* and a *sheikh el balad* who, since the thirties have been officially appointed by the state. The village also has a police station which often intervenes to solve disputes and fights in nearby villages. A market is held every Monday in one of the main streets of Balamun. However, it is much smaller than the town market of Sinbilaween. The *markaz*, to which 60 villages belong, is the district centre of Sinbilaween and is located 9 kilometres north of the village. Sinbilaween has also many preparatory and secondary schools, buildings for political parties, mosques, the central cooperative, the administrative land register and the main police station as well as other facilities. The nearest university is at Mansoura, 25 kilometres north of the centre. Lately, Sinbilaween has witnessed a boom in the informal sector, namely in shops for motor vehicle repairs, carpentry shops,

smiths, travel agencies for migrant labourers and shops selling imported electrical goods as well as motor vehicle sales outlets. This is, of course, accompanied by a construction boom which is taking place at the expense of agricultural land. In particular, this development is occurring at the city fringe, where there are hundreds of small, two-storey shops, constructed of unfinished red bricks. However, this construction boom has not solved the housing problem. A four-room flat in an unfinished building costs at least 2-3.000 L.E. in key money(*khelw,*) and a monthly rental that could reach 30-50 L.E.

The peasants of El Warda village go to the town at least once a week, if not for the market, then to deal with the administration or to visit a relative (who must be well off if he or she lives in town) or simply to buy a buffalo. However, Balamun and Sinbilaween are not the only markets to which peasants have access as one could find a market in a neighbouring village in the region on every day of the week. All of these markets have a specific local importance and are famous for specific goods. For example, on Saturdays women go to the market village of Timida for its good cheese and pickles made from orange peel. On Sunday they go to the village of Diarb which is famous for its sweets. The markets of Tamboul and Mit Ghamr are held on Wednesdays. The first market is famous for the fine quality of its copper products. Many peasants from neighbouring villages who cultivate vegetables follow these markets around all week to sell their products. Nevertheless, markets are not the only cause of peasant mobility, for religious feasts, too, play a crucial role in travel. *Mawlid el-Nabi* and *Mawlid Sidi el-Badawi* are important occasions to visit Cairo and Tanta.

(iii) Description of the Town Market of Sinbilaween

The town market located in Sinbilaween consists of a very long street, where many shops are centrally located. The public sector textile shops, telegraph and telephone office, and cloth and gadget shops are all located in this street. There is also an incredible variety of informal sector shops which supply peasant households with all their needs. These include, knife sharpeners who also sharpen scythes and sickles, special shops which manufacture the copper rings (*Khitm*) for peasants' signatures, and shops selling ropes, sacks, date trees, cages, chairs and tables, and copper and aluminium goods. The two biggest merchants of the area deal in "wholesale" fruit and vegetables.

Early every Thursday morning ambulent women gather outside these merchants' premises to purchase produce which they in turn sell in the market. There is also a section of the market for chicken sales.

With migration, travelling merchants, who sell synthetic cloth, tape recorders and watches from donkey carts, have become a familiar sight.

Finally, there is the huge buffalo and sheep market which peasants frequent whenever they want to buy or sell animals.

Every Thursday the *suq* (market) is overcrowded with people from the neighbouring villages. There are impossible traffic jams of cars, pedestrians, donkey carts and women vendors seated on the roadways.

With migration and males sending money home, many women have become very well informed about the latest local price of the dollar in the black market. The $US100, which is called *Waraqa* (paper) is usually exhanged at the corner jeweller, or at the gadget shop at the beginning of the street.

The majority of women traders in the market know each other intimately and very often borrow each others' scales.

I was told that in the last few years some individuals from this street have become "millionaires" through smuggling 'Hashish' and exchanging foreign currency.

(iv) Other Surrounding Villages

Opposite the village of El Warda, is the village of 'Izba el 'Azab which has around 150 houses. Only a paved road separates the two villages. With migration, the village witnessed an increase in the number of houses constructed of brick. The village has a primary school, a preparatory school, a mosque, a diesel milling machine and a machine for whitening rice. Interaction is very high between these two villages. All El Warda villagers would go to the mosque or use the mill or the school of the neighbouring village. Children and women from El Warda are very often sent there to pick vegetables or to work in different activities.

El-'Azab has a higher rate of population and is known to be richer than El Warda. Peasants there have owned land for a longer time and many of them have started to cultivate non-traditional crops. The rate of migration is very high there and the rate of education among both males and females is higher there than in village El Warda.

Half a kilometre south of the village of Balamun an important Koptic community exists in the village of Kafr Youssif 'Awad. The village comprises around 150 Koptic households, living together with a hundred Moslem households. Some of these Koptic families are known to have a long tradition of producing clerks for work on many estates not only in the Delta but also in upper Egypt. The village has an important church as well as a mosque. Five kilometres east of El Warda is another 'izba called Shaaban. There, the land of the agrarian reform was distributed among important state officials of the Nasserite regime who continued to hold their posts during the Sadat era. In the last four or five years many of these state employees have started cultivating vineyards. They seem to have no trouble evading the *dawra* which is the traditional cyclical crop plantation.

These are the most important villages with which El Warda interacts.

(v) People, Houses and Land

The fact that El Warda was originally constructed as a labourers' camp meant that the housing space belonged to the land-owner. Thus, eviction or settlement of whole families could only be effected under his order. This was the case until very recent times (1983). The space that the 40 houses occupy is around one and a half Feddan. There is another Feddan and a half of empty space alongside the village which was previously used for agricultural operations.

Until the present time, all the houses of the village have been constructed of mud bricks. Peasants were forbidden to build in red brick because this would have meant that they had the right

to appropriate the houses. Therefore, building in red brick was possible only on private property. Some houses managed to construct a second storey although this was also forbidden. The fact that this village is among the few not constructed with red bricks means that its peasants have developed an inferiority complex when compared to neighbouring villages. Besides which, the neighbouring villages also create an issue of this my making it the butt of jokes.

The old generation of peasants said, while telling their life stories, that the houses in which they live were constructed before they or their parents settled in. Originally, all the families were brought in from neighbouring villages when the houses of the estate were constructed. It is probable that there had also been other peasants who had left the village when this piece of land was sold to the landowner in the late 1920s. Descriptions of the houses in old times indicated that the ceilings were very low. "One had to bend every time entering or leaving the house". There was no ventilation and light could not penetrate inside. The peasants did not improve their houses because large sums of cash were needed to do so and besides, at that time, it was forbidden to manufacture great quantities of mud bricks. However, for the last fifteen years, with peasants exploiting their little plots of land, and the overall increase of monetarization with the general policy of the state, peasants now have more access to cash and so the majority of households have renovated their houses. At least twelve households have renovated their houses in only the last two years. Today most of the peasants would produce their own mud bricks, or would buy half the amount needed, and produce the other half. All the

new houses have been raised from the level of the earth by four or five steps and the ceilings have also been raised. Many houses have been fitted with wooden window frames and doors. There are those who can afford to have glass windows and those who cannot afford glass use plastic such as discarded pesticide bags or carton paper. Most of the new houses which have been constructed within the last four or five years have been built through co-operation of several families. However, two or three wage labourers *(anfar)* are also needed. They are paid the normal wage for daily labour as well as having food and cigarettes provided. Last year, the empty space in front of the village, in addition to the stables called the *duwar* which occupied three other Feddans, was offered for sale. One Qirat (24 Qirats = 1 Feddan) in the village costed 1.000 L.E. and in the stables 1.200 L.E. 30 households in the village bought between 1 and 2 Qirats for construction. In 1982, 10 Feddans of the rented agricultural land were offered by the landowners (many inheritors) for sale to their tenants. Seven peasants rushed to buy small plots between one and two Feddans or a few Qirats. The consequence has been that for the first time in the history of the village, communal space used by everybody has become private property.

The fact that agricultural land was offered at a cheap price, (five thousand pounds as compared to fourteen thousand pounds per feddan, because it was permanent tenancy land offered to its tenants, while landowners cannot practically evict tenants), was a key reason why peasants were so eager to buy land, even though it would be at the expense of increasing debts. As a result of land purchases, at least twenty-five households were

forced to sell their buffaloes or to send males to migrate to Iraq for one or two years. After the sale of land, the village witnessed the appearance of fences to define property boundaries. Fights among women have arisen, e.g. when water has been poured onto private property, in a space which was previously public. To "create" a new window in a peasant household could lead to serious fights between neighbours as the household is entitled to buy the empty space opposite the new window. The small size of the village compared to its neighbours, the scarcity of space and the high rate of intermarriage between members of the households, are crucial factors which determine the social life as well as the organisation of labour between households. Perhaps, too, since space is so limited, when a fight takes place (a very common phenomenon) the whole village is likely to be involved. Thus, a small fight could end in a mass struggle.

The interior space of an average peasant house in the village is usually disposed of as three rooms, and a room for animals *zeriba*. One of these rooms is usually used for storing food, tools or for cooking. The sitting-room is also used for sleeping as there are always many children. Many families can only afford living in one room. In that case buffalo and chicken raising becomes practically impossible. The simple fact of not having space could be decisive in terms of fights, privacy or raising animals.

(vi) Women and the Structure of Agricultural Production in the Village

As in many peasant communities the agricultural occupations of El Warda can be divided, as shown by Wolf (1966: 13-14, 37), between activities related to the production of goods to be sold in the market place and activities related to the production of goods to

be immediately consumed by the peasant and his family. In this way it is possible to evaluate the agricultural concerns of our people as one pattern, by combining the various sources of income of their households. Later, I will look at the non-agricultural occupational activities as a second pattern of various resources of household income.

The agricultural setting as a whole can only be understood when viewed from a perspective of the land being a remnant of the old estate, to which the land use principles formulated by various land reform laws have been applied. To the occasional visitor it might seem as though the last 15 years have passed with little impact on the wider frame of agricultural production in the 'Izba. Indeed, looking further back to the times before reform had been applied to the village, the order of the fields, the basic types of crops and the general structure of the process of production seem to have remained relatively unchanged. Cotton has remained the main crop, the cash-crop of the setting, being cultivated for about seven months of the year (April-October). In the remaining months the basic crops for domestic consumption, "subsistence crops" (Stauth, 1983) such as clover, (*bersim*), wheat (*ghalla*) and rice, are cultivated. It is important to note that these crops were also cultivated during the old regime. In the past two-three years beans (*ful*) has been introduced to the area. For small holders it is out of the question to change the crop patterns, for this requires a considerable amount of cash as well as the loss of production of crops for immediate consumption, such as rice and wheat, and clover for animal feed.

The cyclical change in the cultivation of these crops is called *dawra el-zira;yya*. A fact which is often forgotten is that the *dawra* existed long before it became a type of harmonized rule imposed by Nasser's land reform laws. Irrigation is maintained by the landowner who owns the water-wheel *(saqya)*, run by an electrical plant *(tambusha)*. Canal clearing is the responsibility of the landowner who in return charges the peasants three pounds to be paid at the end of the year. The price peasants pay for irrigation per Feddan in this area is much lower than if they were to rent a small water-pump from the cooperative. This would cost 60-70 pounds per year whereas the existing system costs 15 pounds annually.

However, the system of irrigation in El Warda creates many problems and fights among peasants. All the tenants who have land in the same basin, have to prepare their land ready for irrigation at the same time. Often, of the 20 peasants having land in the same basin, some might be late with their preparation and therefore delay irrigation for the land of the others. Thus, it is likely that with every irrigation fights might take place among neighbours.

The land is divided into two big basins called *'qantara one'* and *'Bein El Tallein'* which are separated by an irrigation canal called *'barbakh'* (see map 1). The *dawra* shifts between these two basins. Each exploiter's plot is divided into halves and often into thirds (for example for cotton, clover and wheat). Each of these plots is situated in one of the 2 basins. The *dawra* then proceeds between the basins as follows:

YEAR A: If the agricultural year (which starts in November) begins with the cultivation of beans *(ful)* and clover in *qantara* basin (November-April) *(hud)*, then basin *Bein El Tallein* will be planted with wheat and clover *(shetwi)*. Cultivation will then shift in the following months to cotton in basic *qantara* and to rice in basin *Bein El Tallein (nili)*.

YEAR B: Will see beans and clover in basin *Bein El Tallein*, and clover and wheat in basin *qantara*. This means that having had rice as the main crop last year basin *Bein El Tallein* will have cotton as the *nili* crop next year and so on. (See tables 1 and 2).

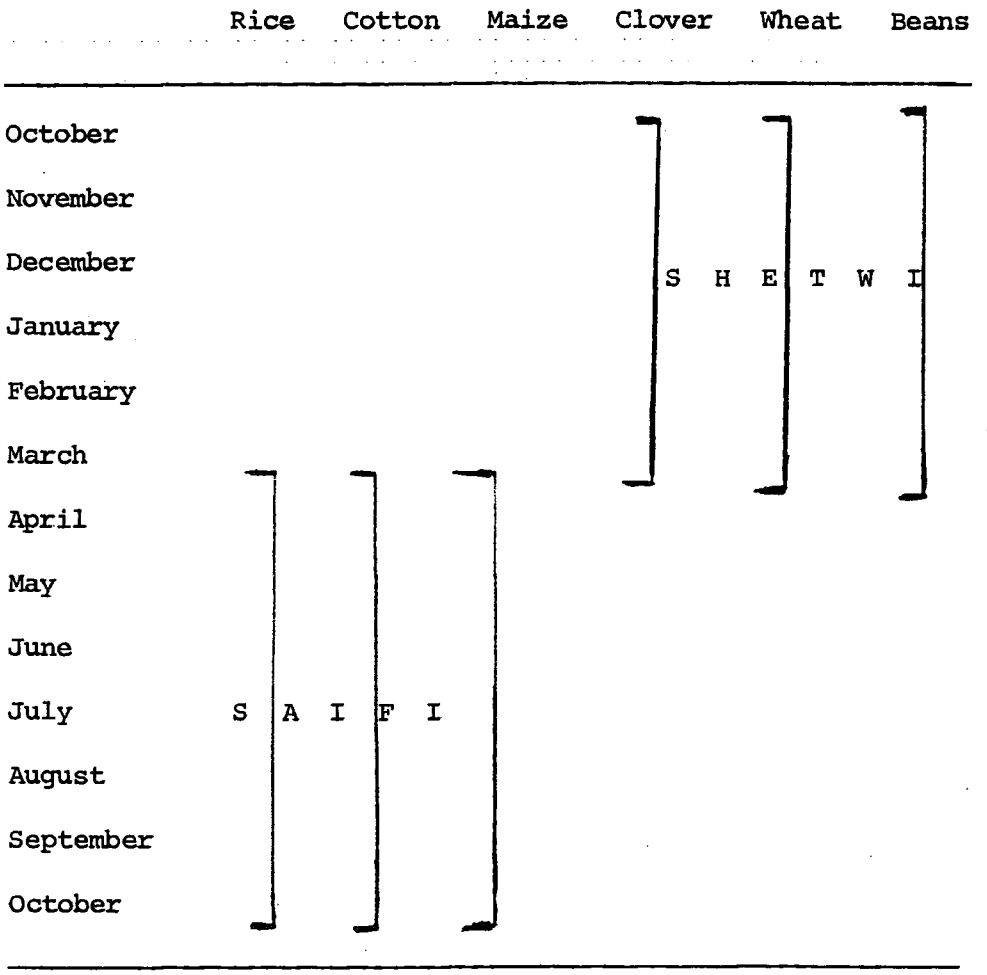
To value the *dawra* in terms of income for a peasant's household we will now look at one Feddan and see how, in a peasant's own judgement, the various crops are produced and made use of. I will proceed by first evaluating the various crops and then coming back to the *dawra* as a source of peasant income.

TABLE 1

HUD	YEAR A		YEAR B	
	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
Qantara	Clover Beans	Cotton	Clover Wheat	Rice
Bein El Tallein	Clover Wheat	Rice	Clover Beans	Cotton

TABLE II

The *Daura*



Cotton - *Qutn*

The production and sale of the entire cotton crop is still controlled by the state cooperative. Prices are fixed every year by the state. In 1983 the co-operative paid 85 L.E. for one *qintar* of cotton. One Feddan generally brings around 7-9 qintars. If we take the average of 8 qintars per Feddan then a peasant would make 520 L.E. per Feddan.

The following are the costs of agricultural operations required for cotton production:

1.	Ploughing *'Harth'* using a tractor	15 L.E.
2.	Seeding *'Zira'a'* done by four children *'Ayal'*	5 L.E.
3.	Seeds taken from the cooperative.	2 L.E.
4.	Fertilizers *'Kimawi'* from the cooperative.	25 L.E.
5.	Hoeing *'Azik'* done by a child driving a donkey pulling an iron plough.	4 L.E.
6.	Insecticides sprayed by cooperative's aircraft	35 L.E.
7.	Picking cotton (women and children)	90 L.E.
8.	Transport	15 L.E.
	TOTAL	193 L.E.

Wheat - *Ghalla*

Wheat is mainly cultivated to make bread for personal consumption and the straw is used for basic animal fodder.

A Feddan would bring 10 *ardab* (minimum), each valued at about 15 L.E., making a total of 150 L.E. 10 *himl* of straw brings about 200 L.E., altogether a gross income of 350 L.E.

The costs of all agricultural operations for wheat production are as follows:

1.	Seeds *'taqawi'*	8 L.E.
2.	Seeding *Zira'a'*	6 L.E.
3.	Ploughing *'Harth'*	6 L.E.
4.	Pesticides *'Kimawi'*	18 L.E.
5.	Cutting *'Damm'* 15 males *'Anfar'* x 3 L.E. per day.	45 L.E.
6.	Threshing *'Darss'* Tractor 3 hours	12. L.E.
7.	Transportation *'Shil'*	15 L.E.
	TOTAL	110 L.E.

Clover - *Bersim*

Clover is the basic source of fodder for buffaloes, cows and donkeys during the winter season. Five cuts can be harvested during its growing season from October to March. Including all possible cuts one *Kirat* brings around 17 L.E. The total possible income from one Feddan of clover is around 200 L.E. A clover crop could be rented for exactly the same amount of money. Renting plots of clover depends very much on household necessity. For example, last year, the majority of the peasants of the village sold their buffaloes because they were in need of cash. They then also leased their *Kirats* after seeding and irrigation. One *Kirat* was leased for 8 L.E. Thus one Feddan was leased for 192 L.E. A comparative figure can be taken from Stauth (1983: 116) where the

income from on Feddan in Menoufeya, in 1976 was exactly 200 L.E. This reveals the extent to which the village we are studying is backward in terms of prices.

The cost of *bersim* production compared to other crops is rather low. In this case no costs for wage labour were found. Seeds are generally taken from the last cut and artificial fertilizing, and watering cost approximately 20 L.E.

Rice - *Ruz*

Rice has to be considered in this area as a traditional summer cash crop, interchanged with the plantation of cotton as described previously. 3 tons of rice are produced per Feddan. Half of the crop is compulsorily delivered to the cooperative. Last year a new type of Phillippine rice was introduced to the area. However, the majority of peasants stated that it was a catastrophe in terms of production, additionally there was an increased problem of rats which caused great damage to the rice. Thus, very often after many collective complaints from peasants, the state administrators reduced the quote of rice compulsorily delivered to the cooperative. The government price for one ton of rice is 100 L.E. Therefore, the cooperative would pay 150 L.E. for one and a half tons. On the free market, 1 ton is sold for 160 L.E., by which the remaining one and a half brings 250 L.E. The Feddan therefore brings about 400 L.E. per crop. From this the following costs of production have to be deducted:

Rice

1.	Natural fertilizers *'Takawi'*	14 L.E.
2.	Artificial fertilizers *'Kimawi'*	25 L.E.
3.	Seeding *'shitl'* 10 males *'Anfar'* or girls @ 2 L.E. each for one day	20 L.E.
4.	Pesticides *'Mubidat'*	10 L.E.
5.	Cutting *'Damm'*	21 L.E.
6.	Transportation *'Maikh'*	20 L.E.
7.	Threshing *'Darss'* x 2 hours	8 L.E.
	TOTAL	118 L.E.

Beans

Beans have been introduced to the area in the last two or three years. This crop constitutes not only a human staple, but is also used for animal fodder when dried or mashed. One Feddan of beans brings about 8 *ardabs*, one *ardab* brings 40 L.E. (government price). The free market price is cheaper: 35 L.E. however, this varies depending on the season. Perhaps too, government prices are higher to encourage small-holders to cultivate beans since they are a new crop in the area. Thus, a Feddan would bring 320 L.E.

The cost of production is as follows:

1.	Half ardab of seeds *'takawi'*	17 L.E.
2.	Artificial fertilizer *'Kimawi'*	10 L.E.
3.	Seeding *'Zira'a'* 4 children *'Ayal'* 125 or 150 plasters each for one day.	5 L.E.
4.	Cutting *'Damm'* 5 males *'Anfar'* or females for one day.	15 L.E.
5.	Threshing *'Darss'* 2 hours	8 L.E.
6.	Transport *'Shil'*	12 L.E.
	TOTAL	67 L.E.

If we follow the logic of evaluating the dauwra in the small peasant perspective of our given framework, then we would have to look at a two-year cycle, giving reference to the reality of location of plots in the hands of each peasant. The following analysis is of an actual property in the optimal terms of our *Sheikh Zakaria*.

From Table 3 (p.94) it can be deduced that the total gross sum of income of three Feddans is 4,420 L.E. in two years, and 2,210 L.E. in one year. However, the sum is deceptive, for we have to deduct from it a rough estimate of the cost of production, as mentioned previously when describing crops, both in terms of work and inputs. The annual rent for one Feddan of 60 L.E., 12 L.E. for irrigation and 3 L.E. for canal cleaning would also have to be deducted. However, within the given framework, the total cost of production can be avoided if tenants carry out the work themselves. In the framework of our specific agricultural setting, this means women and childrens' labour. Thus, we would have to make the distinction between unavoidable costs of production and avoidable costs through self-employment. Unavoidable costs are

those which are dictated by the social standards of production both in terms of input and in terms of wage labour production. Thus, the cost of rent, irrigation, use of machinery, such as tractors, chemicals, pesticides, seeds and payment to the cooperative are unavoidable costs. (See table 4).

It has been stated above that peasant production is related to both cash and kind cycles. However, in tables 3 and 4 all crops have been reduced to cash prices without mentioning, in structural terms, that specific crops such as rice, wheat, beans and clover are generally only cultivated for immediate consumption by peasant households. These subsistence crops can be used if the household needs them or can be sold if the household is in need of cash. Certain agricultural operations such as cutting clover have been monetarized whereas in reality only a few peasants, such as women whose husbands are abroad and who have too much work in peak seasons, use wage labour. If crops are not transported by lorry then donkey carts are still used. Transport from the fields to the house is paid in kind.

There is a multitude of small agricultural operations which have not been monetarized. These include the transportation of manure by donkey, from the house to the field for use as natural fertilizer, production of baskets using recycled sacks, and milk and meat production from domestic animals. (These types of activities will be discussed later in the section on the decrease of the domestic cycle). Many small agricultural operations performed by women, such as the application of pesticides or chemicals in the fields, the removal of weeds in between crops or the removal of cotton seeds, have not been monetarized either. Sheikh Zakaria informed me that these tasks were

insignificant according to male judgement. Here it suffices to state that the "avoidable costs" within the frame of the agricultural setting, both in agricultural production and inside the household, are intrinsically linked to women and childrens' labour.

(vii) Men, Machinery and Patterns of Income

a) Machines of the Village

As the peasants of El Warda were originally permanent wage labourers, the whole village did not possess any type of machine until 1970-71.

On the other hand, the estate had been highly mechanized, with sophisticated imported machinery, since the 30s. Early on the estate was equipped with steam vapour machines, tractors, and diesel threshing machines. Irrigation machines were also an important component of the estate's machinery.

With the collapse of the 'Izba system in the late sixties and early seventies, the estate's machinery was sold as spare parts which were recycled in the informal sector. During the seventies, the village gradually began to acquire certain types of machinery. *Shirk* (sharing) in investing among 2 or 3 families became the prevailing form of financing machinery purchases, so as to avoid interest rates on bank advances.

Types of Machinery in the Village

1. The village has one manual wooden threshing machine *(darawa)*, which separates straw from grain. This machine was purchased 15 years ago and is shared by four families in the village. Work on the machine is paid in kind, depending on which grains are threshed. The income is shared by the four families. Today, such a machine would cost around 150-200 pounds.

Table III

Hud	YEAR A		YEAR B		TOTAL
	Shetwi	Saifi	Shetwi	Saifi	
Qantara 1½ Feddan	3/4 Feddan Bersim = 150 L.E. 3/4 Feddan Ful = 210 L.E.	1½ Feddan Cotton = 690 L.E.	3/4 Feddan Bersim = 150 L.E. 3/4 Feddan Ghalla = 260 L.E.	1½ Feddan Rice = 600 L.E.	2210 L.E.
Bein el Talein 1½ Feddan	3/4 Feddan Bersim = 150 L.E. 3/4 Feddan Ghalla = 260 L.E.	1½ Feddan Rice = 600 L.E.	3/4 Feddan Bersim =150 L.E. 3/4 Feddan Ful = 210 L.E.	1½ Feddan Cotton = 690 L.E.	2210 L.E.

Gross sum of land income in 2 years from 3 Feddans
(without counting cost of production)

Table IV (a)

AVOIDABLE COSTS OF PRODUCTION THROUGH SELF EMPLOYMENT IN EGYPTIAN POUNDS/FEDDAN				
CROP	Seeding	Ploughing	Picking	Cutting
Cotton	5	Hoeing 4	90	
Rice	20			21
Wheat	6			45
Beans	5			15
Clover	5			80
TOTAL	296 L.E.			

TABLE IV (b)

UNAVOIDABLE COSTS OF PRODUCTION
IN EGYPTIAN POUNDS

CROP	Transport	Tractor	Threshing	Inputs from the Coop	Spraying Plane Coop	Irrigation Rent/Year/ Feddan
Cotton	15	15		27	37	60 L.E. Rent
Rice	20		8	49		12 L.E. Irrigation and 3 L.E. Cleaning Canals
Wheat	15	6	12	26		
Beans	12		8	27		
Clover				20		
TOTAL	294 L.E.					

2. There are five iron ploughs *(mihrath)* which belong to five different families and have been in use for 4-5 years. I was informed that they suffice for the 40 houses of the village. The ploughs are borrowed and there has never been a fight about their use. The ploughs are mainly used for hoeing between the raw cotton 10 days before irrigation. These ploughs are manufactured in the informal sector shops of Sinbilaween.

3. There is only one tractor which is used to perform all the agricultural operations for the village. There are 14 tractors in the region, however there is little competition between them in terms of prices or labour. The village tractor is shared between two households (one of which is in the nearby village). This tractor was purchased 2 years ago from a private shop in town. There are three agricultural seasons during the year. After deducting the cost of fuel, oil and repairs the tractor owner who lives in the village earns around 1700 L.E. per season. He takes 170 L.E. as salary for his labour and shares the remaining 1530 L.E. with his partner.

4. There are four other tractors which park in the village but are not owned by the villagers. These tractors are mainly used to carry bricks from Sinbilaween to Mit Ghamr which is famous for its brick production.

5. A half-truck was bought among three partners (sharing), two of whom were outsiders, in August 1984.

6. There are two Japanese taxis (Yamaha) which were bought around 4-5 years ago. Both taxis are shared between two related households.

It is clearly possible to see how the system of sharing *(Shirk)* has taken on a new dimension in the last ten years where investment in machinery and vehicles is concerned. It has obviously enjoyed a resurgence with peasants exploiting small plots of land.

b) Cash income of males

It is important to note here in this economic perspective that males who leave agricultural activities bring cash incomes from non-agricultural activities. The intention here is not to count or to compare the value of these incomes with incomes of females in the agricultural frame. I merely wish to analyse income in practical terms from a structural rather than an evaluative perspective.

All male subjects live in the village, but work and travel away from it. Of the 84 males of the village, 20 have actually migrated to Jordan and Iraq, 12 are in the army and 8 live in Cairo (included here are 4 men who are in jail for their part in a vendetta which will be discussed later). There are 20 males working in non-agricultural activities. These would seldom be seen working the land, whereas their wives and children furnish the basic labour for agriculture. It is commonplace for young males to emigrate and for their wives to work as wage labourers in and outside the village. Thus, agriculture relies basically on the remaining 25 males, 110 women and young girls, and 81 (or less, since there are a lot of babies) children.

Descriptions of the different types of male cash incomes follow:

1. Taxi-drivers would earn around 7-10 L.E. per day (before deducting the cost of repairs and fuel). Not included in this amount are all the informal dealings such as being paid on a monthly basis to drive the children of the village to the school in the town, or driving people to the town during feasts and *mawlids* - the cost of this journey being 10 piasters.

2. Tractor drivers, who do not own their own tractors, earn a monthly salary of up to 100 L.E. for transporting bricks. (The only tractor owner's earnings were discussed previously).

3. Males working in the army who have a preparatory degree and have then entered the army as volunteers, not conscripts, could earn 60 L.E. or more a month.

4. State employees who hold a diploma in agronomy, accounting or commerce, after three years of state service, would earn around 60-80 L.E. per month.

5. Most of the uneducated males recruited for the army learn skills such as truck driving, painting walls, plumbing or construction. On completion of their military service these males are often recruited in the informal sector of the town (Sinbilaween) and are thus seldom seen on the land.

6. Males employed as cooks, servants and housekeepers in Cairo *(Bawabs)* earn very low wages (15-20 L.E.) which they supplement by carrying out extra services for tenants of flats. Cooks often work in 2 jobs - for the state in the morning, and for private household in the afternoon. Naturally, the people of the village know each other in Cairo and have networks to help newcomers to Cairo from the village. During peak seasons the cooks of the village earn more

by catering for weddings in the area.

7. Males working in construction earn around 4-5 L.E. a day. However, they work on a daily basis and rely on contractors for work. I observed that males working in such activity were often unemployed for many days and therefore tended to emigrate.

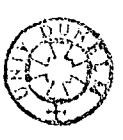
Since 1977 migration has taken on an important dimension in the village. It was reported to me that at that time new "offices" offering contracts and visas for Saudi Arabia opened in town. Today, migration is predominantly directed towards Iraq and Jordan, rather than to Saudi Arabia, since they do not require visas and travel is less expensive. At the present there have been 25 emigrants, some of whom have returned. It is interesting to note that among the 25 who remained, there are about 10 who are over 45-50 years old for whom the opportunities to shift into another occupation such as taxi driving or to emigrate are almost non-existent. The majority of males remaining on land are therefore among the older generation of peasants. The average earnings of a migrant away for a period of 10-11 months is approximately 2,000-2,500 L.E. However, this figure is only a rough guide, as the amount earned depends upon the type of work and the conditions of labour. Some migrants reported that in Jordan, they worked for 14 hours a day as black labour. The majority of men worked in hard manual work and none of them were covered by any type of social security in the Arab countries.

With migration, or males being in jail, many women today rely on childrens' work as a source of cash income. Apart from work on land, children, aged between 12-16 years, are also sent to work in construction. I have seen 13 year old children constructing houses,

carrying bricks and so on. Childrens' labour is intensified during the summer holidays. A child can ear 3-5 L.E. a day as a construction labourer whereas the wage paid for agricultural work is less - 2 - 2.5 L.E. for picking in peak season.

The purpose of this section has not been to evaluate male incomes in terms of their quantitative contribution but to attempt to demonstrate that these incomes are related to social settings different from agriculture. It can be seen from the information collected that while women are related more to income from the land (since they have to manage the work), male incomes increasingly relate to state functions - the army, migration and the rising informal sector and network of transport in the district town.

All these job opportunities and services have been rapidly developed in recent years, while the frame of agricultural production within the local setting remained basically the same. Apart from the opportunities offered by the state within the process of the destruction of the estate during the Nasser period, and the increased job opportunities through migration since 1977, a tremendous rise both in construction and in local transport can be observed. As described before many of the males of El Warda are engaged in such activities, which goes hand in hand with the extension of market relations due to the expansion of the whole economy in Egypt; while women remain in the "backward" agricultural sector. Thus El Warda can rightly be called "backward" in the sense that it does not, and cannot participate in the modernization which the state aimed for, with the introduction of the "food security" programme mentioned in Chapter II.



(viii) Education in the Village

El Warda is greatly discriminated against in terms of education when compared to the neighbouring village (El Azab). Until now, there has only been one male from the village who managed to achieve B.A. level at a national university, whereas countless males from El Azab hold this degree. The average educational achievement in El Warda is to achieve a diploma in commerce, agronomy, accounting or electricity. This is considered as being of a lower standard than the national baccalaureat. The reason very few among the village never reach the baccalaureat level is that the children of the village never reach the percentage of marks required to register in secondary schools. As an alternative they are immediately transferred to "diploma" level. As a consequence, two strata are created in education, of which the diploma level students are stigmatized and have less chance of continuing to higher education. The ratio of male:female diploma holders in the village is 13:1.

There are two main reasons why girls are discriminated against in terms of education. First, all peasant houses concentrate on educating boys at the expense of girls. Most of the women interviewed stated that they could not afford to educate all of their children because the expenses of schooling in addition to private lessons are too high. In addition, girls have a functional role to assist their mothers with labouring. Coincidentally, all women stated that their girls, upon entry to primary school, were not "clever" enough to study and learn - (*di malahash fil 'Alam*). Second, it was reported that the remaining females studying in the final diploma year had not even reached the percentage required for a diploma degree.

They were forced to attend private schools, where fees reach 25 L.E. a year. I was informed that for 3 years whole classes of females failed the final year examination which was, and is, not the case for males. The three females mentioned before have failed the final year at least once, if not two or three times. The belief that girls have less chance of scholastic success is an important reason why peasants are reluctant to educate their daughters. Educated males and the only educated female have not worked on the land since they acquired their diplomas. The only male graduate from the national university is treated with great veneration when he returns to the village (which is seldom). He is called *ustadh* (mister). Although he is only 27 years old he is addressed as *ustadh* by peasants who are much older than him. He is very seldom seen in the fields, except during peak seasons when he could sometimes be seen assisting the females of his family for an hour or two.

Private lessons, implicitly imposed upon children in preparatory and secondary schools are a phenomenon worth studying on their own. Preparatory pupils usually take private lessons in 2 subjects (very often the children have major weaknesses in English and French language). These private lessons are a great burden for the peasant household since every subject costs 2-3 pounds a month. This is in addition to the annual fees for schooling, books and clothes and is a severe financial drain especially where there are more than two children to be sent to school. Many women also complained about the cost of transport to and from school which costs 20 piasters per child per day as the school is in Sinbilaween. Many parents make deals with the

taxi drivers to pay the sum of 250 piasters a month instead of paying on a daily basis.

So far, I have attempted to portray the general features of El Warda. In the following chapter I will explore the major changes in women's labour.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES

1. "The Fellah in this mode of exploitation earns less than those who are payed by piecework. He is obedient, submitted to a very severe discipline, the slightest negligence, the slightest disobedience would cost him a salary of many working days".

   "Also in the estates worked by daily wage labourers, there exists real employed brigades, whose only occupation consists of supervising the daily wage labourers, during all the time and in the most strict and rigorous manner".

* * * * *

CHAPTER IV: WOMEN'S LABOUR BETWEEN STRENGTH AND EXPLOITATION

1. The Household

Women's contribution in agricultural production is very often underestimated in Egyptian official statistics (Tucker, 1976:5). The fact that a great number of women mainly work during peak seasons and shift to other activities during slack seasons might be one factor leading to this lack of recognition of their labour, as Tucker sees it. However, a more common as well as general understanding of this fact would be, that women's labour in staying in the shadows of men's labour, remains socially unrecognised and thus underestimated.

This chapter aims - through the material description of women's labour in different domains - at shedding some light on the type and nature of these underestimated activities.

Before describing women's work it is necessary to establish the given social conditions under which this labour is engaged. These social conditions are, in the micro setting described here, determined through kinship and co-residential relations. The economic unit to which women's labour is confined, the "peasant household", remains thus tied to kin and co-residence groups, (see for a possible contradiction between a mere economic and a kin group and co-residence related definition of households Friedman, 1984: 46-52; Wallerstein, 1984: 20-22).

(i) Household Composition

During the early years of their marriage, the young couple shares its income with the older parents. When the first child is born and specifically when the relationship mother-daughter-in-law worsens (which is the traditional case in so many houses in rural Egypt), the young wife urges her husband to separate from the extended family.

As for the mother-daughter-in-law relation, migration and the general decrease of males from the village could lead to an increasing tension within the family, and specifically to an increased subordination and control of the migrant's wife without being supported from her husband who usually plays the intermediate role in the early years of their marriage. (Taylor, 1984: 8).

Interestingly enough, the problem of scarcity of space, and the high land prices, renders physical separation from the extended family setting harder than ever. There under these circumstances, separate households are created within one house. Each family thus maintains separate budgets and belongings, and the mother-in-law might not have authority at all over the wives of her sons. However, the separate parties continue to share given resources both on land and in the house.

Nevertheless, and rather related to the type of peasant houses observed by Ayrout, there exists a pattern of 'female biased' households where a generation of old women still exercise authority and control, even if the younger generation has separate budgets. In this category land and property belongs to them as widows, or because they were traditionally independent in dealing in the

petty trade, in managing the budget, and owning some property (land or money, or a share of a house.

These women maintain the social networks within the village not only because they are old, known as wise and have a knowledge in advising young women in methods of healing, but also because they maintain strong social networks for work on land i.e. they cooperate in picking and seeding. Their household assists other women in going to the market. Among this category of women, e.g. an equal division of tasks allows a better work organisation both in house and land.

If we look at the 40 houses of the village, it in fact becomes impossible to separate "households" in a clear economic way. As just described, in many cases, couples, even when separating their 'household' from the one of their parents or sisters in terms of cash dealings, would continue to share resources both on land and house. While in fact they could separate 'households', they continue to share in a type of extended family relations, in the restricted sense of being forced to do so, due to the given scarcity of resources. While in fact they follow an ideal of the 'nuclear family', they continue, or feel forced to continue in sharing a wider economic enterprise of self employment of labour and of self sustenance.

In overviewing the set of the 40 houses which constitute the village, I will focus on the unit of the household as a descriptive category. The obvious combination between the semi-extended family and the semi-household situation, lead us to distinguish between various sets of households as they are

related to the common usage of habitat and land. Thus, three basic categories can be distinguished:

Category 1 is a nuclear family (setting), living in a separate house. We would find a single person, or couple disposing both of the house and land. In this case relatives could share in the household and its income, but they would remain in a marginal or dependent position.

Category 2 is a setting of a combination of "households" sharing both house and land, however maintaining separate budgets of cash incomes. In this case, however, the whole setting would be controlled or maintained by one "head" (male or female) of the family, who in general would maintain his or her property rights on habitat and land.

Category 3 constitutes a setting of a combination of households sharing both houses and land, under the conditions of separate budgets of cash incomes. In this case, however, the setting would consist of inheritors, who might have divided the land, or not, but live in one house and are involved in a type of collective maintenance of the property. All cash incomes would be divided up. Separate cooking is also very frequent in this category.

If we now look to the individual cases of the 40 houses of the village, we find the following distribution of the three categories:

A) Categorization of Houses by Kinship

Category I	Single parent houses and offspring	21

Category II	Houses with Elder 'heads' (males and females) with married sons	10
Category III	Inherited Situation, no elder heads, brothers and sisters	9

When separated households (separated in terms of units of common share of cash income) the village amounts to 65 households sharing in 40 houses. These 65 households are distributed according to the above categories as follows:

B) Composition of Households/No. of households per house

	CATEGORY OF HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION		
	I	II	III
No. of Households 1 Single Parent House	21	-	-
2 Households in One House	-	8	5
3 Households in One House	-	1	2
4 Households in One House	-	-	1
5 Households in One House	-	-	1
Total number of Households/ Category	21	19	25

= Total number of Households in village = 65

These 65 households share 38 plots, while 4 others have bought plots from the agrarian reform thus it amounts to 42 plots.

As we can see from these figures there are a great number of these households (which are based on a semi-extended and semi-household situation). The family relation guarantees a collective access to resources (kind) while the household relations sets the condition for a separate consumption of cash income. This picture thus reveals a case of malleability of the local institution of reproduction which was not foreseen in the theoretical discussion of household composition (see Wallerstein, 1984). Women's work and their social status, play a crucial role in the process of making use of the given resources and inter-relating incomes appearing in the form of kind and those appearing in cash.

In order to understand the forms in which women's labour and status contribute to the use of resources, one can accordingly distinguish five categories which then refer to the types of gender relations within the 40 cases.

Category A: In this category we find a gender situation which could be described in terms of 'wives of absent males', but could also comprise widows, divorced and single women, and wives of males in Cairo, army and jail. Women in that case maintain both land and house while males are away. They are given full responsibility, and have no old 'heads' to control them. The general feature of this category of women is that since they have no males at all to assist them, they are forced into cooperation and maintain strong women's social networks in order to avoid wage labour.

Category B: Another group of households can be identified on the basis that males live in the village but work outside it, thus leaving agriculture and house maintenance to their wives. Even though there might exist one peasant in the house, he is socially marginalized by brothers bringing cash incomes from non agricultural work. Efficiency in work on land depends upon the number of women, girls and children working on the land. It is in this category that one is most likely to observe a total separation of cash incomes and cooking.

Category C: In some cases we find individual women (widows) heading a set of households. In this category women have always played a domineering role even during their youth by controlling the budget, the petty trade, and also by owning some property, and some valuable belongings. Even though the eldest son might separate his cash income, the mother still plays a powerful role in owning land. In this category both young and old women placed stress upon the importance of sharing cooking, and agricultural tasks among women. It was also noticeable that these women played an important role in cooperation on land and household, in exercising their knowledge in health, in informal religion, or in curing animals.

Category D: In other cases we find one man being the head of the set of households and maintaining the position of a traditional peasant. In this setting agricultural tasks still rely on family labour. The traditional sexual division of labour is still maintained. Women in this category play an important role in maintaining the domestic cycles (even though there is a general

decrease in the domestic cycle in the village [see Chapter V, (i)] . They have greater freedom in petty trade and market than some women of Category B. It was observed that 3 cases among this category were considered as the well off of the village. They have the biggest plots of land and highest rates of male education. Accumulation of wealth also takes place through the ownership of tractors and half trucks etc. Thus, concerning this village, those households which are better off are the ones where the men did not migrate. In this category it was also observed, that the well off peasants stated the importance of equal sharing in tasks, in cash incomes, and also in sharing cooking and food.

Category E: In this situation it is males who are present in the village and keep their wives in seclusion, forbidding them to do any type of work outside the house. Field and market activities are forbidden. This attitude is to be found among the young generation of state employees or males working in non-agricultural jobs, and is an attempt to confine their women in the 'middle' class' role of the housewife. Young couples living in extended families, are most likely to develop what one could call "housewivization", which becomes a symbol of higher status. This attitude generates frequent fights between the elder generation, which is in need of women's labour on land, and the young males who want to "seclude" and control their wives. Nevertheless, in peak season, women of this category could only go to the fields if their husband was present with them. Both males and females in this category would argue that it is "shameful" that women go out of the house.

Number of cases in categories based on gender relations:

Category A	16
Category B	11
Category C	2
Category D	10
Category E	1 house and 4 households.

If we try to interpret the significance of this categorization in terms of gender conflict we would find the following:

From Categories A, B and C one can deduce that in around 2/3 of the houses, males are occupied in the generation of cash income through non-agricultural activities. Here one can see the gap between the sexes in their division of activities where women are kept on the land and left in generating incomes in kind. Furthermore, in most cases where males remain living in the village together with their wives but engage in non-agricultural jobs, and refuse to work on land (Category B) frequent clashes on dowry, land property, distribution of cash, women's control of petty trade and appearing on the market place are to be observed. More then anything these constant fights represent a state of excessive disjunction between typically "males' culture" and typically "women's culture".

In Categories C and D, there still exists a type of balanced sexual division of labour, where 'traditional' feminism still plays a predominant role. These two categories represent a structural difference in terms of gender relations as compared to categories A, B and E. It is in this category that there is a strong counter culture of and resistance by women.

These, then, are the social conditions under which gender relations, and labour organization are structured. The following section will describe women's activities within the village setting.

(ii) Everyday Activities

In everyday life, women usually wake up around five or six o'clock in the morning. They prepare breakfast, composed of milk, tea, white cheese and bread. If they have buffaloes they then milk them and take them to the fields. If they sell the milk the women line up in front of the milk collector, who passes daily at 9 o'clock. During peak seasons women would be seen in the fields from early morning until sunset, with a pause in between for lunch.

The space related to women's everyday activities is mainly restricted to two areas, the village/houses and the field (*al bait, dar-wal ghait*). Apart from going to the market once a week, all social interaction is restricted to these two areas.

During June-July 1983, peak season coincided with the Islamic month of fasting (*Ramadan*). Peasants considered it as the hardest season they ever had. Harvesting and threshing wheat, the hoeing of cotton on the other plot before irrigation, had all to be done at once. Ten days later, peasants had to seed rice. Women and men alike reported that they could only sleep a few hours a day. Since all the village fasted in a temperature that reached 40^{o}C, the majority of agricultural operations were performed very late at night.

Cooking and washing dishes along the water canals are strictly female activities. As in many peasant societies, fetching water from the pump, or the canal, as well as watering buffaloes are also female activities.

Despite the fact that constructing and repairing the house as well as mud ovens, are traditionally done in family, and among relatives, today it is mostly women who are seen performing these tasks, even though kin members, and husbands would be present in the village. For instance (Anouar, Category B was seen more than once repairing her house without the assistance of her husband. (Dawlat, Category A who is divorced and lives with her mother constructed the final stage of her house, for a very long period of time without any assistance from her two brothers living in the village. Again, making mud bricks is work traditionally performed by both sexes, yet today only women and children are performing these tasks.

Child rearing is usually done by the mother-in-law, or by young daughters who are responsible from a very young age (8-9 years old). Once a child is around 4-5 year old he is left to play in groups around the village.

Many households, have started to use the semi-automatic washing machine (which costs around 90 pounds) for clothes. Since very few households possess a water pump inside the house, the majority of women carry water to the house first. Second, they wash clothes by hand along the water canals, while heating the water with the kerosene cooker. They then, pour hot water into the washing machine with the clothes. Thirdly, they then

have to rinse the clothes with water from the water pump.

(iii) Diet

Bread is still considered the major item in the peasant diet. It is usally baked in great quantities. Rice is the second item after bread. If the household owns a buffalo, half of the amount of milk produced would be consumed after being processed to cheese, fat and butter. Rice and milk are cooked in the traditional stove. The diet of peasants also includes vegetables and green herbs of the season which could be cultivated on small plots at the border of the field. Meat is cooked during feasts, births and weddings. Households which raise chickens and are better off, cook them once a week.

(iv) Baking

Baking is an important social gathering. It is means of exchanging news and gossiping. Women cooperate together by baking in one oven to save straw and help each other in handling bread. There are around 15 traditional ovens, and fights have never occurred over who and when uses the communal ovens. The majority of women bake every 3 or 4 days. Women make it a matter of pride, by stating that there are regional differences in the way ovens are made and bread is baked. Bread should be as white as possible since it symbolizes the cleanliness of the household and the good management of the women, and this explains the importance of mixing in American white flour. "Here we would be disgusted of the bread baked in towns ... we will never buy bread ... and we will always bake it in our way". There are different types of bread which are baked for different occasions. *aish ghalla* is round and soft while *aish bat* and *aish rougag* is dry, and thus could be kept

for longer periods. During feasts huge quantities of biscuits are baked, for women compete with each other to demonstrate that the household is well off.

In a study done in a suburb setting of Cairo (18 miles south of the capital) in a village called Kafr al Elow, El Fakhouri states that it is frequent that several families would hire a professional baker for about 25 piasters (1972) (El Fakhouri, 1972: 22). Such a phenomenon would be impossible in El Warda, for women give a significant social importance to bread baking. It is also an important female public gathering, where males never interfere, and if they do they are ridiculed by women since it means interference in women's domain.

(v) New Patterns of Consumption

The process of economic liberalization while related to a more extensive integration of the rural society into the wider frame of the world capitalist system, has however important cultural implications, in a very practical sense.

The commodities which are produced as industrial consumer goods, in everyday peasant life, take on a value of their own. If such commodities have an ephermeral value in western societies, which is based upon over production (Baudrillard, 1972: 11), among third world countries, the use of such commodities implies a different dimension. For example, nothing in the village is thrown away, everything is recycled.

In the majority of peasant households, we find in general four or five items of such culturally valued consumer goods which are the following:

1. All the village possesses television sets, except the 3 old women mentioned in the local setting.
2. Tape recorders and fans are also very widespread.
3. There are around 3 or 4 butagaz ovens, which were bought only 2 or 3 years ago.
4. Only two houses possess a refrigerator and a mixer.

It is interesting to note that butagaz oven did not alter the way women bake, since they continue to use the mud oven. Furthermore, butagaz ovens did not replace the kerosene cooker *'Babur'*, which is used both in house and field for boiling water for tea. On the other hand, the continual shortage of Butagaz cylinders, which are bought from Sinbilaween, renders the usage of these ovens more disadvantageous than the kerosene cooker.

By coincidence, it was revealed that the two houses which possess refrigerators, were the ones which were involved in the vendetta (which will be analysed later). I was often told "once the family of El Aidi bought a refrigerator, the Thambu family had to buy one too, to show that they were better off."

In all the houses of the village, these commodities were always located in the main sitting rooms, so that they are seen by casual passers by. From washing machine, to television, or fan, all these goods were covered by a hand-made, knitted colourful piece of cloth, to be protected from dust, but also to be exposed as a symbol of social status and wealth.

These goods symbolized the outer world, i.e. that they were not for everyday usage. For instance, chinese cups and plates were also displayed in the sitting room but never used. A mixer was always kept in its original cover paper, and essentially used to offer lemon juice for guests, whereas peasants would traditionally offer tea, or coffee if they are better off. When a guest is in the house, the television or fan, or the tape recorder is put on as a sign of hospitality. A washing machine could be frequently used, but would always be located in the sitting room.

Another implication of these dynamics of change, is to be observed in male body behaviour. For instance, among young males, a tendency is to adopt modern dressing styles, such as wearing trousers, and jeans is to be noticed. On the other hand, while they remain in the village they tend to wear a different type of white *galabeyya*, which is gradually replacing the traditional one and which bears a resemblance to the male Saudi dress, as well as being very impractical for agricultural work. Letting hair grow longer, smoking foreign cigarettes, wearing electronic watches, handling machines and speaking the language of television i.e. the dialect of Cairo versus the village dialect, are becoming means of male differentiation vis-a-vis their local setting which is dominated by female presence.

These changes both on the body level, and the penetration of consumer commodities, represent the social image of what the home life in Cairo called *'Masr'* - of the high culture - would be. This image is perceived through fascinating pictures on television,

through personal experiences of males, who worked in Cairo, or through migration. (All these are issues on their own, but which are referred to here in a rather necessarily allusive way.)

Of course women too have a share in consumerism, they too watch television. Yet decifering the code (Featherstone, 1985)[2] is left to the males mainly because of their supposedly (real or unreal) better knowledge of the outside world. (This is an issue for a separate study. I am only relating it here to stress the fact that the introduction of consumer goods and media in the village are also factors of shaping a new understanding of gender roles).

2. The Market

The day of the market is considered to be a day of meat, of sweets, of going to the district town. In many ways it is the day of women. Going to the market does not only entail buying and selling, it is also a social event, since like many women's activities it becomes another opportunity to chat, gossip and pass time in an agreeable manner.

Since women control the domestic surplus in animals and grains; it is they who appear as the real sellers and dealers in the market "public". Thus, when a woman is considered as the "bank" of the house, if she is old and has a 'knowledge' as peasants would say, she goes with her young son to choose him a fertile buffalo (Hanem, Category C). If she is clever (*shatra*) she can after five minutes decide whether or not it is a day of profit to sell her poultry or her vegetables. (Hania, neighbour village, Balamun). Bargaining is self evident, even though it is useless in many instances. Knowing how to deal in the market entails a specific gift, as peasants would say.

Every Thursday women go to the market, alone or in groups, in the collective taxi of the village. Most women stated that they can never fix a precise budget for the market since it rather depends upon their economic situation. For the households which are somehow well off, women spend around 7-10 LE a week for 7-9 persons. Women with no males stated that they would never exceed more than 5LE a week and the maximum would be 25 LE a month.

As mentioned before peasants seem to have a clear conception of the role of women in the market. It is also perceived as women's place for leisure, as well as their right to control the household budget. "Women too have to get freedom ... we men enjoy ourselves in the coffee shop ... women have to have a leisure time by going to the market alone". "A man is nothing without a clever woman". "We peasants have a precise philosophy about what women should be doing ... and is produced in the house". (Zakaria).

"A woman must have the control over things (economy, market), so that she be respected". "A man is a river and the woman the dike". "Wealth is accumulated through women". All these were statements repeated by both males and females from Category C and D. The women's powerful role coincided with the fact that there was little fighting between sexes.

On the other, 'secluding women', distrusting them in terms of money dealings and specifically in controlling the domestic surplus could become an issue of gossiping against a whole household, or a family. As a reaction to this, women seek for alternatives

such as stealing from their husbands, which seems to be a current phenomenon.

(Zeinab, Category D) for instance was married at the age of 14-15 to a 50 year old man from a neighbouring village to work on the land as a substitute for his first aging wife. Zeinab said that she was forced to overwork on land, and in building her first husband's house. Both wives were beaten, undernourished, and never had money although her husband was rich (owning five feddans, 2 houses). Both wives thus had to steal grains and money. "We made his life a hell, since he spent all his money on hashish, and we worked ... this is why I ran away from his house and tried everything to divorce". (said Zeinab).

However, if peasants (such as Zakaria, Manazel, Hanem, Hania) are to be considered as the norm, they are in fact with the actual changes becoming the exception. First, with the fact that the young generation of males in refusing to remain in the social position of 'peasants', the 'philosophy' related to the realms and freedom of women is increasingly being neglected. If not contradicting the image of modern lifestyle.

Today, many young women are not allowed to go to the market place alone. They are mistrusted on the level that they are potential thieves from their own husband, or that they could be seduced by other men since they are naive, or simply it is becoming a sign of social distinction to avoid the 'mass' on Thursdays (Samir, El Rai, Abdel Rehim, 'A del, Negah, Sami - all Category B). Second the sale of domestic surplus of the household is tending to become a rare phenomenon in the village. For many

women the function of selling in traditional markets has disappeared with the decline of the domestic cycle. (See the section on the decline of the domestic cycle). "It is me who controls the budget, and we do not produce anything anywhere in the house to be sold ... I do not see any reason why I should go to the market on Thursdays, or why should it be my wife who goes" (said Sami). However, during Sami's absence for two years in Iraq, his wife (Anouar) was the head of the household because Sami did not trust his mother. Sami's behaviour is viewed suspiciously by the majority of the women in the village. "He never trusts his wife, he listens too much to other people ... and he is a hashish smoker ... men like him one should avoid", said many women. To sum up the argument; mistrust and lack of confidence between the sexes is one of the consequences of the breakdown of the traditional gender relations. Women, on the other hand, use their informal means to defend their positions such as stealing from their husbands' incomes; or such as gossiping against them in the public of the community; by blaming them for spending all their cash for their own pleasure such as smoking hashish.

To make clear the notion of mistrust, I cite the following example: Atiat's husband (Category 1) has been migrating to Iraq for 7 years now, with short return visits of one month. Ever since then Atiat has held the copper ring *(khitm)* to deal with the administration and the land. Her husband (Mohammed) bought 2 feddans of the agrarian land reform land on long term credits which he is still paying. When Mohammed returned in 1983 for a month, there were rumours that he had the intention of marrying another widow. During Mohammed's absence, and after that, Atiat knew his intentions and she managed to transfer the land

property to her name. "Now he can marry as many women as he wants, I have the land under my name, he cannot throw me out" Atiat said. Therefore, while traditional norms allowed greater autonomy and control for women in the sphere of the market and petty trade, lack of trust, imposition of a new type of segregation upon women, is an outcome of males becoming "modern".

3. The Field

(i) Feminization of Work in the Field

Esther Boserup's "Women's role in Economic Development" clearly shows that colonialism in Africa, by introducing new machinery and techniques in agriculture, has led to a widening gap in labour productivity and income between the two sexes. Males appropriated the usage of machinery and learned the modern methods of cultivating cash crops, while women were left with the traditional manual methods to cultivate subsistence crops. (Boserup, 1970: 56).

In Uganda, for example, Europeans neglected to instruct women when they introduced new agricultural methods, for they apparently seemed to show little interest for female farming systems. In many cases, this led to enhancing the prestige of males and lowering the status of women. Through education, and learning technical skills males appeared as scientific and modern, while girls, who were mainly taught by their illiterate mothers, became more identified with traditional behaviour, backwardness and superstition. Such characteristics were in old times a common trait among all villagers. (Boserup, 1970: 55-56).

A lot of similarities can be drawn between Boserup's empirical observations, and the impact of agricultural transformation that occurred in El Warda. These changes have mainly altered the sexual division of labour on the field. They can be summarized in the following points:

1. Mechanization is replacing human labour, but more specifically male labour which is increasingly diminishing in rural areas.
2. There has been a feminization of certain agricultural operations which were strictly male functions. Moreover, women are today seen performing what was considered as a male activity. The reverse is never the case. What is left as non-mechanized tasks, are socially considered as insignificant manual functions, to be done by both women and children (since they are both remunerated on the same level).
3. There is a strong tendency among young males, to refuse and despise work on land. Any job is socially better than being a fellah. "The most retarded and stupid of this village earns 3 or 4 thousand LE in a few months in Iraq ... I am not stupid to remain on land - I leave it to the women of our family" (Reda, a returning migrant 18 years old). "My husband is a proud man, he decided to travel to Iraq because he is landless and did not want to work in other people's land as a wage labourer - he sees it as shameful" said Ro'ya (Catergory A) who works herself as a wage labourer during peak seasons.

4. From various observations be it that returning migrants live on leisure (*Fusha*) during the interval period before returning to Iraq, be it that state employees who would play with their children near the cotton field in which their women are working or cooperating with each other, be it that they would take over official tasks such as dealing with the cooperative, males would openly statethat they earn nothing from this work, and it is too stupid for them. We find that males underestimate and despise various types of peasant work, while at the same time they find it quite normal that their wives do it.

(ii) Impact of Technological Change

The following section will mainly describe the major technological changes that led to the alteration in the traditional sexual division of labour. The technology introduced, however, was very well "adapted" to the needs of the peasantry. Very often, for instance, new machinery was linked to old tools, which demonstrated great communal creativity on the level of the village.

First, the tractor has saved a lot of time and energy apart from the fact that peasants use it in multiple functions. One tractor man (Sheikh Zakaria, Category D)performs all operations to prepare land before seeding for the whole village. In previous times, making rows for cotton, ploughing and smoothing land required long hours of labour, with buffaloes. Today, ploughing one feddan could be done in an hour. The tractor is also used for power generating when linked to an aluminium water wheel. (In the area all wooden water wheels have disappeared). It also generated power for threshing. One Feddan of wheat is threshed in 3 hours.

The traditional *murag* has also disappeared. Second hoeing cotton fields was considered one of the few agricultural operations which required male physical strength. It was done by a big hoe *(fa'as)* which weighs around 5 kilograms. In the last five years, El Warda, as well as in the neighbouring villages, witnessed the appearances of an iron plough which is used in between cotton rows. This tool is manufactured by smiths in Sinbilaween. I have found no evidence related to the history of this tool. It is quite primitive and does not differ from many ploughs in different peasant societies. It was probably recreated in town with the phenomenon of decrease of males in agriculture. This plough is pulled by a donkey. A child of around 13 years, or a woman would hold it behind the donkey.

Thus, contrary to Boserup's observation that in Asian societies where plough cultivation implies an increasing male participation in agriculture and an exemption of women's labour, (Boserup, 1970: 25) concerning the case of the village here, this new plough has led to an increasing participation of women in agriculture.

Third, peasants have reported that there has been an alteration in rice cultivation[3], to reduce human labour. In previous years peasants cultivated rice, following the method of *shitl*, which consisted of seeding rice in small basins, and planting them 20 days later in wet fields. One Feddan of rice required 10 males and females in one day. The new method consists of soaking a whole sack of rice in water for 24 hours. Seeding is done a day later with a small piece of wood *(shadia)* (size of the hand). The operation

is called *'zira'a bil shadia'*. One Feddan is seeded in one morning by 5 females or girls. All activities performed with a *shadia* are considered as basically female tasks.

Fourth, harvesting wheat is considered a male activity. Houses which are better off, and have insufficient males, use wage labourers. However, women were seen harvesting. During November, 1984, a new machine for harvesting rice was introduced.

Fifth, in October 1984, peasants applied a new technique of joining a small motor to the wooden threshing machine (which separates grain from straw). The speed of production is tripled, and human labour to turn the wheel is not longer needed. The manual threshing machine was usually given to be run by poor women in the villages (El Warda, Balamun, El Azab), who are landless, divorced, widows or orphans. These women worked mainly during peak seasons, for limitless amounts of hours, and were paid in kind, according to the amount of *ardabs* (a unit of measurement) threshed. Working on this machine guaranteed them subsistence in grains and straw.

Thus, with this new type of mechanization one would presume that a whole strata of poor women in many villages, will suffer from being deprived of subsistence alternatives.

Sixth, a child of 12 years old can drive a tractor to plough the land; women on the other hand, are never seen dealing with any type of machine (water pumps, tractors, cars, bicycles). The remaining manual agricultural functions are socially devalued in

the sense that children as well as women or old males could perform them (cotton picking). Wages of women are the same as for children, (*Ayal*).

Finally, male migration has led to an increasing female responsibility, symbolized by the fact that they are given the copper stamp (for signature). Here two authors have argued the following:

> Many of the women whose husbands migrate for employment abroad arguably feel more autonomous, while the husband is away (Hamman, 1981: 11).

Khafagy similarly in her study of the village of El Kabbabat (80 km south of Cairo) argues that through migration women seem to have acquired "new power" with the increasing work and the new decisions they had to take during the absence of their males. This power is manifested in the public spheres through women dealing with institutions such as the cooperatives which gave them increasing self confidence and more importance. (Khafagy, 1984: 19-20).

This argument however, does not really analyse the problem, even if it is true that women take over productive functions during the absence of their husbands. Women do take over 'public roles' and deal in public spheres that were not possible in former times. Nevertheless to fully understand the real change in the position of women one has to take into account the social mechanism which operates in the relation between the sexes i.e. the pride and self consciousness of males participating in new social roles outside the community and through outside experiences. These changes are

transforming women into the underestimated category of the left behind and "Peasant". This new social position of women, in fact deprives them of their strong and 'autonomous' role which is related to the 'traditional feminism' within the household.

(iii) Alterations in Sexual Division of Labour in the Village

Type of Agricultural Operation	Sex	Machines or tools Used
1. *'Ray'* Irrigation	Males	Done by a *'saqya'* (water wheel) made from steel called *'Tambousha'* and run by an electric motor. There is a *'ghafir'* (night guard) responsible for running the water. It functions only by a collective agreement among the tenants of the basin (opening the canals could be done by children and women)
2. *'Harth'*, *'Zahf'* and *'Takhtit'* Ploughing the land and preparing it before seeding.	one tractor man performs it for the whole village.	A tractor
3. *'Ziraa'* Seeding cotton, rice or vegetables.	Mainly females today.	Performed with a piece of wood, size of the hand called *'shadia'*
4. *'Khaf el Kutn'* removal of the surplus cotton plants.	Females	Performed by hand.
5. Removal of bad herbs in between crops.	Females	Performed by hand.
6. *'Azig'* hoeing	Originally males, today females.	Males with *'Faa's'* Today, females with a *'Mihrath'* (plough).

7.	*'Rach Kiwami'* Widespreading Fertilisers.	Originally males, today females	
8.	Picking cotton worm	Children	Compulsory function by the state. Every smallholder is forced to send one of his children for work in the fields for 50 days. Children are paid a lower wage labour (25 piasters) than the market price.
9.	Distribution of cotton pesticides	State	Performed by planes which distribute pesticides according to basins.
10.	Applying fertilisers and working under the animals/ transporting mud from house field as natural fertilisers.	Mainly females and children	Donkey and hand
11.	*'Gama'* Cotton collection	Mainly females and children	
12.	*'Damm'* Cutting wheat	Males or wage labourers but also females.	Performed with a *'Mangal'* (scythe).
13.	*'Darss'* Threshing	Originally co-operation the family. Today females and children.	Performed by a tractor. Use of the motor to generate electricity related to a threshing machine.
14.	*'Darawa'* Separating straw from grain. Rice Maize or Wheat.	Females/or males. Mostly considered the poor females.	Performed with a modern manual machine.
15.	*'Malkh'* Transporting crops from fields to village.	Originally males but also females.	Donkey carts. Today Camions.

16.	Cutting *'Bersim'* clover for daily buffalo feeding.	Only females.	With a scythe. Transported by donkey.
17.	Measuring fields after cultivation and specifically if it is for share cropping *'Muzaraa'*	Males	
18.	Milling/storing and cleaning grains. Whitening rice.	Females	Performed by a diesel machine. Males who run it. Several families own it.
19.	Sale in the market	Females and males.	
20.	*'Mua'wla'* contractorship.	Originally males to bring *'Anfar'*, today females are mainly contractors upon children.	Collect the children from the village and supervise them during work on the field.
21.	Cooperative and administration	Originally males, today females with no old parents or fathers-in-law take the total responsibility of land, and dealing with the administration.	

4. Women and the Conception of Work

Given the fact that women and children's labour is vital for the reproduction of the peasant household, As indicated in previous description, different types of work are subject to different social evaluations. These evaluations of women's and children's work will reflect these changing norms.

In traditional Egyptian peasantry as described by Ayrout - and Ayrout related his work to an ideal type of lower middle peasantry - women's work outside the house, for various specific activities, is welcomed. It is valued by men as a source of richness, both when women help for certain activities (picking and seeding in the field) (Ayrout 1963: 58) or go to collect water. The balanced and ritualized gender relations entail and afford some Public activities and no shame is seen in a peasant woman's appearance on the field, or in the street of the market. "There is no shame in work" peasant women of this strata would argue, which is a prevalent case in the neighbouring villages (El Azab, Balamun). However, there always remained an upper strata of peasants in the village, who enclosed their women and deprived them of any public appearance in the village. This strata is /limited to wives of *umdas* , state official, or those simply having larger property. This strata always imitated the norms of the urban upper classes.

This strata of the larger property owners always considered public appearance of women as shameful. For example, in El Azab, there is a well off peasant who owns 5 Feddans, a car and a water pump, who is known to never let his women work in the field, as a sign of higher social status. They are not even allowed to fetch the water. All work on the field is done through wage labour.

On a third level, we find that through the rising poverty in the villages, a considerable number of small peasants were forced to send women and children as wage labourers.

Linked with this fact, women appearing in the fields or working in the public, for wages, which is called *'Tisrah'* meaning wandering, was and still is considered as "shameful", as a sign of poverty, inside the village, since women in that role could undergo humiliation (no longer beatings but insults).

Thus, the 'realm of necessity' by which in traditional peasantry the women's public appearance in work was welcomed and seen as a sign of prosperity and peace inside the peasant house, is now labelled as a realm of poverty. (Many women of the village could be included in this category, D^5 (Category A, B).

Furthermore, with male involvement in state posts, and migration, there is a growing part of the poor strata of peasants becoming involved in the "outside". In this arena, they relate their own work and existence with the "high culture" of the urban middle classes of state employees. This traditionally poor strata now develops values to compete with the traditional ones of the village. Here again values are adopted which go against the 'realm of necessity' of the traditional middle peasants. Public appearance again becomes shameful. Where this shamefulness remains at the level of rhetoric, it only shapes a pattern of fights between the sexes. Here again the State, through imposing covering the head in all public schools, is enforcing the image of the muslim, urban and educated woman versus the popular and peasant image of the woman working both in the fields and in public spheres. Thus, while girls of the village, when leaving for town, and school wear the veiled uniform on their return, they dress in their traditional clothes.

Similarly many migrants who travelled to Saudi Arabia said that *harim* there were "very polite, they are all veiled, they are not like ours here who have no shame in talking loud, or walking the way they do". This was said because migrants were impressed by the fact that they never saw a woman's face there.

Elasticity of norms within the village and among women becomes the solution to this obvious contradiction between the ideal "secluded and respectable" woman, and material conditions that work imposes. Thus, "shameful work" would depend upon the context, time and life cycle of women.

Any woman from the village would state in public that she never works as a wage labourer outside the village. In reality, when she would be seen doing so, she would justify her actions by arguing that this is not real wage labour, but that she is rather assisting a relative or a neighbour who urgently needed women on the land. Furthermore, young unmarried girls have always worked as wage labourers, in slack seasons in the nearby villages. However, they would always refrain from work during the period of engagement and before marriage, arguing that housework is more respectable, and less tiring. After marriage, and specifically if the income is not sufficient (landless or migrating and delaying sending money) women are to be seen returning to work on the field. For example Soheir who is 24 years old (parents, category D,) was married at the age of 18 to a Koran reader from the nearby village. She remained with her husband for 2 years and was forced to work as an ambulent fruit and vegetable merchant. Despite the fact that this activity is

valued as marginal, and mainly poor women are forced to do this,[4] the issue of "shame" was never brought into question. In fact Soheir's husband always refused to work on land since he 'reads and writes' (but nevertheless had no job). Thus, the household relied basically upon Soheir's income. After several "beatings" and fights Soheir returned to her parents' house, without divorce.

During that period of non-divorce, non-marriage, Soheir had freedom of action, she sold her fruits and vegetables in the market; she worked as a wage labourer and she went any place she liked to go. Last year, after long negotiations and fights about her personal belongings, Soheir managed to get a divorce. Since then, she confined her activities to housework or working on the land of her father. In fact, Soheir received a new bridegroom, and thus there was a second possibility of marriage.

However, during last September (1984) Soheir was still not married, for rumours became widespread that her bridegroom was going to marry another woman. Soheir was thus seen again in public, working as a contractor for the nearby village. Her activity consisted mainly of bringing children from El Warda to pick tomatoes. She returned to work, because as a divorced woman she had to support herself, despite that fact that she lived with her parents.

Soheir is to be considered one case among the very numerous women in the village, who during their lives had to "hide" their activities, or go into public spheres according to the life situation.

In this section I have explored the basic changes that women's labour has undergone in the spheres of the house, market, and field. arguing that the feminization of agriculture did not necessarily lead to an enhancement of women's social position. The following section will examine the impact of women's increasing participation in public spheres on three other domains: the domestic cycle, cooperation, and the role of dowry as a property belonging to women.

FOOTNOTES

1. Related to consumerism and consumer culture, this idea is supported by Mike Featherstone who points out the importance of "the socially structured use of good, with class background, or what Bourdieu calls habitus, a key formative factor: the working class use goods in different ways from the middle class and those suggested by the media publicity for expressive lifestyles." (Featherstone, 1985: 8).

2. For the effects of mass culture in the Third World, as well as the way pictures are interpreted see: (Featherstone, 1985: 23-27). The author argues the following:
"...Far from assuming the same decoding of a given message it can be argued that texts are read in a variety of ways which are structured by the background of the readers." (Bourdieu, 1968: Eco 1981, Owen Lewis 1983). Bourdieu for example remarks that the sybmolic codes embedded in modern cultural artefacts only make sense to those socialised into these codes, and that foreigners and different social classes view the same object through inappropriate codes".
(Featherstone, 1985: 24).

3. The government sent a group of local employees to visit the Phillipines and import seeds of rice. Phillipine rice is cultivated in the region since now two years. The majority of the peasants have been complaining about the yields. The cultivation of the seeds was compulsory since it was distributed by the cooperatives.

4. Here, one should differentiate between women selling the products of the household, as it was referred before in the Model and the traditional peasant household, and poor women who buy vegetables from the big town merchants as is the case here, and work as ambulant merchants.

5. In this context it is important to note that the whole village of El Warda is socially devalued by its neighbour village because they are not "free" peasants but were attached to the estate. Until today they are referred to as "animal rearers" *Kallafin*, as an insult for making "their Harim work from morning to evening", thus not respectable.

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CHAPTER V: FROM THE HOUSE TO THE FIELD
TRANSFORMATIONS IN WOMEN'S SOCIAL WORLD

I. The Decline of the Domestic Cycle

A common trait which is to be observed among almost all peasant households of the village, is the decline of domestic products from animals, for the last 4 or 5 years. Stauth mentions that the sale of buffalo products, eggs and poultry sale are included in the domain of women, which demonstrates their pride and cleverness in saving money for the house. (Stauth, 1978: 10).

Taylor on the other hand, argues that migration in the village of Dahshur led to the expansion of the agricultural sector, in the form of livestock, poultry and agricultural inputs (Taylor, 1984: 4). This however, did not occur in El Warda. Women rather intensified their activities on land. The purchase of land at even cheaper prices may even have meant using all the money saved.

The decline of the domestic cycle is manifested in the decrease or disappearance of poultry, the decrease of buffaloes, and the decrease of vegetable cultivation in between cotton rows in summer.

At least 25 houses sold their buffaloes to buy land. Among these, five women from Category B were forced to do so. In 3 cases this was because migrant delayed sending money. In the other 2 cases wives whose husbands were in jail had to pay for lawyers. However buffaloe raising, like gold, is the basic source of investment.

During September 1984, 4 households again managed to buy small buffaloes, which were all shared among families. Those owning buffaloes said that they usually consume half of their dairy products for cooking (as well as for production of cheese and fat). Half of the produce is sold, the average earning is 7.50 - 10 L.E. a week. Otherwise, dairy products are bought from the market.

These changes are mirrored in the household expenditure patterns. For example, the purchase of "White" American flour has become an essential item for baking. A household of 6-7 persons would usually buy 2 sacks of *fino* white flour a year, for 7.50 L.E. per sack. Yeast, is bought from one woman, who runs the petty commerce of the village, who buys it from Balamun. If a mother should need a cup of milk or an egg that she does not have, she would buy a glass of milk from the neighbour for around 7-10 piasters. The same applies for pepper, salt and sugar when the stock of the household (which is usually bought from state cooperatives [for alimentation]) is ended. Cigarettes and children's sweets are always bought from the petty traders. Only when there is a guest, who must be an outsider from the village, or during feasts are such items offered as a sign of hospitality. Of course, tea is continually offered to everyone.

Perhaps these types of monetarized relations of household consumption can be generalised for the whole village. Very often factors such as fights within the family in not paying off sisters or brothers would be a clear reason for not sharing surplus milk, poultry or eggs, etc.

Second, the majority of women stopped raising poultry because they died from the effects of rice pesticides. None of the women interviewed sold poultry. "They get lost, or they die, it is a harrassment for us, it is better to buy them from the market". However, around five still raise ducks but the number would never exceed five.

The sale of a pair of doves, or eggs or one chicken becomes a matter of survival for poor women of the village (Category A). The same applies for the sale of rice (which is not the case of other grains). Since the amount of produce has decreased during the last few years, women selling rice are those who are in great need of cash, since they sell a basic item of the household diet. (4 cases, Category A.).

Among Category D, 5 cases reported that they had to buy rice for consumption, because they did not manage to reduce the amount delivered to the cooperative.

Third , mainly women belonging to Category A reported that they have stopped, or rather reduced cultivation of vegetables in between cotton fields. However, the phenomenon is still widespread in the village. Women said that planting vegetables needed a specific care in irrigation, which was only possible when land was under the control of males. They added that they organised their time better during the presence of their husband; it was possible to make profit through the sale of vegetables in the market.

Other reasons could explain this decrease. For instance, many peasants who cultivated vegetables complained about neighbours stealing their produce. They said that they could not control such thefts anymore. This is why many women replied by saying it is "not worth it anymore".

Finally, with the decline of the domestic cycle, a change in the norm of women's cleverness in saving from domestic surplus is occurring. "Women's cleverness" on work in the field is gaining a greater importance within women's networks (as will be demonstrated in "women and cooperation"). This explains why peasants so often repeat "you would know the clever woman from the stupid one, in the field". "In this village women do everything, they do not need men anymore, they are themselves men". On the other hand, the sale of domestic products and rice, are taken as a sign of poverty. Mainly poor women sold rice, while well off houses kept the surplus to be offered to cousins in Cairo, and during feasts.

2. Women and Cooperation (*Muzamla*)

"Here all women cooperate", "here, all the village goes on cooperation", "here, those who go on cooperation are those who have *harim* ".

Cooperation in certain specific processes of agricultural production, specific types of work shared together in the field today, is one of the most striking relations in the overall pattern of relations between households. This section, will

, analyse the re-creation of this non-monetarized relation.

Cooperation in the fields today, is a formal mechanism of sharing work in a non-wage relation which has only been created through the land reform mechanism. Fifteen years ago cooperation on land was non-existent by the mere fact that all the peasants of the village were working in the big state as permanent wage labourers (*mawazzafin*). Cooperation at that period of time was not required.

On a second level, informal types of reciprocal exchange of commodity inputs between households seem to have existed in the village since long ago. However, under the changing social conditions different forms and patterns are taking place within these informal types of reciprocal exchange. Cooperation on land has become a formal type of work organisation. This is due to the fact that there are definite preconditions, that allow peasant households to penetrate the sphere of cooperation. As a general observation, cooperation entails certain general processes with high labour inputs and specific crops and seasons. Moreover, it generally requires low skills, or what was in old times included as the work of children (*'ayal*). For instance, cooperation mainly takes place in cotton picking, rice seeding and threshing wheat (all these agricultural operations do not require very skilled labour). On the other hand, not all households would call on cooperation in harvesting, for it requires male labour.

Cooperation means that, if there are 30 or 35 households which have preconditions for cooperation, an informal schedule will be made concerning every 10 or 15 households, about whose land to start work on and on which day. Cooperation thus functions on a rotation manner. Thus, during peak seasons, two or three networks

of cooperation in the village would function at the same time. During the last cotton picking in September/October 1984, of the 40 houses of the village, only eight households had to bring in, partly or totally, wage labour. Fights about the schedule of cooperation never occurred in the village.

(i) Preconditions for Cooperation

Firstly, the household which goes on cooperation must have a sufficient number of women to exchange in labour. It is basically women and children who cooperate. If a household offers a large number of women and children, it will receive the same number on its own field. The more women and children there are, the quicker the land will be finished and the more one makes a profit. For example, Sheikh Zakaria (three feddans) who cultivated last September three quarters of a feddan of cotton, was the first peasant to finish work on his land. The members of the household who worked on the field were the following: Zakaria and brother, the two wives and two children of 13 and 15 years of age. The number of peasants working on the three quarters of a feddan was 26 persons. Apart from Zakaria and his brother the remaining peasants cooperating were women and children. Work starts early in the morning and continues until sunset, with a pause in between for lunch. The work atmosphere is very pleasant, women sing, joke, compete by showing who is first on a row of cotton. Tea is boiled in the field, and a tape recorder is running to listen to popular songs. The household of Zakaria was among the first ones to finish cooperation on land since they are six persons to be exchanged (they are in fact four persons to be exchanged for children go to school and

only work on holidays). However, Zakaria is considered an exception by the mere fact that the household entails two peasant males who go on cooperation.

If a household sends, for example, two women to cooperate (a mother and a daughter), it will receive two other persons to work on the field. If, for example, household A has received on its own field one girl from household B, while household A had already sent two girls to work on the land of household B, household A would receive from household B the amount of a wage of the girl who did not come on the land of household A. Thus, in case of any alteration in the relations between households, this non wage relation could be easily turned into a wage relation. Moreover, going on cooperation also means that the household should cook for all the people who work in one's field. This implies cooking huge quantities of food for 20-26 persons and therefore, more than one woman is involved.

The second condition for cooperation is that the household must have a sufficient amount of land to receive labour. For otherwise, women would go on wage labour in and outside the village. For example Fayza (Category A) is a female tenant exploiting 15 Kirat. Since Fayza exploits less than one feddan, she stated that she would go on cooperation the year in which the size of the cotton plot is bigger. The following year she would work for wage labour since she does not need so many people to work in her field. After having finished her fields by cooperation Fayza would also work for wages if labour is needed in, and outside,

the village. On the other hand, Dawlat (Category A) is a female who was evicted (by her brother who is a tenant) from land both she and her mother worked. Although the relationship between the brother and sister is not so good since he took the two feddans he now leases, yet Dawlat would go on cooperation so that peasants in return would work on her brother's land. At the end of the season, Dawlat's brother would pay her a wage for the number of days she cooperated for his field. There are two reasons why her brother (Sami) proceeds in this manner. First , this year, Sami could not exchange his wife for labour because she delivered a baby and he himself does not work on the land. Thus, the household was short of labour. Secondly, by letting his sister cooperate instead of his wife, despite the fact that they are not on good terms with each other, Sami would pay Dawlat less than he would pay to bring in outside wage labour (*Anfar*). The case of Dawlat reveals how family ties could play a role in lowering wage labour, specifically for landless and poor women.

The third condition that regulates cooperation is the reputation of women in work. A girl or woman has to be reputed as clever in work so that she is taken in different fields. "I only take clever girls in my field for rice plantation ... if I take a stupid girl she will spoil my land". As a general observation, many households would show off so that everybody wanted to cooperate with them. On the other hand Atiat actually faced serious financial problems as her husband had not sent any money from Iraq for six months. Atiat has been known, and specifically in recent times, as not being a good worker on land.

Some households reported that she cooked very badly, others reported that she does not work at all at home and watched television all the time. A third group claimed that she does not clean her house at all and ignores the buffaloe and that this is why she had to sell the animal. During last September/October, none of the peasants interviewed wanted to go on cooperation with her claiming that it would be a great loss to receive her in one's fields. Thus, someone like Atiat is increasingly being marginalized even from the spheres of women's networks. As an alternative, Atiat would have to wait until the whole village had finished cotton picking so that some relatives might help her. However, it was reported that she had to bring in partly wage labour.

If cooperation does not occur due to the insufficient number of women or children, other "ideological" factors, including fights, could be reasons to exclude certain households from entering the sphere of cooperation. Thus, apart from Atiat's case we reverse the question and ask which are the households which did not go on cooperation in the village.

Case No. 1: the household of Mohammed Mansour, (Category B). The household consists of three married brothers with their wives and children, two sisters of which one is married, and a mother. Among the three brothers only one male is a peasant and the other two are tractor drivers. The mother is too old to work on land. The married sister was kept in the house because her husband refuses to let her work in the fields. The reason behind this is that her husband is not a peasant but a truck driver and thus he considers it shameful that his wife works on land.

During last summer, two of the three wives of the brothers had a big fight with their respective husbands before cotton picking and left the house for at least the third time (in every stay in the village, we could observe that women left the house of their husbands to return to their parents' houses during peak seasons). The third remaining wife was about to deliver. Thus, among this big family, only two persons were available to work on land and one girl to be exchanged in cooperation. On the other hand, the brother peasant was never seen cooperating in any other people's fields. This is also due to the fact that he is known in the village to be a "bad peasant" who neglects work. Moreover, I was told that the peasant brother had many fights during last year, with at least four women of different households. Thus, as very few people cooperated with this household, work on the fields took a much longer time.

Case No. 2: the household of Hafez El Aidi (Category B). The family consists of a peasant father and his wife, three sons of whom two are married, and four children. Two sons work for the state and earn salaries over 60 L.E. The family also exploits three feddans of land. Almost nobody in the village would cooperate with this family. During the last cotton season the two state employees were seen in the fields assisting their father in carrying cotton for one to two hours, but never picking cotton or working on land. There are several reasons why this family did not go in cooperation: firstly, since the two sons are state employees they would refuse to work on other people's land. Moreoever they would refuse to send their wives for cooperation even if this would cost them the wages of 3 or 4 children as it did during the last season. The two state employees consider

themselves of a higher status than the rest of the village, thus it would be considered shameful to see their wives working on land. However, when it occurs that female labour is urgently needed, the wives would be seen working under their husbands' supervision. Moreover, although the mother is a peasant, the sons reported that they would not let her work in other people's land. Secondly, Hafez El Aidi, the peasant father, was involved in the vendetta that took place in 1975 and killed a woman from another household. As a result of this, four households boycotted him totally and threatened him that revenge killings would occur in the future. Two other households which are related to the enemy of Hafez El Aidi and among which is the only tractor owner of the village, basically talk to him. However, these two households would refuse to have any type of economic dealings with him or send women for cooperation.

Thirdly, Hafez El Aidi had a tremendous fight with his two sisters who claim that he took from them land without paying them off. Since last year they have decided not to deal with him and humiliate him in public on every occasion possible.

Fourthly, Hafez El Aidi also had a brother who was killed in the vendetta. The widow is claiming that Hafez El Aidi did not give her the rights of her husband in land. The fights have lasted for the last four years. During March 1984 Hafez El Aidi attacked the wife of his brother, beating her and causing a serious head wound which resulted in a long stay in hospital. This meant that another household broke off relations with the family of Hafez El Aidi. Thus, all these fights played a very important role in

making Hafez El Aidi and his sone hire wage labourers. Moreover, the children who worked on his land were all brought from outside the village. This family was not only isolated from the sphere of cooperation, but also from the social networks which exist in the village. The fact that Hafez El Aidi was a *ghafir* and has the legal right to carry a gun, has meant that many households fear a potential killing in the village.

Case No. 3: Zeinab (Category A) is a female who rents one and three-quarters Feddan. Zeinab's husband is a cook in Cairo and could only come to the village three days a month for a holiday. Of course the husband is never seen working on land. However, the husband always stated about himself "I am not a peasant ... and I don't know how to deal with land ... my wife, too, does not know anything about land, and I do not let my women go and work on other people's land". One of Zeinab's daughters is the only educated girl in the village. Work on land for this girl is regarded as a big humiliation. "I never work on land, I am educated ... I want to do my own projects with my capital". Moreover, since she was lately married to an army volunteer who earns more than 80 L.E. per month, it was reported that the girl is not allowed to do any type of activity apart from cooking and washing dishes. The second sister is illiterate. However, she also refuses to work on land claiming that she is a tailor. For most agricultural activities Zeinab also requires wage labourers. Her husband stated that the production of agricultural land is mainly for household consumption. Cash money is mainly provided from the 100 L.E. of the salary of the husband and a big part of it is paid in wage labour.

Case No. 4: Sania Hamed (Category B). The family exploits two and a half Feddans and consists of the husband who is a taxi driver, the wife who is a peasant, and seven children. Since the children are still too young and the husband never works in agricultural activities, there is no one to assist the wife. The wife reported that most of the agricultural activities are monetarized. However, in the future the situation will change, when the children will be able to be exchanged in labour. On the other hand, the household relies on the daily earning of the husband, which is around 7-10 L.E. "Land for us is mainly for feeding the family ... Although, however, this year I had to buy surplus rice because the production did not suffice for the whole year".

Case Nos. 5 and 6 are two cases of old peasants whose sons have migrated, and who do not have enough women or children to work on land, thus, they bring in wage labourers.

Case No. 7: Ramedan (Category B), whose husband is also a taxi driver. This young couple has no land. The wife would work on the land of her father-in-law who exploits two feddan. She would receive a wage lower than the average due to family ties.

Case No. 8: Abdel Rehim (Category B) is a carpenter and has been in the army since 5 years ago. His brother together with his wife migrated and left him to exploit one and a half feddans. Abdel Rehim stated that he never wanted to be a *'fellah'*, and his wife never worked on land. He thus brought

in mainly wage labour and was never seen working on land.

Another point which might be revealing concerning cooperation is that the phenomenon does not exist so extensively in the nearby village of El Azab. The reason might be that the nearby village is larger in size and population. The average landholding is bigger. Nevertheless, cooperation did not disappear from there entirely, rather it takes another form. It is said that those who go on cooperation in the nearby village are the poor people and those who possess no land. "Cooperation there is not like here ... for here everybody knows everybody and has a relative in every house". Cooperation in the nearby village means payment in kind.

Those who help in any activity and specifically if they are poor, will be rewarded in straw *(tibn)* or rice straw which is widely used for household consumption, such as washing dishes in the water canal, or to be burnt in the stoves. The decrease of cooperation in the field in the nearby village could also be explained by the fact that there is an increasing tendency to shift from traditional crops to vegetables plantation (however in El Warda, none has shifted to vegetable cultivation). Azam from El Azab for example, who owns three feddans of vegetables, would bring in mainly wage labourers, consisting of the women of El Warda. They would often work as wage labourers in the nearby village during the slack seasons.

To summarize the argument: the more women and children one has to exchange, the better cooperation occurs within the network itself. A sufficient amount of land is required as

well as the reputation of women which is essential for recruitment. Receiving labour on one's land among women of the village is considered as a social gain. Profit making is one of the crucial reasons why peasants would go on co-operation, and the pride of it should be stated publicly. For women, reputation is not only linked with recruiting people, but also with good cooking and abundance in making food and distributing tea. Thus, work in the field is also taken as a social event. Both males or females who started manifesting certain "urban attitudes" such as keeping the *harim* in house, exclude themselves from not only the network of cooperation, but also from the social network which functions basically upon women's social activities.

It is a fact that women have always worked in the fields. However, in old times women worked as poor wage labourers, being 'controlled' in the fields by a rigid system of supervision, which was maintained by the males of the estate. In other words, male presence was always required on the fields as an essential factor to organise labour through coercion.

Today with the general decrease of male presence, women are the essential controllers of labour except for usage of machines. Thus the re-creation of cooperation relies basically on women's networks, and is a major substitute for wage labour. From the cases mentioned, those who consider themselves of "higher status" in the village, and those who are considered of lower status (Atiat), do not enter the sphere of cooperation.

(ii) Reciprocal Relations Between Households

Reciprocal relations between households seem to have existed since a long time ago, and were vital for resistance against the tyranny and hierarchy of the system of the old estate. To analyse the relationship between households without referring to reciprocal relations, would be a serious omission in this research.

If there is a limited amount of selling milk or eggs between neighbours in the village, on the other hand, there is a tremendous exchange between households of all sorts of tools. For example, there are five *mihrat* (iron ploughs) which are privately owned and used by the whole village. I was told that fights have never occurred at the level of exchanging the plough. Tools such as hoes *(faas)* sacks, ladders to climb to the top of houses, sieves, and casseroles are also very widely exchanged. There is only one iron (which is heated on a kerosene cooker) for the whole village. Its function gained an importance when education and consequently uniforms were widespread in the countryside, and thus the item is continuously exchanged among the households of the village. There are also other forms of reciprocity, specifically among women.

In old times, there was a common reciprocal tradition among women in the village. Since intensive female labour was needed in peak seasons, many women used to leave the key of the house with children to give to their female friends. (Probably, from peasant stories, in old times no keys or doors for houses existed.)

Symbolically it meant that women gave the responsibility of the house to other women.

Leaving the key of the house to a female friend means that there is a very strong tie and that anything could be shared. If a woman has just delivered, her sister, or friend or her neighbour will take the whole responsibility of the household until she gets up again. In cases of crises, or emergencies, such as a child falling ill or a woman being pregnant, or an old man dying, taxi drivers would also be ready to transport patients, and offer cash money. Reciprocal exchange on breast-feeding the children created strong ties of brothers and sisters of milk between neighbours of the village. Women today call it *muzamalla bil ridaa* which is cooperation in breast feeding. There is thus a whole generation of brothers and sisters in milk who cannot, according to Islamic law marry.

Commodities such as television sets, washing machines, fans, mixers and tape recorders are never exchanged between households. Moreover, all agricultural operations performed by the tractor, such as threshing, preparing land before seeding, or drawing rows, are monetarized. The owner of the tractor (Zakaria) has created a real accounting system, in which he notes the inputs, outputs, and debts of every household in the village. This is also a very important means by which he can exercise his power through his knowledge of individual financial conditions. As a symbolic exchange, a special price (which is 15 L.E. instead of 17 L.E. to prepare land with the tractor before cotton seeding) is offered for the whole village. However, the owner

of the tractor stated that he could not afford to give more favours. "I cannot afford not counting ... I have a partner, fuel and repairs ... If I start preferring someone over the other, fights in the village will start".

Solidarity among migrants is also another important phenomenon that could be included in this section. Almost all peasants travelling to Iraq go in groups of three or four. In the receiving migrant country, they live together, if not in one room, in the same buildings called "the units of Egyptians". They keep very close relations with each other. During feasts they return together. Tape recorders have actually solved a major problem of illiteracy, and have become one of the most important means of communication between the outside world and the village. Usually a collective tape is sent from Iraq, from the group of males to the whole village. Every individual migrant would send greetings in a ranking manner, i.e. from old to young peasants, closest relatives, friends etc. There would also be news exchange, wives wanting money to pay back land bought through credits, promises of sending money as soon as possible, promises to return for weddings, exchange of gossip and small fights. The tape or tapes would be passed all around the village and the whole community would have the right to listen to it.

3. The Circulation of Gold and the Role of Dowry

> The dullness of women's attire is relieved by striking ornaments. Round the neck they wear strings of big yellow or blue beads, on their

> wrists a number of bracelets made of glass or gold; these in the latter case are the family bank, and come often as part of dowry. (Ayrout, 1963: 72).

> I would never put my money in the bank ... because they would always delay my business ... and papers go and come ... and you know how is administration here ... we peasants invest in gold ... it is our bank and we handle it easier ... our women would wear it and keept it". (Abau Doukhan [d]).

"Bank? No we never go to the bank .. we are peasants when we invest, it is in gold or animals ..." (Zeinab).

Gold is considered as an important means of investing and saving. It has the advantage of easy circulation, in that it can be bought or sold at any period of time. Migration and buying land required considerable amounts of cash money. The majority of women said that during the last 5 years they had to sell their gold at least once.

Gold is included in the sphere of women in the sense that they wear it, guard it, and have the right to sell it. It is also a means by which they can exercise power upon their husbands, and the whole household. It is not shameful if a woman sells her gold to rescue the household and she is respected and rewarded for this action. However, if the male does not replace it, the wife could turn the issue into a public humiliation, and threaten him socially.

"The clever woman" would be the one who knows when to buy and sell gold. The value of gold increases during peak seasons,

but more specifically after the sale of cotton. Weddings also increase during that period of time, while the value of gold decreases during rice plantation. There are thus "times of selling and times of buying gold".

Dowry has gained a significant importance today. Males are supposed to bring gold, cash money, and a house or a flat in town. The wife's family brings furniture. If fights are suspected the clever family would demand that a list of the wife's belongings be written, and signed. "In case something is stolen, or sold we go to court against the husband". The list, (*El Kashf*), remains with the wife' s family.

Furniture mainly consists of chairs manufactured in town, in the style of Louis XV. A wooden cupboard and bed, chinese plate and cups, aluminium casseroles, and a butagaz oven are all items included in the dowry.

Copper also figures in the dowry, and is highly exchangeable. There is an incredible recycling system of copper in the whole region. I was told that the majority of young couples sell their copper after six or ten months of marriage. There are specialised merchants in every village who buy the used copper for half the price to recycle it in the market.

> The wife retains ownership of her furniture she brought on the wedding day, her gold or silver bangles, and the money for what she raises and sells. Thus she can save and even lend to her husband, which gives her a certain authority. If he maltreats her, she can appeal to her relatives,

> or even return to her father's house, imposing her own condition for return - the gift of a dress or earrings. She is more independent of her husband than he of her". (Ayrout, 1963: 122).

Today, dowry has become a crucial reason for fights taking place between married couples, or between families that are still discussing marriage. Gold or copper that was sold and never bought back again, promises of paying money by males or just refusing to give back the furniture that belongs to wives, are often occurring. Perhaps one reason why such a phenomenon was not so widespread in old times, is because dowry consisted of very simple items. Old women would joke about it and say:

> In old time there was nothing to offer ... my husband's *Shabka* (which is the sum males give for marriage) consisted of a pair of wooden shoes *(Koubkab)*."

Dowry consisted mainly of a copper casserole, a big tray, mud pots for cooling water *(gulah)*, a bed and a cover, and a rug made from straw *(hasira)*. Wealthier women had a silver bracelet *(Khukhal)*, which decorated their feet.

Fights between families about belongings is one reason for marriage delays. For instance, Mazaya's bridegroom disappeared from the village after having signed the marriage contract, due to a fight over dowry. Mazaya's family searched for the young man for three years to settle the divorce.

On the other hand, if belongings represented the source of women's authority, the situation seems to have been reversed.

During my several stays in the village, four fights between couples occurred. In all these cases, the issue of women taking back their belongings was a crucial point of the fight. Threat to exercise violence against the wives' family through powerful relatives were constantly referred to. In three cases males publicly stated that they did not care whether their wives would divorce or not. However, none of the women would get any of their belongings.

In two different cases, women were thrown out of their husband's house, after beatings and overwork. Dawlat for instance had to go to court to demand her belongings, which she never managed to get. Soheir had to give up her gold which was taken by force as well as her furniture so that she would get her divorce. In three other cases, women stated that they felt they had been robbed by the fact that their copper was sold and never bought back.

This study however, does not aim at idealising the past, or to claim that gender relations among the elder generation of peasants were harmonious; for such fights seem to have always occurred and could not be evaluated as being a specific trait of peasants. The overall changes, the types of coercion, and stealing between sexes is taking a structural dimension. Males for instance do not take into consideration any more whether the wives would use the "public" and village norms against them since these norms do not count anymore.

In the next chapter, I deal with certain traditions embedded in peasant culture, arguing that with the overall socio-economic

changes described before, such traditions are mainly perpetuated by women. They play a crucial role in identifying with it and become a major source of their culture.

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CHAPTER VI: FEATURES OF WOMEN'S CULTURE

1. Magicians, Popular Medicine, Midwives

Sheikhs[1] (magicians), popular medicine, barbers and midwives are the still persisting, informal alternatives by which peasants seek solutions to their everyday endurance.

Inefficiency of the formal medical system is one factor that explains why such traditions are perpetuated.[2] As a general attitude peasants have little confidence in doctors. Both males and females have complained about the humiliating treatment in public hospitals. "They treat us like buffaloes, (*Bahayem*)". Private doctors are on the other hand, becoming expensive. "There are doctors who take 2 pounds for consultation, others take 5 pounds, the good doctors take 10 pounds for only five minutes". The first contact with doctors for many women is related to the identification of their age. They have to reveal their breasts and teeth and feel very much humiliated. This procedure is carried out for girls whose parents never registered them. A week before their weddings, girls are sent to doctors to be given an age. The legal marriage age is 16 years old. However, underage marriage is still prevalent.

Consulting doctors is usually done in emergency cases. Symptoms of *Bilharziose* , which are known to all peasants are cured through certain injections issued by doctor's prescription. For other types of illnesses, such as broken bones, haemorrhoids, eye problems or rheumatism, peasants would consult 'popular doctors', of both sexes.

In a study made about popular medicine in a village of Beni Suef called El Gadafoun (150 km south of Cairo), F.A. Ismail has pointed out the fact that the persistance of such traditions is related to the ecological isolation, illiteracy and the lack of formal medical assistance (Ismail, 1984: 502). As for the case of El Warda, despite the fact that it is not isolated from the town district, recourse to traditional means of curing is still very widely spread. Peasants only see doctors in acute cases.

Women more than males seem to have a great access to sheikhs and popular medicine. "Here sheikhs are an affair of women" reported many males. "Half of our women go to sheikhs".

F.A. Ismail demonstrates in his empirical study that women are the ones who frequent popular doctors most, since they are culturally responsible for sterility, precarious children's death etc. (Ibid: 503). Ayrout mentions the same observation:

> The magician or sorcerer, called *Shaykh* or his female counterpart, called *Shaykha* with his charms, his formulas, his perfumed sachets and incense and his magic cures, would be a serious rival to the muzayen, if his customers were not chiefly women. He may live in the village or merely pass through. It is to him that the country women have recourse in order to cast out *Afarit* (devils), or to secure the help of ginni ..." (Ayrout: 1963: 100).

For many women, the sheikhs give a great psychological relief. He or she, by talking and listening to them, gives them, hope and advice for the future. A sheikh is still the

preferred solution to care for children.

> The sheikh is much better than doctors ... instead that the one of us pays 5 or 10 pounds or even more ... and you know the medicine is expensive ... The sheikha would take from us 2 pounds ... she has a good hand (*yad Mabrouka*) she would pass incense (*Boukhour*) several times on the body of the child ... put a cream all around him, and he is healed ... We did this with all our children" (Manazel, Sania, Category C) (Fikrat, Fardous, Category A).

Another factor enforcing magical practices is the high rate of infantile mortality. Many women who had been married for 5 or 6 years lost if not one, two children. Among the older generation of women, I often heard:

> I delivered in my life 10 or 12 children, 6 or 7 remained.

Infantile mortality is a major reason for women's insecurity.

> We have to wait for a while before registering a child in town, a lot of them die, and it is a hassle to run for papers and then the kid dies".

Until the present, a lot of young girls in the village were never registered: "My parents forgot to register me they were not sure that I would survive"; "you know how this old generation was stupid, my family never registered girls because they would get married, but they registered males because they thought that they would have problems with the army".

High infantile mortality rates are thus perceived as a fate (*qadar*) that no one could escape. Doctors are in that case helpless and nonsensical. For instance, peasant's explanations for such frequent infantile deaths, is that every human has a replicate *ginni*, sister or brother under the earth. Very often if the child is born too pretty, or too blonde and white, its *ginni* replicate becomes jealous of the attention given to the child, and thus will seek to kill it. The role of the sheikh in that case would be as the intermediary, who would talk to the *ginni*. Some mothers reported that they often knock the floor and beg the *ginni* to be merciful.

When male children are born in poor health, their mothers would dress them as girls, with earrings, bracelets and talismans (*Higab*) so that they are not hit by an "evil eye".

I was told that when both males and females are left alone along the river or the canal, where they could perceive their reflections on the water, they suddenly become possessed by a *'ginni'* who penetrates their bodies. On the other hand, any enemy or jealous neighbour is capable of doing a charm that could harm a person, in rendering his or her behaviour abnormal. One could also 'pick' a wrong charm that was intentionally made against another person, if one passes in front of specific paths or doors. The possessed person, usually plunges into a trance phase, or he or she would "refuse to work" or obey anybody's orders. Thus, the role of the sheikh would be to remove from that "sick" person the charm. *(Amal)* and cure his or her abnormal behaviour. The sheikh deals with sterility problems with girls.

who do not have bridegrooms and problems with "people who are nervous with their bodies" (Sania, Fatouh , Tahra, Fikrat, Kamthat, Sheikh Zakaria).

Soheir Morsy in her study on "sex differences and folk illnesses in an Egyptian village" (1978) analyses the phenomenon of spirit possession which she calls *''uzr'*, in terms of social relations of power differentials. Women are more likely to undergo *'uzr'* than males since they are subject to male authority. (Morsy, 1978: 614). The phenomenon of *'uzr'* was explained by the fact that it offers a legitimate enforcement of the social position - although temporary - of both males and females who occupy in the village and among the families, subordinate social roles, but which may change in a life time. (Morsy , 1978: 613, 614). In addition to Morsy 's explanation of the *'uzr'* phenomenon, it was noticed in El Warda that the mechanism of plunging into a "trance phase" is also used by individuals who already occupy a higher social position in the community. *'Uzr'* here could be a justification for ascendance in the social ladder. It could also be interpreted as an act of one's acceptance in the village despite the fact that he or she is richer. For instance Sheikh Zakaria, who is the only tractor owner in El Warda, underwent a trance phase only after he bought the tractor, and started to accumulate wealth. Since then, and despite the fact that he is not very old (40 years), he is called sheikh.[3]

Infantile mortality is not only caused by deplorable hygienic conditions, but by tremendous misuse of medicine. Toufaha (Category C), for instance, has already had two children who died at the age of one year: "I always took my children to the doctor, but they both died. I followed their advice, what can one do, when they were thrown by an evil eye". Toufaha's third child was born very sick and weak. During the first year of his life, because of doctors' advice, the child was mainly fed white industrial powder (*Bebelac*), saccharin and antibiotics. His mother thought overfeeding the child with rice and tea would render him healthy.

Second, peasants attributed the deaths of 2 children (12 and 14 years old) this summer, to injections against Bilharziose, which seem to cause a general weakness in the body.

Thirdly, the distribution of unsophisticated pills without any instructions, lead women, even those willing to take them, to misuse them. "I take the pill for a while, and stop when I am tired"... "I do not take them every night", etc... All these are reasons why peasants dislike, and mistrust formal medicine.

Information about the best sheikh or sheikha is transferred by old women, always willing to mediate for their young cousins. They are used to travelling 15 or 20 kilometres to visit the sheikh. Women would go in groups, by cars, buses or trains. The trip could last for a whole day. Sania for instance is used to travelling every 15 days to see her friend the sheikhah and to bring to her other women. For her, the trip is mainly for leisure (*Fusha*).

A sheikh or sheikhah is usually considered to be a non sexual person. This is why if they break the rule they could be beaten and suffer aggression from the whole mass of the village. One often hears about sheikhah "so and so" who never married ... and refused all the pleasures of life ... now she walks around wearing a sack of raw material in winter and summer" (sheikhah in Sinbilaween) or "The Sheikhah of the village of Abou Kebir, who is over 60 years old, and has all power to communicate with the *'ginni* , or of "the sheikhah of Balamun who was very pretty in her youth, but refused marriage and led a life of saints". Fights between families, fights over money, sterility, children's illnesses, male migration or, in young boys and girls, disobeying elder parents, are all problems needing solicitude.

Finally, sheikhs play a functional role, even if it is in reality not for a cure, since consulting a sheikh becomes a relief. Magic in our case, becomes the only space where women could complain about their everyday immediate problems and receive a reaction.

(i) Midwives and Barbers

Midwives and barbers are still important characters in village life. The barber of El Azab is known to distribute penicillin injections, pills such as aspirins, perform male circumcision and of course shaving. Every summer there comes a woman who wanders around in the village of the area to perform female circumcision which is widely practised in the village. The operation is done when girls reach the age of

10 or 12 years old. None of the young girls of El Warda escapes this operation, which seems to have been practiced since a long time agao. All the women insisted upon the importance of "perpetuating such a tradition to 'clean' the girls". Trained and licensed midwives (*dayas*) were allowed by the state to deliver and give injections all over Egypt. Since 1960, however, the state ceased to issue licenses. (El Khouli, 1982: 387).

In El Warda as well as in its surroundings there did not exist any licensed midwife. All midwives are experienced old women who have learned some techniques from other old trained relatives. There are two midwives in El Warda who deliver everybody (Fikrat and Manazel). "I learned to deliver from a cousin, and because I had 8 deliveries, so I followed this cousin on every occasion until I became known". (Fikrat).

As a general attitude, women prefer to be assisted by midwives, and at home, for the following reasons:

First, midwife costs 10 pounds, in addition to offering her a meal and sweets, which entails a social gathering and a pleasant atmosphere. Whereas during my stay a woman had a difficult delivery, and was transported to a doctor who asked for 50 pounds.

Second, women do not trust doctors. They complained of bad treatment. However, since none of the midwives are licensed, in case of difficult deliveries, they become reluctant to send women to doctors, since they could be penalised. Here the problem stems from the fact that formal medicine underestimates the role of midwives, but does not offer many alternatives.

As for abortion, women too have their informal means that are in many cases quite dangerous. In case women already have many children, the common method is to overwork and carry heavy sacks. This is how Fikrat lost her seventh child. Anouar had two abortions in 3 months (December, February, 1984) which coincided with the fact that she was continually fighting with her husband (Sami). She however delivered her fourth child in October 1984. For these two abortions her husband had to take her to the hospital after it was clear that it was a miscarriage.

If carrying heavy sacks does not necessarily lead to an abortion, the alternative would be to visit an experienced old woman like Geneina did, 20 years ago. Whether abortion is widely practiced or not would be difficult to answer. Perhaps women would always find a solution when there are too many children in the family. Very often this would occur at the expense of women's health.

The ritual of public declaration of virginity, during the first wedding night, could hardly be interpreted as mainly reflecting male chauvinism. Through women's accounts, it was noticed that such a tradition is perpetuated by old women. Public performance, among 4 or 5 witnesses is a crucial factor in the operation.

The young bride is supposed to stain 2 sheets with blood, among which one is hung in front of the bed for 2 or 3 days to be shown in public, while the second sheet is kept by the wife, and only shown in case a male puts into question her reputation.

Many women stated that although the experience was traumatizing, it becomes an important weapon to safeguard their reputation, against the gossip which regulates all aspects of social life.

The menopause phase is thus considered as a great relief, since the burden of delivery is removed. Women acquire a higher status. There are thus, certain cultural manifestations which must have always existed in peasant and also popular culture. However, women as the 'left behind' turn up to identify and reproduce such traits.

2. The Mawlid Anniversary of Saints

The Mawlid is an essential element in popular peasant culture. The Mawlid means the celebration of the day of the birth or death of a saint, *wali* . Usually the celebration continues for 3 or 4 days with a final night, *'El laila El Kebira* which is the feast night. The celebration entails huge public gatherings, which peasants from all over Egypt attend. The public gatherings always take place around the tomb of the saint.[4] Very often the feast entails millions of peasants coming from all over Egypt.

The "Mawlid" is not only considered as a religious event, but it is an important social gathering, an event outside everyday life. It is linked with consumption from the markets that evolve around; it is related to a time of feast , of joy and jokes. The "Mawlid" is also an occasion to see relatives living in different towns, it is an occasion to travel in groups of both sexes and to see new places.

Many peasants following suffi orders, *Turuq* , would camp in tents in groups and walk together with flags and emblems.

The most popular "Mawlids" that the village would attend during the year are the following. The feast of the prophet *Mawlid El Nabi, Sayeda Zeinab, Mawlid El Rifai,* which are held in Cairo, and *Mawlid Sid El Badawi* which is held in Tanta and *Mawlid Desuq*. There are around 4 or 5 houses attending about 14 feasts held in the delta during the year. However, this depends upon their timing, for not all "Mawlids" like the ones of Tanta and Desuq are held after cotton picking. It occurred during my stay that a "Mawlid" was about to be held in Mansoura, but it was postponed twice.

During the last four or five years there has been a revival in "Mawlid" attendance in El Warda. Apart from "Mawlids" mentioned above peasants seem to have had little knowledge of other "Mawlid" in the delta.

This growing interest started when a wandering sheikh from Banha, called El Sheikh El 'Arabi visited the village to instruct them in religious matters and suffi orders. He converted many families into the Rifai' Sufi [5] order. The peasants took from him an oath meaning that they would consult him, follow his teachings, and go with him whenever he informs them about every "Mawlid". They were supposed to follow him in the steps of God.

'El Sheikh Akhatha minhu el 'Ahd wi machy' in fi Tariq Allah'.

To become a member of the Rifai' order implies a possession of a card, issued near the Rifai mosque, in Cairo costing 2L.E. To

belong to a *Tariqa* implies solidarity and brotherhood in the group. For example, Ibrahim Abou Doukkhan stated that whenever he is in Cairo, he manages to get his tea, sugar and cigarettes with very few problems from the employees of the cooperatives in El Azhar area since they are members of the Rifai' order. This card also allows Ibrahim to camp around the mosque and avoid being bothered by the police force as he stated.

Both men and women travel in groups, with taxis of the village which also carry wood, and cloth for the tents. Food such as rice, bread, tea, the kerosene cooker and casseroles, are crucial items for the 3 or 4 days camping.

Peasants would camp altogether in one or two tents near a garden or a parking place, or in a small quarter around the mosque. On top of the tent there would be written the name of the village, then the region and the order the tent follows. Thus, if someone gets lost, or a relative who is living in town wishes to visit his rural peasants he or she would find no problem in orientation.

Tea and food are offered to everyone passing by. In many instances tents compete with each other as to who is the most hospitable, an atmosphere of brotherhood. Women play an important role during the feast. They are the ones who maintain the cleaning and cooking in the tent. Fardus for example has decided to serve in the tent in all possible *'Mawlids* , *Takoum bil Khidma* . She remains during the whole period of the "Mawlid" and cooks for everybody. Fardus was sterile for a long period of time, but did

a *Nadhr*, which is a conditional promise, that if she gets a child she would serve for free in the tents. The promise was realised, she got her child and thus she is fulfilling her duty towards this gift. Fardus and many other women are known to travel without their husbands, and remain in the tent for 2 or 3 days which seems to be a frequent phenomenon.

The "Mawlid" for the majority of women symbolises the best informal channel for religious practice for if many women do not pray in everyday life (see the section on women and prayer) yet their religious interests are mostly menifested in the "Mawlid" The *Ziyara* (visit of the tomb of the Saint), reading the *fatiha* or even participating in the *dhikr*[5] in the section of women (which is ritualised dancing in groups, aiming at the remembrance of God) are all means by which women could identify with religion. Visiting the tombs for many women becomes their resort for complaining against some tyrannic member of the family such as mothers-in-law or husbands, wishing to have a child, or marriage after being divorced or widowed. Children are taken to receive the *baraka* from the Saint, and cured of illnesses. Religious teaching in popular language is related to meetings in groups. Tapes of popular songs about saints' stories are sold in shops near mosques.

For many women it becomes their only way to see *'Misr'*. This is thus, one of the informal channels through which women can express religion and socialisation.

3. Women and Prayer

> Here none of the Harim pray ... they are anyhow stupid and ignorant in religion ... do they ever know anything".
> "they are just clever enough to walk behind stupid sheikhs"

repeated many males.

Bourdieu in his book of "le sens pratique" has referred to a previous work he has done about the Kabyle society in which he clearly referred to sexual separations intermingled with time and space separations. In his study he made clear that there are invisible borders, as well as symbolic representations of such borders between women and men's worlds. For example, he constructed for different domains of practice such as agrarian rites, cooking, feminine activities, life cycles durations of time, diagrams of sexual opposition. Dry, wet, polluted space, open, closed, sacred, non-sacred, movement in the inside-outside become oppositions that regulate the social and sexual division of labour.

> ...Il n'est pas besoin de revenir sur l'oppossition entre et le dedands, la maison, la cuisine, où le mouvement vers la dedans (mise en reserve) et le dehors, le champ, le marché, l'assemblée où le mouvement vers le dehors, entre l'invisible et le visible, le privé et le public, etc. L'opposition entre l'humide et le sec qui recouvre parcilement la précédante, donne à la femme tout ce qui a rapport, avec l'eau, le vert, l'herbe, le jardin, les légumes le lait, le bois, la pierre, la terre (elle sarcle pieds nus et

> pétrit la glaise de poteries ou des murs intérieurs à mains nues". (Bourdieu 1980: 357) (for more details see the diagrams of pp 354 and 258).

These examples taken from the Kabyle society might not apply to all societies of the Middle East and could not be generalised. However, influenced by the descriptions of Bourdieu, I would like to point to various facts which in the "fellah" tradition symbolizes such separations and are clearly manifested in religion and prayer. Perhaps through religious practices one could draw definite separations and borders between men's and women's worlds. For prayer in the village is a male affair, and more specifically a public affair.

For instance, along the fields there exists a small place where males could pray, as well as for social gathering and chatting. If a woman is passing, she may chat while standing, joke, however, never sit in males' public spaces.

On every Friday around noon, all the village becomes a public space for females, for males would be praying in the mosque. Friday for women is the day of cooking, baking and gathering. A male who remains in the village instead of going to the mosque is regarded as strange and women would ridicule him. If males have a public space for prayer women are never seen doing so. This is firstly, as it was said before, because young males have greater access to education, thus they learn religious practice. Secondly, despite the fact that a lot of old males are illiterate, yet they have access to the mosque, where they listen to religious teaching, while women are mainly left with informal channels of religion.

20 cases of women stated that they do not pray because they were never taught. Old women who went to traditional schools *Kutab* mainly knew the *fatiha* and some *surat*. Many replied that they never had time and that "God will forgive us because we women work a lot". Whereas males do not impose prayer, it is implicitly assumed that the elder member would pray for all the house.

Women are taught religion basically through ambulant sheikhs. Fikrat, (Category B) who is both a peasant and a midwife said that she consulted a sheikh for prayer, who told her never to practice it, since she is constantly dealing with blood and thus being polluted. "I always trusted words of sheikhs, because he solved my sterility ... I am not allowed to pray" said Fikrat. Fardus (Category D) said that she, among a big group of women, learned prayer under the hands of Sheikh El Arabi. "He taught us roughly how to wash ourselves ... he also taught us the fatiha ... told us to bend twice ... to do a mimic of a prayer and god would accept it".

Secondly, it was noticed that males are constantly ridiculing women's religion, beliefs and backward language. For instance, Sheikh Zakaria's religious practice differs significantly from the one of women's religion as it was mentioned before. Zakaria was called Sheikh after he passed through a "trance phase". Thus, he would urge peasants to build a mosque, he is very proud that he has read all the Koran and follows religion very strictly, as part of the enhancement of his social status. Moreover, he would always state that he never followed any charlatan such as El Sheikh El Arabi. It is true that Zakaria would attend 3-4 *mawlids* during the year, but never 14, as many women do.

It is thus a prevalent perception that women are related to charlatans and *ginni* . The milkman (coming from a neighbouring village) once said in a male gathering: "These women of this village are very wicked, they systematically mix milk with water to cheat me ... since I have no time to measure all milk ... and I know their ignorance I have invented a language for them ... I tell them the *ginni* spirit has visited me during the night to forbid me to take your milk ... and they believe me". said Abdel Rehim.

This separation between formal/informal, male/female spheres is manifested on the level of usage of language. In certain "sacred situation" women would perpetuate a specific ritualised language, which could be an intermingling of Koranic verses, with magical words, and prose entailing descriptions of tools, and situations of everyday life.

By sacred it is meant here situations when women would undergo trance phases, to communicate with outer world beings, or just old women of "knowledge" who would be called to save a dying child, by removing the evil eye. For instance Manazel (Category D) is known to read (such effective words) prose and has a healing hand. She would first start to cover the child in a magical manner, with her black dress, then would read the Koran and stories in which Mohammed the prophet is referred to as a shepherd, who touched buffaloes and sheep to render them healthy. The prophet would save the clever (*shater/shatra*), male/female peasants working on the field, and having their gallabeyya in the mouth (symbolizing that they work with their hands) from the evil eye (since they are

hard working). The salvation tool against the wicked, and mean would be the sickle for males, while it is the scythe for females. (*Mangal wal sharshara*). Notice here, the bigger tool is used against males, its sharp edge is meant to hit the evil eye and wound it, while the smallest tool is used to wound females' eye. Those who have evil eyes are usually referred to as the envious and non working, versus the clever working peasant.

Thus, there are certain cultural traits which are maintained and perpetuated by women to cope with everyday situations.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Here it is important to make a difference between the *'ulema'* of El Azhar who are called Sheikhs and the sheikhs who are magicians, or followers of the *sufi* orders. The former category constitute what Gilsenan calls the "Elite of Canon lawyers and religious scholars" (1973: 10). They have defined social role and represent the formal state religion; whereas the latter ones are rather representing the popular Islam.

2. Elizabeth Taylor in her empirical study of the impact of migration upon women in two villages in Giza mentions the decline of services such as health, education and agricultural cooperatives which were introduced in the 60s. This led the population to turn to the private sector. (Taylor, 1984: 6).

3. Zakaria managed to acquire his wealth through renting 3 Feddans, since 1969. He educated his 4 brothers, and together with one brother they toil the land, sharing incomes, cooking and habitat. Zakaria never migrated, toiling his land relies on family labour. Zakaria stressed upon the fact that he educates his brothers "so that they get a state post, in Cairo and land remains to me". He is considered among the very few males to cooperate with women and recruits them very easily to work on his field. He is trusted by them in the sense that he defends lonely women, whose husbands are in jail or migrated. It is in that sense that he is not considered as "dangerous" for the "harim". His wife is known to be very clever in maintaining the domestic cycle (3 buffaloes) (2 others shared with other households of lonely women).

4. For more detailed description of the "Mawlid" see Lane 1944: 246, 147, 521, 452, 470, 472. Concerning the proliferation of contemporary "Mawlids" in the Delta

see (El Khouli, 1982: 351-360) also (Gilsenan, 1973: 47-64).

5. Concerning sufi orders Gilsenan writes the following:

> "Sufism (*Tasawuf*) is the term applied to the mystical life as it has developed within the general framework of Islam. It has followed two main streams. The first, beginning in the early centuries after the prophet Mohammed's death, is that of individuals who felt a call to the mystical or devotional life. The second, and our concern here is the corporate pursuit of the 'way' the tariqa (pl Turuq), by groups of muslims who came together in the sufi brotherhoods following one of the great saints of medieval Islam. Thus, most of these Egyptian orders claim spiritual descent from 'Abdel Gadir El Jilani (d. 1168) whose disciples began to gather around the end of the twelfth century, or Ahmed El Rifai (d. 1195), or Hassan al Shadhili whose tomb is still the centre of the most popular saint's day celebration in Egypt". (Gilsenan, 1973: 1)

6. For more details about the Dhikr see: (Gilsenan, 1973: 156-187).

7. One need not return back to the opposition between the inside and the outside, the house, the kitchen, or the movement to the inside (inhibition) and the outside, the market, the assembly, or the movement to the outside, between the invisible and the visibile. the humid and the dry that partially covers the previous one, gives to the woman everything which has a relation with water, the green, the grass, the garden, vegetables, milk, wood, stone, the earth (she

needs bare feet, and kneads the clay for pottery or for interior walls with naked hands.

* * * *

CHAPTER VII: WOMEN AND VENDETTAS

> ... a neighbour takes some of his harvest, or a duck or chicken; someone tampers with his irrigation water or fails to keep his buffalo off his field; his son is bullied by another boy, or his wife insulted by the wife of another man; a friend delays too long in returning a few borrowed piasters, or looks too long at his wife; then this same fellah who is so patient under the injustice and exactions of his masters shows himself irascible indeed. The occurrence may be trifling, but at the moment it strikes him as intolerable and stings him to revenge. He reacts violently, and infects the others with the same passion. Human life at such a time counts for little." (Ayrout, 1963: 143, 144).

(i) Clash among stuborn peasants caused by children's fight: the official version

In the following section I will reveal a story of a fight which occurred between 2 families which ended up in a killing. To a casual observer, the vendetta would have seemed to be caused for an irrational reason such as an ordinary children's fight where parents interfere and end up beating each other.

However, if this vendetta started as a banal event, there were material grounds revealing an increasing social differentiation between the two families involved, as well as

it reflected the developing clash between sexes, in which women played an initial role in mobilizing the whole village.

First, I was told that in 1975 when the vendetta occurred many fights and killings also took place in Balamun. Four informants said that this phase witnessed an increase in violence, gun carrying and beatings. One plausible reason was the general belief that the government had become weak. *El Hekouma Dai'fa.* One informant stated that at that period of time Sadat had sent his wife to visit the governorate of Mansoura. Many peasants were offended by Sadat sending his "harim" (which created very negative reactions) Perhaps because the door of migration had not yet opened for the mass of small peasantry, while at the same time the open door policies had already created expectations of wealth among the poor. However, two years later, the situation in the region had totally calmed down, for the government sent a 'tyrannic' officer who collected all the weapons of the region, and jailed masses of peasants, creating a general fear.

Secondly, the vendetta of the village did not differ from the ones that occurred in Balamun, but its consequences took a different shape. The story as I said before, started with children playing together, insulting each others' families, then the mothers interfered and beat each other. An old member of the Thambu family, whose young daughter was implicated, interfered and was also beaten by a member of the family of El Aidi. Naturally, due to the size of the village, and the space issue, the whole village was involved in the fight. The old wife of the elder member of the Thambu family was reputed to be very

powerful with both her sons and daughters-in-law. She was also known to mobilize a whole village in wars of stones, through gossip; thus after the first fight with Hafez El Aidi, the old mother urged her sons to take revenge. Two days later a big fight started, under the guidance of the old woman. A huge stone was thrown and hit her on the head, killing her. This consequence was not intended. Nevertheless, the enmities increased. Fights and threats of divorce among couples who belonged to the two families took place, dissolution of contracts upon shared buffaloes also occurred. A whole situation of tension was created and the Thambu family swore that a bigger revenge would come in the future.

A year after the death of the old woman, 5 males of the Thambu family restarted the fight by shooting at members of the El Aidi family. Hafez El Aidi, was during that time, *ghafir* of the village and worked the garden of the state in summer (as tenant). Two days later, four males of the Thambu family decided that it was time to kill a 30 year old member of the rival family. Thus, they caught the person in the field and started beating him with heavy hoes (*fass*). The wounded man tried to reach the offices of the estate, but was killed by repeated blows of the tool. The government interfered, with massive beatings and arrests of a great number of males. The village was surrounded for a week. Later on, everybody was released. Reconciliation on a written contract between the two families was done in the police station. Since from both sides a person was killed, none of the families were sentenced. However, the El Aidi family continued the legal procedure without informing the Thambu family. Thus, in 1984,

and after 7 years, 4 members of the Thambu family were sentenced to 15 years of jail with forced labour. The Thambu family considered it a betrayal since from their side they had stopped any judicial procedure. During last March 1984 El Aidi threatened his enemies of appropriating their land (as tenants), as their right to be paid as ransom for the killed male. On the other hand, women of the Thambu family swore that the vendetta has not ended yet.

(ii) Second level of investigation: social differentiation among the two families

The first impression from peasants' interviews was that an official version had to be systematically given, to any interviewer whether he be a police officer, a state employee, or just a curious inquirer. i.e. that the story is only a common children's fight. This argument in appearance seemed to please everybody. All interviewed people stated during discussion how stubborn and stupid were the peasants, or the whole village, or the women who start such atrocities. However, it appeared to me that the wordings were chosen to avoid other explanations or conflicts that were appearing on the surface.

Nevertheless, perhaps by recalling the history of the two families one can get a clear vision of what and why such a killing had happened.

First I was told that the Thambu family was among the last families to have settled in the estate. In fact, it settled in

the forties, whereas the estate was created in the thirties. The elder member of the Thambu family originally came to work in the estate as a poor *'tarahil'*, to cut the date trees *(Hindi)* of the area. The elder member (Mohammed Thambu) left his family in Sharqiya to settle with his wife and children in one room in El Warda. He was poor, and had only one small hoe *('Awaga')*. Since it was through the woman that he knew that labour was needed in the estate he was debased in the village, called "the family brought by a woman" and "the man of the *'Awaga'*. Because it was the last family to be brought, the poorest, and largest, they wre treated as outsiders. In every small fight, they were insulted as *'Tarahil'*, sons of dogs, who stole labour from other families.

Latent hatred between these two families has always existed, however, confrontation culminated in the seventies. Despite the fact that both elder members of the respective families were night guards *(ghafirs)* and had the same size of land to exploit, I was told that the El Aidi family became wealthier in the seventies. The estate policy always insisted on making one family be subordinated to another. Thus the Thambu family was often taking jobs organised by El Aidi. Children of El Aidi escaped work, had better education (Army, state) which was not the case for the Thambus. The former ones were among the first house to acquire a television set. an oven, refrigerator etc. During the sixties, land reform laws led to the fact that the estate dismissed part of its labour force, among which was Mohammed Thambu, while Hafez El Aidi remained as a night guard. Later Hafez El Aidi was appointed by the government as an official night guard, owning a gun, a fact which increased his

power. In the seventies he rented the garden of the estate (since landowners were absentees) and forbade the Thambu family entry to the garden. Three times fights and insults occurred. Jealousies increased since El Aidi could get free clover, and fruits from the garden. He was envied and feared by the fact that he possessed a gun, and four incomes (estate salary, the garden, the state salary, land) and the gun. His younger son was among the first one's to migrate to Iraq.

(iii) Third level of investigation: women's hidden role

What becomes a more plausible explanation in the second version based upon the history of the two families is that the vendetta was caused by the increasing social differentiation that was occurring between the 2 families. However, that one family was always considered as the outsider and the underdog was not the only reason that caused the event. On a third level of investigation it appeared that women were in the final instance the initial factor in the incident.

As mentioned before, women had played an important role in starting the fight. The old woman of the Thambu family was famous in that "she could have given the order for her males to throw themselves in the sea, and they would have done it for her". The same thing was said about her daughter (Fayza) that she has put fire in men's ears and moved them to kill. This is why many old women of El Warda said that the women of El Thambu are not to be advised for marriage. "They are too strong" I was told.

Interestingly enough, when the murder of the young male occurred none in the village interfered. "We could not interfere because there was already one person killed. Besides, the young El Aidi had already been involved in many incidents with women ... Many *harim* complained of his behaviour, it was a relief for the village to get rid of him" (said 3 informants who had little to do with the vendetta). Three other informants reported that the brother had already been involved in several fights over money. Another rumour widespread was that he had entered houses of harim while males were absent, creating a great fear in the village. Six women stated that he deserved punishment because of his aggression towards them. Two other houses refused to deal with him at all.

(iv) Concluding remarks

As described above, the incident has three layers. It was presented to the public and to official investigators as one of these stupid fights among peasants, which "occurrence may be trifling" as Ayrout puts it. It then was explained to me by outsiders of the story, Sheikh Zakaria, El Mahdi family in terms of class differentiation between these two families.

Only through women's casual comments both on the old mother and on the role of young El Aidi, the younger brother of her killer, being killed himself, was the initial role of women and their concern revealed. It would however, seem too simple to explain the story merely in terms of a fight over women's honour, or as representing a strong woman, threatening the domain of males. In analysing the case therefore, we have to recall that

a strong, old woman, *mara gabbara*, mother of ten sons and daughters, was killed unintentionally by a strong older man (Hafez El Aidi) who for long had joined the ranks of a local guard and policeman, representing the state.

This incident, we have to remind ourselves, took place in 1975, when open door policies were already underway, while expectations of the poor were rising, provoking social and political unrest, which was parallel with the decline of the state authority. The incident on this level could be read in terms of the second version; of a class differentiation, which was fought by a strong woman claiming legacy through traditional feminism.

If one looks closer at the incident, the informal convention of vendettas, *Tha'r, Tar*, would have required by all means that the husband of old wive Thambu, or one of the sons would have taken revenge in killing El Aidi, or one of his immediate kin (sons, or daughter). Here however, the incident is turned to become a "problem of harim", specifically the young harim who felt threatened by the younger brother of El Aidi who walked around the village as the violator of the sacred realms.

On this level, the story is reinterpreted through gossips of the young women and specifically the ones of the strong daughters, and daughters-in-law of the killed woman as a matter of threat to the "harim" as a whole and similar to what Bourdieu describes as a violation of males sacred realms in Kabyle society; (The *'h'urma - h'aram)*, which are "one's home - one's wife - one's rifle" (Bourdieu, 1974: 219). The case became a weapon in the hands of women, in turning it into a matter of males' honour, and pride. We have here to understand the whole

case in terms of reciprocity mechanism (Bourdieu, 1974) which regulates the challenge-response mechanisms, in restoring honour.

An old strong woman challenged the dominant role of a "patron" in a politically and socially critical situation, and was killed.

. Thus, here the case could not be merely interpreted as the strengthening of the women's position, but also in terms of women's understanding of a possible reconciliation with the enemy through a reciprocal threat. That is the Harim understood, that if they had taken revenge merely on old El Aidi, and killed him, their case of being threatened by a violator would have still remained unsolved (and it is self-understood that young El Aidi, was revealed as violator of harims' realms only with the evolution of the incident). We have here to bear in mind that it was women of the Thambu family who re-interpreted the case, while it was males of the family who took the revenge.

By interpreting this event on the level of the reciprocity mechanism (Bourdieu, 1974), we come to the conclusion that the harim of El Thambu family reinterpreted the case not merely in terms of the strengthening of the "traditional feminism", but rather that "traditional feminism" as well as the harim's version might suggest a rebalancing of power between the two enemy parties, instead of engaging into a new riposte, and possibly a new murder. With the killing of his brother, old El Aidi's honour, as a state employee as much as the honour of the Thambu harim was re-established and saved. In fact, as it was described before, by the types of agreements that were made immediately

after the killing of young El Aidi, and after police raids, the situation seemed to be resolved, on the informal level *'urf*. The threatening "patron" and the threatened "harim" reconciled for an intermediary period and peace seemed to prevail.

However, old El Aidi, the better off peasant, the former night guard and policeman did not consent with reconciliation. While submitting to peace in the public of the community, he secretly hired a lawyer to restart the case through the formal procedure (as against *'urf)*. For more than six years he attempted to pursue the case, which led to the condemnation and consequently imprisonment of 4 people for 15 years.

Thus, the social trickery here, and in difference to Bourdieu's analysis, is after that old El Aidi had re-established his honour in public (as a gentleman who accepted reconciliation after the death of his brother), he then tricks the Thambu's and their Harim, by using the state and formal law to break the settlement. His action consolidates the fact that he has no respect whatsoever to the harim's role in setting the rules of the game. In fact in our case here Hafez could only trick because he derived his power from the state.

I have described here the vendetta as a mere event incorporated in a historical situation, in which a lot of such events happen. In its deeper reality this event led to the restructuration of social relations on the level of the village as a whole.

* * * * *

CONCLUSION

Throughout the study of rural women in Egypt, I have attempted to throw doubt on the prevalent sociological assumption that rural women through male migration and capitalisation of agriculture, are acquiring new powers in public spheres. On the contrary, very little attention was given by sociologists to the already existing traditional powerful role of women. More specifically, I have raised questions about the impact of *'Infitah'* policies upon everyday existence of both males and females. There is evidence revealing that monetarization, and the introduction of consumer goods could also appear as a new form of social integration and democratization of wishes and wants. However, if there has been privileges created by Infitah such as greater mobility, increase in cash money, and individual choice in not remaining a 'peasant' but working in the informal sector, it is the males who participate in it rather than the females who are left behind.

On the second level I have attempted to emphasize that the process of the creation of non-wage relations through women's networks in cooperation, as well as the process of feminization of agriculture which entails increasing female participation in public spheres does not systematically lead to the enhancement of women's prestige, but rather devalues them under the changing social conditions.

I have also referred in Chapter II to the modern phenomenon of veiling and its practical implication, which is the process of "housewifization" in the village, arguing that it is more and more becoming a means by which males could exercise power, and social status, threatening the image of the "clever peasant" woman.

'The modesty code' in Arab villages as described by Antoun (1968) is a concept which the author developed through Coran, village customs, literary and popular idioms, is practically non-existent in El Warda and has probably never existed among popular stratas of Egypt (for a brilliant critique of Antoun's article see: Abu Zahra, 1970). Unmarried young girls have been observed attacking physically and insulting a potential father in law because he might put into question their reputation. Sexual jokes, and characters of very daring women are generally accepted. In the village there are women who are known to be aggressive and strong "they acquire their right with their fist" (meaning "by force", and there are women said to be *'ghafirs* [night guards]). This points to the reversibility of roles in gender relations.

Contrary, however, to Antoun's concept and revealing its ideological character, the 'modesty code' appears as a rather "modern" concept rather than a traditional one, today imposed and created, with the overall social change, with which men attempt to relate to the image of a self-restrained "Islamic" middle class woman. Here again the contradiction between modern/ traditional becomes non sensical, since the "traditional" is re-created to fit the image of the modern world.

The aim of this thesis was far from arguing that there has been an increasing coercion exercised upon women in recent times but rather that there has been an alteration in the form of coercion and social devaluation. It does not intend to idealise gender relations in the past. However, in former times even if women were "beaten" in the field as poor wage labourers, they maintained a balanced relationship in the house. Today it is a reality that they have a full responsibility in public dealings, land and home. However, this does not contradict the fact that coercion is still exercised in the house, and among family members.

Finally, it should be taken into consideration, that such an individual issue as the struggle between sexes, where family fights are implied, could only be understood if they are analysed in structural terms rather than in terms of individual behaviour.

There, the growing contradictions between the sexes is only one dilemma among several ones created by the social disorder, and lack of control through the laissez-faire economy.

* * * * *

APPENDIX I: LAND DISTRIBUTED BY AGRARIAN REFORM LAWS: 1953-1969

Origin of Land	Area (feddans)	Families benefitting
1. Land reform law No. 178, 1952	365,147	146,496
2. Law No. 152, 1937, Law No. 44, 1962 (Transfer of waqf lands).	189,049	78,797
3. Second land reform Law No. 127, 1961.	100,747	45,823
4. Purchase of lands sequestred in 1956 (response to Suez invasion).	112,641	49,390
5. Law No. 15, 1963 (excluded foreigners from land ownership)	30,081	14,172
6. Other	98	49
TOTAL	797,761	334,727

(Richards, 1982: 148).

APPENDIX II: EVOLUTION OF LAND OWNERSHIP IN EGYPT

Size of feddans owned	% of landowners		% of area land	
	1965	1973	1965	1973
Less than 5 feddans	94,5	85,6	57,1	26,1
5	2,4	7,8	9,5	11,2
10 and more	3,1	6,6	33,4	62,7

(Mursi, 1976: 268)

APPENDIX III:

The law in favour of altering tenancy relations was proposed by Abu Wafia, president of the people's assembly and by Ahmed Youness in 1945. It entailed the following:

1. Rent should be equal to seven times the amount of taxes (which meant an increase in rent of 20 to 25%).

2. The landowner and tenant are authorised to have a rental agreement in kind, not simply in monetary terms (something which had been strictly forbidden since 1952).

3. The landowner is authorised to evict the tenant from the land he rents if the rent is not paid within two months after the end of the financial year (when the delay had been fixed at three years since 1952).

4. Civil courts are required to adjudicate in cases of disputes over rentals (from 1952 all the problems had been resolved by village committees, which were closer to the peasants, quicker, and above all, free).

(Lachine, 1977: 9)

APPENDIX IV: THE MAIN SOURCES OF INCOME OF EGYPT IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Oil revenues	164	268	600	688	1347
Suez Canal	85	311	428	514	589
Remittances of migrants	365	755	896	1761	2214
Tourism	332	464	728	702	601

THE RELATIVE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL EXPORTS

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Oil	164	268	600	688	1347
Other products	1402	1341	1392	1296	1165
TOTAL	1566	1609	1992	1984	2512

Central Bank of Egypt, (Anonymous, 1981: 15).

Appendix A

Table I Migrant Workers in The Arab Region By Sending Country and Country of Employment, 1980

Sending Country	Country of Employment										
	Saudi Arabia	Libya	United Arab Emirates	Kuwait	Qatar	Bahrain	Jordan(East Bank)	Oman	Yemen(YAR)	Iraq	Total
Egypt	155,100	250,000	18,200	85,000	5,750	2,800	68,500	6,300	4,000	100,000	695,650
Yemen(YAR)	325,000	-	5,400	3,000	1,500	1,125	-	120	-	-	336,145
Jordan and Palestine	140,000	15,000	19,400	55,000	7,800	1,400	-	2,250	2,000	7,500	250,350
Yemen(PDRY)	65,000	-	6,600	9,500	1,500	1,125	-	120	-	-	83,845
Sryia	24,600	15,000	5,800	35,000	1,000	150	-	600	1,000	-	83,150
Lebanon	33,200	5,700	6,600	8,000	750	300	-	1,500	500	4,500	61,050
Sudan	55,600	21,000	2,100	5,500	750	900	-	500	2,250	500	89,220
Maghreb	500	65,600	-	300	-	-	-	120	-	-	66,520
Oman	10,000	-	19,400	2,000	1,150	900	-	-	-	-	33,450
Iraq	3,250	-	1,200	40,000	-	310	-	-	-	-	44,760
Somalia	8,300	5,000	5,000	500	-	-	-	400	500	-	19,700
All Arab	820,550	377,300	89,700	243,800	20,200	9,010	68,500	12,050	10,250	112,500	1,763,840
Pakistan	29,700	65,000	137,000	34,000	20,770	26,160	4,000	44,500	3,000	7,500	371,630
India	29,700	32,000	109,500	45,000	11,850	12,300	500	35,600	2,000	2,000	280,450
Other Asian	93,500	27,000	20,700	10,000	4,500	10,000	1,000	-	300	1,500	169,500
All Asian	152,900	124,000	267,200	89,000	37,120	48,460	5,500	80,100	5,300	11,000	820,580
OECD & East Europe	30,000	15,000	11,600	5,000	1,250	6,500	2,000	3,900	1,000	2,000	78,250
African and Other	6,000	2,200	1,300	300	350	400	-	200	450	-	11,200
Turkey	2,000	27,000	300	600	480	200	-	170	-	-	30,750
Iran	11,800	-	40,900	40,000	20,850	3,150	-	400	-	-	117,100
Total	1,023,250	545,500	411,000	378,700	80,250	67,720	76,000	96,800	17,000	125,500	2,821,720

Source: This table has been derived in large part on the basis of material collected as part of an ILO study. The precise methodology employed was to estimate employment growth in each country of employment by sector, estimate, albeit roughly, the growth of the indigenous labour supply, allocate that supply to economic sectors, and thereby calculate a demand for expatriate manpower. Then, additional migrants were added to a 1975 stock of migrants in such a way as to reflect labour market trends from 1975 to 1980. In this process extant information on labour market trends was of critical significance although they were not always available. These figures should be seen as first approximations and will require subsequent refinement as time passes. Where the methodology was not applicable, alternative approaches were used, notably in the case of Jordan, where estimates were provided by Ian Seccombe, of the Department of Economics, Durham University. See ibid, Jordanian Labour Migration; the Impact on Domestic Development (Durham, unpublished MA thesis, 1980).

Note: This table does not take account of a small number of migrations which are acknowledged but about which few if any data are available. These include the migration of: Sudanese to Egypt; Syrians to Lebanon; West Africans to Saudi Arabia.

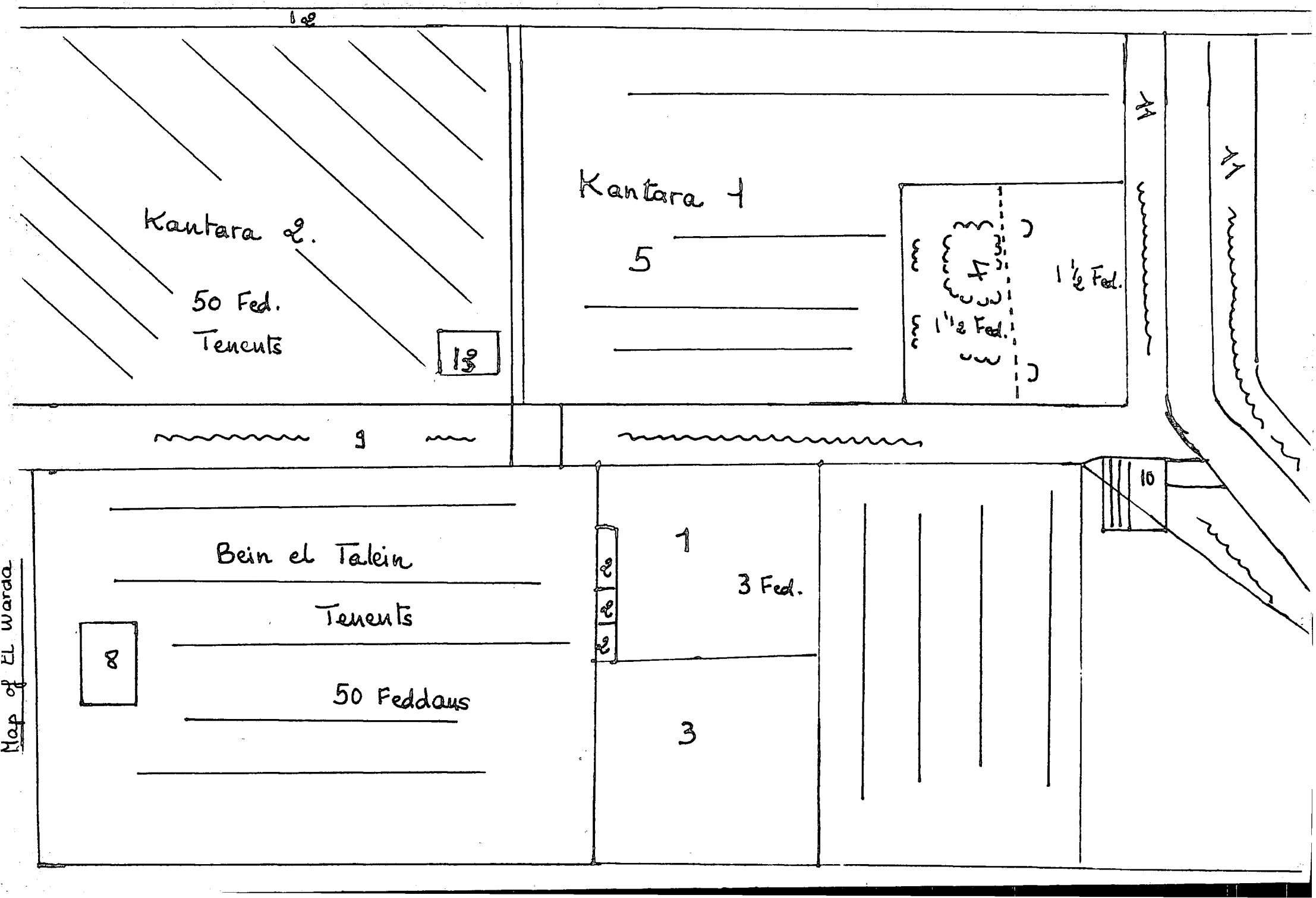
APPENDIX V

Source: (BIRKS and SINCLAIR, 1981: 18)

APPENDIX VI: AN ESTIMATE OF LANDLESS FAMILIES IN RURAL EGYPT: 1952-1972

	1950	1961	1955	1970	1972
Rural population	13700	16120	17604	19280	19928
Number of people engaged in non-agricultural activities	1370	2418	2641	2892	2989
Agricultural population	12330	13702	14963	16388	16939
Number of families engaged in agriculture	2466	2740	2993	3278	3388
Number of landed families	1003	1642	1785	1853	1857
Number of landless families	1463	1098	1208	1425	1531
Landless families as % of agricultural families	59	40	40	43	45

(Radwan, 1977: 23).


Kantara 2.
50 Fed.
Tenents
13
Kantara 1
5
1½ Fed.
1½ Fed.
9
10
Bein el Talein
Tenents
50 Feddans
8
1
3 Fed.
3
Map of El Warda

1. House of the estate = 3 Feddans
2. Offices of the estate which are not used anymore
3. Stables called (Dowar) = 3 Feddans
4. Village of 40 houses, one feddan and a half, in addition to the empty space, which is one feddans and a half.
5. Kantara and the land on the left side of the house is sold to outsiders (rich peasants of the region) since 3-4 years ago.
6. Kantara 2,tenants
7. Bein El Talein - Tenants
8. Tombs of the village
9. Water canal, called *(Barbakh)*
10. Water machine, run by a steel *(saqya)*, generated by electricity.
11. Water canals.
12. Road.
13. An old water machine building. The machine was sold.

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