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**Changing Economy of
Semi-Settled Bedouins**

**Case Study of A Community
in the Governate of Giza
Egypt**

Afaf Abdullah Al-Bassam

1977

Economics

350

CHANGING ECONOMY OF
SEMI-SETTLED BEDOUINS:

CASE STUDY OF A COMMUNITY
IN THE GOVERNORATE OF GIZA

EGYPT

القنطرة

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A Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of Sociology-Anthropology
of The American University in Cairo
in Partial Fulfillment
of The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

AFAF ABDULLAH AL-BASSAM

المؤلف

May 1977

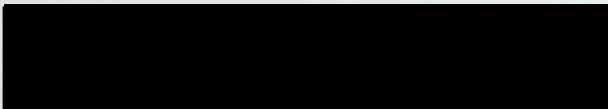
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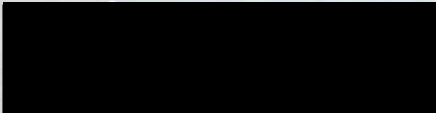
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by

Afaf Abdullah al-Bassam

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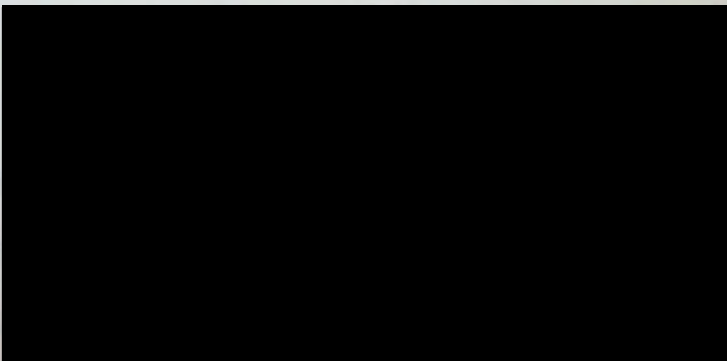

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May, 1977

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere and deepest gratitude to my advisor Dr. Donald P. Cole, to whom I owe the greatest debt for his constant advice and guidance not only to proceed in my research, but throughout my academic years in the department.

To Dr. Nicholas S. Hopkins, I wish to extend my deepest personal thanks for his constant, patient and expert help, as well as his invaluable remarks, modifications and suggestions that have made the completion of this work possible.

I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Sherief el-Hakim for his valuable advice and suggestions.

To my mother, I wish to express my deepest gratitude for her unending patience encouragement, help and moral support not only during my research but throughout the long years of my education.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude and thanks to Mr. Nabil Ibrahim for his continuous encouragement, patience, expert advice and without whose help this thesis could not have been completed.

To my friend, colleague and "bint Khala", Afafe el-Khiami, I wish to extend thanks without whose company to the field this research could not have been possible.

My sincere thanks and gratitude go to Mr. Aziz Kiroollos for his typing of the manuscript under difficult conditions. To Mr. Edward Metri, my thanks for his kind help in printing of the thesis under such short notice.

Last but not least, my deepest and sincere gratitude to Sheikh Salem, Sheikh Hammad, and all other members of the Sarab community, to whom I am grateful for their kindness, hospitality, generosity patience, as well as for the valuable information that made the writing of this thesis possible. To all of them, I extend my sincere thanks and gratitude.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on field research carried out between February and December 1976 on a community of semi-settled bedouins in the Governorate of Giza.

The community subject of this study is the Sarab clan of the Amirat sub-tribe. The Amirat are a sub-tribe of the well known Heweitah tribe who are of Eastern origin. They are still to be found to this day in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Sinai and Egypt.

This research is a study of the changing economy of a group of semi-settled bedouins - the Sarab. The completion of the Marutiya Canal and the irrigation and drainage schemes that extended the area under cultivation into the desert, was a turning point in the lives of these camel nomads. As a consequence, a major decision was taken by the Sarab, to give up the life of absolute nomadism and settle on the land between the "desert and the sown".

The research attempts to bring forth the changes that took place as a result of this decision, and the implications of change on the socio-economic life of the community.

The Sarab for the past 10-15 generations have been wandering between Faiyum, Giza, Qalubiya and Sharkiyah, their base being the Governorate of Giza. They were carrying goods and crops back and forth, predominantly camel transporters and sheep herders. Now, after settlement, they live 14.5 kilometres from Giza square, physically so near yet culturally so far from Cairo, the urban capital of Egypt and largest metropolitan city in Africa. In spite of settlement on the land, they are carrying out a dual type of economy nomadic and sedentary, that of crop transport and herding of sheep; and agriculture and paid labour, side by side.

It is a case study of the Sarab, a community, who in spite of settlement manage to live in isolation both from the government and the neighbouring villages. They settle their disputes through their Orfi law, cling to their bedouin traditions, customs, beliefs values etc. They take great pride in their "Arab" origin and do not intermarry with the neighbouring fellahin whom they despise and consider to be inferior. Their camels are their pride and joy.

Moreover, as the text will show, the Sarab are in a state of transition and change which will in the next 15-20 years gradually result in the assimilation of the community into the

surrounding peasant society. Not until inter-marriage takes place for several decades will complete assimilation and sedentarisation of the Sarab become possible. In this state no distinctions will remain and they will no longer be distinguishable from the fellahin. But this will come at a much later date, long after they have given up their semi-nomadic ways of life.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a renewed interest in economic Anthropology, more systematic and theory conscious. Anthropologists, in their studies of different societies, communities and groups, discussed the economic aspect of the life of the people under study, as part of the overall social and cultural setting, meaning the mode of livelihood of the people, mainly their means of subsistence.

Only recently, a separate branch in Anthropology, namely Economic Anthropology has been recognised. Thus, the interest and increase in the studies carried out by anthropologists in the field of economic anthropology.

My interest in the subject, and the reason for my selection of the topic, is the fact that economics has always drawn my attention, because my undergraduate work was in the fields of economics and political science. Nomads and bedouins have drawn the attention of travellers to the area for a long time. Thus, we see that most of the literature in the past century has been written mainly by travellers who through their travels in the deserts of the Middle East gave very enlightening and interesting accounts of the people that inhabit these isolated

areas. Even though these accounts are not ethnographic studies, yet they give the student or scholar the descriptive background material on which to build and study, documenting what they saw at the time they saw it.

The selection of the topic came as a result of interest in nomadic societies in general and special interest in this specific community in particular because of the geographical situation they occupy. The community is situated about 14.5 kilometres from the heart of Giza square, so near urbanisation and yet so far. They are on the borders of cultivated fertile land and the vast desert that surrounds it. They are settled on the land, sedentarised in the physical sense, yet in the cultural, social, economic and ethnic sense they have their own distinct and separate identity in which they take great pride.

The importance of the study of such a community lies in the fact that, even though they are living between "the desert and the sown", they are in a state of transition and change, economic, social etc., as a consequence of the impact of the larger surrounding society on them (Nash 1966: p 103). They are in a state of transition from completely nomadic to a fully sedentarised community.

The study is also important because there is a lack of interest on the part of scholars, researchers and government institutions to look into the state of affairs that the semi-settled nomads and bedouins, that constitute part of the population of Egypt. Even though their numbers are decreasing through sedentarisation and assimilation into the surrounding peasant society, it is worthwhile to look into the life of a people that have managed to keep their identity into the last quarter of the 20th century. I believe that within the next 15-20 years they will be completely sedentarised and assimilated, and will cling to a few customs only for a period longer than that. A main support for their continued identity is their pride in their descent and ancestry - namely their Arab i.e. bedouin origin, through the prohibition of non-Arab marriages as distinct from "ahali" or fellahin. (The terms bedouin and Arab will be used interchangeably in the text). This pride in difference will take a longer time to disappear. When this obstacle or fact is overcome, then complete assimilation into the surrounding society will take place.

My major concern in this thesis, is to understand and study this community, the reasons behind the changes that have

taken place within it, and the facts that led to these changes as a result of sedentarisation.

The problem that I have chosen to investigate is the change in the economic mode of life. Many of these changes can be summarised as the implications of settlement on the community under study.

The importance of the research lies in the fact that no one has attempted to my knowledge a similar study of this particular kind of community, that is so near urban metropolitan Cairo, the heart and centre of Middle East culture, civilisation, modernisation etc.

The problem of the research is significant to Egypt, a country of sharp contrasts. The narrow fertile Nile Valley and the delta lie between two vast deserts that stretch beyond the boundaries of the country. The desert area constitutes about 95% of the whole country (Awad, 1954: p 240).

The population of the deserts are a roaming nomadic folk that wander in the deserts with their camels and flocks. Sometimes these desert nomads establish themselves on the borders of the cultivated lands, maintaining some kind of relations with

the settled population already living in the area. Some of these bedouins that settled down managed to assimilate, while other groups maintained only minimum contact with the peasants of the valley, clutching to their own ethnic and cultural composition.

It is a well known social phenomenon in many parts of the world including Egypt and the Middle East, that a gradual transition is occurring from total nomadism to a completely sedentary life in which agriculture is attracting, absorbing, and persuading them to abandon their life style.

It is from this point that the interest in such a study arose - of a people - a unique culture, a type and mode of life that will soon come to an end, and a process that is as old as civilisation and yet has new urgency in the contemporary world.

CHAPTER I

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

a- Review of related literature

Economic Anthropology is a fairly new and recent field, in the past it has been dealt with within the scope of Social Anthropology. Its theoretical structure is still in the process of growth and formulation. Since Malinowski's pioneer work on the economy of the Trobriands, we have seen the rise of Herskovits, Firth, Polanyi, Bohannan, Nash, Dalton, Meillassoux and others on the subject of economic anthropology of primitive societies - both tribal and peasant.

The literature on the subject of nomads in Egypt is limited. No extensive specialised research has been carried out. Only a limited number of books and articles are available on the subject. The material is very general in nature, descriptive and documentary in content, written mainly by travellers, or foreign (British and French) officials making a documentary record of what they saw of the inhabitants of the desert areas in the process of carrying out their duties.

These works even though they are general, give an overall picture of the life of the wandering nomadic desert folk of Egypt. Many valuable and similar surveys have been made by

travellers of other parts of the Middle East. They are important because they give insight about the habits, customs, values and beliefs of the bedouins. The various relationships among family members, tribes clans etc., are described. The laws, rights, rituals, life in the tents, food, animals, marriage are all explained and documented as the observers saw and understood it. This gives us a base on which to start.

No student interested in studying bedouins or nomads of the desert can do without reading and assimilating Charles Doughty's classic "Arabia Deserta", London 1926.

George Murray's, "The Sons of Ishmael", London 1935, gives the historical perspective and background of the Egyptian Bedouins. It presents the ethnographic data the author collected over a period of 25 years spent working in the Egyptian deserts. The nomadic peoples of the Red Sea coast, Sinai and the Western Desert are described.

In "Bedouin Justice: Law and Customs Among the Egyptian Bedouin" London 1968, Austin Kennett tries to show the conditions under which the bedouin live, their mentality and point of view. He says that the bedouin with all his faults is a very lovable person, and his code of laws and customs is

remarkable for its practical common sense. Through the presentation and description of particular cases, Kennett shows that Bedouin Law is no more infallible than any other law, and that in some cases justice is not done.

Some of the more valuable material on the subject of Egyptian bedouins, which corresponds more to ethnographic surveys, are the studies carried out by General Rifaat al-Jawhari. As an army officer, serving in different parts of the desert, al-Jawhari was able to gain first hand information on the lives, customs, traditions etc. of the bedouin dwellers of the Egyptian Deserts.

In Al-Jawhari's "Shariat al-Sahra" (the legislation of the Desert) Cairo 1961, he gives detailed accounts of the way of life of the bedouins, their customs, traditions, laws, habits, dress, animals etc.

Other books by Al-Jawhari on the different bedouins in Egypt are "Sina Ard al-Qamar" (Sinai Land of the Moon), Cairo 1965. This book deals with the Sinai bedouins only. In "Shata al-Ahlam" (Coast of Dreams) he speaks only of the Western Desert bedouins, of their history customs traditions

and way of life. "Sahil al-Murgan" (the Coral Coast) describes the bedouins of the Eastern Desert. He has also written about the bedouins of the Oases of Egypt. In all his books, Al-Jawhari gives very enlightening accounts and describes the life of the bedouins living in the different desert areas of Egypt.

Mohamed Awad's article on "The Assimilation of Nomads in Egypt", 1954 is a brief review of major nomadic movements in the past history of Egypt. It outlines five stages in the assimilation of nomads to sedentary life - from absolute nomadism to complete assimilation. This is one of the most related works to the study I have carried out.

Harold Barclay's article, "Study of an Egyptian Village Community" 1966, is a survey of the social and religious organisation of a village community whose inhabitants consider themselves as "Arabs", as distinct from fellahin, their ancestors having being sedentarised Bedouin. It is based on field work carried out by the author on a village in Giza near Cairo. It is one of several villages in this vicinity originally settled by bedouins from the Western Desert, and are completely sedentarised now.

The works of Burckhardt and Burton give the historical

background of the bedouins in the 19th century. They enumerate the different tribes and give accounts of their customs, manners, institutions etc. They include valuable and interesting information on the life of the bedouins in the past century.

Abou-Zeid has carried out a great deal of research on the sedentarisation of bedouins, but his interests and works have concentrated mainly on the study of the Western Desert bedouins.

The above is some of the literature on the subject of bedouins in Egypt. However, no literature is available on the Sarab community, who to this day do not belong to any village and are not registered in any of the government administrative units. They form an isolated group in both the cultural and administrative sense, living on the borders of the desert. Follow up research of this community in a decade or so will add a great deal to the literature and record the changes and assimilation of the group.

b- Methodology

This study deals primarily with the economic aspects of life of a semi-settled nomadic community. It aims at investigating and studying the changing economic aspects of life of the people that live on the borders of the desert who have changed from a completely nomadic way of life to settling on the land. A change from camel herders to farmers tilling the good earth, working as labourers, transporting etc., who only a generation or two ago considered that this mode of making a living was degrading and not fit for a bedouin.

In this study I try to point out the economic changes that have taken place in the mode of living of the community. It will take the form of a descriptive ethnographic case-study of a group of semi-sedentarised nomadic community in a state of transition.

It will touch upon some of the socio-cultural implications but will deal mainly with the economic changes that have taken place.

These changes are a consequence of the community's settlement on the land either through ownership of a small plot of land or through rental of house sites. The wandering nomads have finally settled down on the land even though as the study will show later, they still live partly according to the former nomadic way of life.

Nomads in Egypt are gradually being assimilated into the larger and more dominant peasant population, and are at different stages of assimilation.

The field work started in February and ended in December 1976. But intensive research was carried out May through December. It is based mainly on participant observation with the use of informants as well as unstructured interviews when inquiring about particular subjects such as economic, social and legal matters.

The printed material on the subject of nomads in Egypt is very sparse as pointed out earlier, and no material at all was available on this particular community.

The research concentrates primarily on this group of semi-sedentarised bedouins who gave up their nomadic way of law of continuous movement for a settled type of life. It is a case study of a group-part of a tribe that is spread over an area stretching from Fayyum to Beheirah governorates. Living on the out skirts of Cairo, in the governorate of Giza, so close to urbanisation and yet unique, also very different from their fellahin neighbours.

The methodology followed in the research is mainly descriptive and where possible analytic based on participant observation and unstructured interviews, also making use of informants to explain and to give an account of their way of life, their customs, values beliefs means of livelihood etc., the changes that occurred and the reasons behind them.

c- Field experience

The interest in "bedouins" "nomads", "arabs" first started when taking a course on the ethnography of the Middle East. I wrote a paper on the commercial families of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, their movement and network of trade. Working on the paper I read many sources on the subject of nomads which made my interest grow. For my field of specialisation in the comprehensive exam I chose tribal society in the Middle East. This finally led to choosing a topic for the thesis which was rather difficult to make. The fact that I could not leave Cairo because of job obligations, made the choice of topic for the field research complicated. It was a choice of either a tribal society or a complete change in the field of specialisation - a topic that would not involve such difficulty. I was told that it must be in the same field.

Being tied to Cairo, the availability of finding a tribal society was near to impossible. I was not alone, my friend and colleague Afafe el-Khiami also had the same problem. We were both working, going to the field and finding such a community was rather frustrating. Going to the Western Desert which we had visited before on a field trip was not a practical idea. We decided that we should find a solution to this problem.

With a large map of the Giza Governorate we selected names of many villages that sounded "Arab", and at the first opportunity,

map in hand we went to "shop" for a village that would correspond to our requirements. It was a very "tall order", but we had no choice. This plan was not much help, because a "friend" said that we are being far too optimistic in hoping to find a village or community "tailored" to our needs.

Having no choice we went all the same, and by sheer luck we not only found such a community, but one that is more "nomadic" than we ever hoped or dreamed to find. They are a community scattered in small groups outside many of the villages that we went to see originally. They do not live in regular villages, or in mud-brick or stone houses that are common of fellahin and sedentarised bedouins; but are living on the borders of cultivation with the vast and extending desert behind them, in the middle of nowhere. Their "houses" huts are made of mud, straw and dung with straw and palm branches for a roof. They live on small plots of land consisting of a cluster of mud huts. They are surrounded by their animals living a barely hand to mouth kind of existence.

We were introduced to the community by our first informant, whom we met also by chance. He is a fellah, about 17 years old, from a near by village. Seeing him reading a book along side the road, we considered him the most suitable to talk to. His name is Nasser studying for his Thanawiya Aama. He was fascinated by our questions and was very cooperative. Asking him about "Arabs"

he said that there is a village near by whose inhabitants are all Arabs. He took us to the Umda, from whom we learned that the population of the village is of bedouin origin who settled around a shrine "Zawiya" about the turn of the century.

The population though claiming Arab origin has mixed a great deal with neighbouring peasants. We found out later that many of those who claimed to be "arab" were those that took refuge with the bedouin Sheikhs paying them in some cases large sums of money in order to be "adopted" by them when the census was made. This action saved them from conscription that bedouins were exempted from and which was compulsory for all peasants. This immunity from military service was granted to the nomads of the desert by Mohamed Ali for their former services - helping him to maintain himself on the throne against the Mamelukes. (Murry: 1935 pp 30-32).

Returning from the visit to the Umda, we saw at a distance, small mud huts with women dressed differently from the peasant ones, wearing belts around their waists and bourq'u on their faces. Asking our informant who those were, he said they are bedouins who are not affiliated to any of the surrounding villages. We asked him who they were, and where they came from and how many they were. He said that they live in clusters all around the area. They do not mix a great deal with the villagers, they are friendly but live in isolation.

It was late in the afternoon and we asked him if he could take us to them on another day. He was pleased to be of assistance and offered to wait for us in the same place the following Friday.

As we had started our field work in early February of 1976, the weather for the next couple of weeks was very windy and many sand storms (Khamasin) prevented us from keeping our appointment with our young "educated" informant.

On our next field trip, it was with difficulty that we found our informant, but we managed to do so at last. Not knowing his full name, it was sufficient to say Nasser of the Thanawiya Aama.

Taking the car as far as we could on the small dusty side road, we walked in the fields for over half an hour to reach the scattered mud huts with small dirty children running around us, wondering to themselves what two people from the city are doing in the middle of no where asking about their Sheikh.

Finally, we were taken to their Sheikh's elder brother, the Sheikh himself being away with many male members of the community on a trip of crop transporting "Tasief" The brother, Makboul a man probably in his late fifties (it is rather difficult to tell their real age because of the hard life they lead) met us at first with a certain amount of reservation, not being accustomed to seeing two girls dressed in "modern" dress coming all this way to speak to them.

The first meeting went off rather successfully, with all the women and children gathering around to look at this strange sight. Makboul told us that they are Arab bedouins, who have been living in the province of Giza for as far back as he can remember, and his father before him. He related that as a child, they were roaming the area living in tents with their camels and flocks of sheep camping where ever they saw fit. About 30 years ago, Makboul's father bought 3½ feddans in this area settling down, building mud huts to replace the black tents. They still refer to themselves as Arab Kheish (Arabs of the tent).

When asking Makboul whether they were Arb Sharq (east) or Arb Gharb (west), he was not sure. He said we are Arb! The people living in the nearby willages are not pure Arab, their blood has been mixed with the ahali (fellahin).

It was his turn to ask us questions. Who we were and what we wanted. It was somewhat difficult to make him understand that we were students doing anthropological research. He was very suspicious of us, but because of their hospitality and friendliness to guests he tried to hide his suspesion. By the time we left (about 3 hours later) some of the reserve wore off and as a matter of fact he was friendly to the extent that he invited us to his daughter's wedding that would be taking place some time soon.

Just as we were ready to leave, he said that the next time we come, his brother Sheikh Hammad will be there and would like to meet us. This sounded like another turn of investigation awaiting us on our following visit.

Our first meeting with Sheikh Hammad a few days later was more difficult than that with his brother Makboul. He was a much younger man, perhaps in his early 40's, sharp, shrewd and more intelligent. This was seen in the questions he asked us. He was even more suspicious about our intentions. He did not ask questions in a direct and straight forward manner, but managed in a very intelligent and shrewd way to ask round about questions, making the same inquiry in several different forms. In my opinion, what was really behind all the precaution and suspicion was the fact that, his brother and the rest of the community we had met on the previous visit, told him that we had taken some genealogies of the tribe. He refused to tell us the names of his children.

On our following trips to the community, a certain rapport between us was established, though Sheikh Hammad was still reserved about information regarding genealogies. Any questions that he did not want to answer, he would say so frankly, and we did not pursue it further. Trust resulted, and he started becoming more open and less reserved. He said that our honesty has made him accept us as members of the family and that we were welcome any time and free

to ask anybody (meaning the women folk) any information that we needed to know.

An amusing experience was the fact that both my friend and I had the same first name. This was reason enough for creating doubt among the community. Trying to change one of our names, using a nick name would not have been much help, because should we forget and address each other by our real names would make them even more doubtful, giving them reason to believe that we have something to conceal. We told them that we were cousins - our mothers being sisters.

By this time, 6-7 visits later, they had accepted us to an extent that they wanted to visit us at home, to ask about us, because they had become worried when we did not show up on a particular day we had said we would. We told them that each of us was living alone with her mother and that our brothers were abroad working and studying. We promised that as soon as one of them returned, they would be more than welcome to visit us. At the time we were afraid that they would be offended because of our refusal, but this established us with them even more. They thought very highly of us, that we were conservative and reserved and that it was not "proper" to allow strangers to visit us in our homes with our "male" family members away. This incident was related by Sheikh Hammad to many of the new members of the

clan that we were introduced to. They all looked upon us with great respect.

The next hard nut to crack was meeting Sheikh Salem. He is the eldest - over seventy years of age - and most respected member of the community. He is Sheikh Arb who is called upon to mediate and "judge" in cases of disputes thefts etc. between different members of his tribe near and far. He is also called upon because of his wisdom and knowledge in Orfi law, to sit in "law" councils concerning members of many different clans and tribes. Even though he is a sick old man he travels long distances (Faiyum, Sharkia, Qalubiya including many parts of Giza) to settle different disputes when he is called upon.

Sheikh Salem is a frail little old man. He is very sharp, quick, shrewd and intelligent. To be accepted by him was the last test we had to go through to be accepted fully by the whole community without reservation.

We put a great deal of weight and importance on our meeting with him should we not be accepted by him for one reason or another, we felt that our whole research project would come to an end. His rejection of us would mean refusal by the whole community. This was very clear from the behaviour of Sheikh Hammad on our way to visit Sheikh Salem for the first time.

Sheikh Hammad introduced us as banat khala (maternal cousins), students interested in studying bedouins, their way of life,

especially interested in Orfi law, having the same name, reserved and conservative, always coming together, never one alone (this was one of the major reasons why neither of us could attempt the field work separately. It was difficult enough being two girls unaccompanied by males and it was out of the question to be accepted each by herself). Sheikh Hammad continued with his introduction, saying we refused to have them visit us at our homes because our brothers were away.

This last remark gave us some hope that this little old man might finally agree to accept us coming to visit them. He then asked Sheikh Hammad to stop talking and allow us to say who we were, why we came, who sent us and what we wanted. This and the next few meetings with Sheikh Salem were among the most difficult tests of acceptance that we had to go through. He suspected that we were sent by the census, or the mobilisation and conscription departments with many other fears and suspicious crossing his mind.

For the next three or four meetings which lasted between 3-4 hours each, in his own intelligent and subtle manner he was trying our patience. He would talk endlessly, relating strange stories that took place many years ago, speaking to all those that came to visit him including his fellahin neighbours who came mainly to look at us. (Sheikh Salem settled on the fields about 1940 when he was

appointed Ghafir (Guard) by the land owner). Through these first sessions we did not take down notes because he did not permit it yet. Very often he would speak to Hammad and other bedouins that came to visit him, in their dialect which we did not understand. During this time he would look at us searching for signs that might give away our real intentions, always attempting to try our patience, seeing how long our cover would last.

During our first meeting Sheikh Hammad said we could record our meetings with Sheikh Salem on a tape recorder which we brought along with us. But Salem refused, saying that later on we may write notes (which Hammad explained we do) but no recording. His frank explanation for his refusal of a tape recording was that should we record, then confronting him with something he said, he cannot deny a recording of his voice. But with writing notes, he could always say that a particular point was misunderstood by us and we did not "write" it as he "meant" it.

The shrewdness and extreme intelligence of this old illiterate man, the polite yet firm manner in which he said it, is an unforgettable lesson in the ability and "diplomatic" character of Sheikh al-Arb to have control over an unknown and unclear situation before him. His mastery and control of the situation should be credited for a people whom we as urban Middle Easterners consider to be illiterate, backward and uneducated.

With the ice broken, passing all the tests and continuous "interrogations", after 5 or 6 visits we were finally accepted by sheikh Salem. From this point on we felt at ease because of our full acceptance, without any further doubts by even the newest members that we met. Our pass was the fact that we met Sheikh Salem, visited him very often, and had long chats and discussions with him about Orfi law and all matters concerning al-Orban (The Arabs).

Sheikh Salem was one of our most important informants. From him we learned that they were Arb Sharq from Hejaz and that they were a sub-tribe of the well know Haweitat who for the past 150 years dwelt in this area as roaming camel herders.

As time went on we became attached to them more and more, it was no longer just a trip to gather material for our theses, but a visit to friends whom we got to like and who shared us the same feelings. We got to know the names of all the heads of the different households, their wives and childrens names, who is related to whom and how. We would ask by name about any missing member of the family, and this made them even more attached to us.

Some of the children would be sick or have some minor wounds and we would bring simple first aid on our next visit which we made a point to make the following day. We even tried to introduce, but without much success, change in their habits of cleanliness we

brought soap and encouraged the children to wash their faces and keep them clean to avoid the swarms of flies that were on their eyes. Many of them suffer from different eye diseases - common to bedouins and fellahin alike - we were not very successful in this, but kept on coaxing them to the extent that we even bribed those children who had clean hands and faces by giving them sweets.

The children were intelligent and thought that they fooled us. They would see us coming at a distance wearing our galabias (which we made especially for the field) seeing us, they would rush to the water pump and splash water on their faces making them dirtier than before and come running to meet us showing off their hands and faces as being "clean" and awaiting to be rewarded!

Another change we introduced was the use of the "primus" for cooking instead of the regular open fire they used. We gave many away to the households with whom we had established very close ties. These were presented among other presents during the Byram feast. The men were very touched and grateful but the happiness of the women was beyond expression.

For the following feast, the Korban Byram, which coincided with our last visit to the field in December, we gave them railway men signal lamps, because they have no electricity, even though the neighbouring villages are all illuminated. What gave us this idea was the fact that one of our younger informants Gomaa - a

very intelligent and sharp young boy of about 13 years of age, whom all expect to become a Sheikh Arb in the future - hung an electric bulb at the entrance of his hut which he shares with his widowed mother.

This present was very rewarding, because they said that this would make them think of us every sunset when they light it and sit outdoors, as it does not blow out in the wind, instead of sitting in complete darkness or be obliged to sit indoors using small kerosine lamps.

We took tea and sugar with us on our field visits that were about 4-5 days per week. Tea-drinking while sitting and chatting was a must. Their tea is very strong, served in small glasses, they usually had three turns each. This was unthinkable for us, not liking tea at all let alone strong "black" tea! We managed to drink only one glass at each tea-drinking session, which they considered as strange. Another agony we had to go through as a result of their extreme hospitality, was meals, but we managed to survive them. The mid day meal is made of bread which they bake on a flat iron, on a fire made of dried grass and twigs. Some white cheese, a few sliced tomatoes, some fowl bought at the village or at times cream made from the milk of their animals. They eat meat once a week, usually on Thursdays as well as on feasts and celebrations.

We attended several celebrations, a wedding and a circumcision of which we took many photographs. The distribution of the photos to the people was interesting. Big and small, they would all try to snatch each others pictures and hide them. They call the camera, "Kodak".

The honesty, sincerity hospitality and kindness of the people showed in every gesture. When I took 2 weeks off in August to visit my brother in London, we told them that I would be travelling and we would not be coming until I returned. They did not expect my friend to come on her own because I drove the car, they offered to go and fetch her from her house.

They were so attached to us, that they feared this was just an excuse we are giving for not coming back. Sheikh Hammad then said that we had become a part of the family and that he wished that they had not known us, now that we are not going to return. This was one of the most touching moments of our field experience.

On our last trip to Sheikh Salem, saying good bye and telling him that my colleague (cousin) was leaving for the States, we asked his permission to use their first and family names. We explained to him that if any other researchers were able to locate them, they might be disturbed or bothered. Sheikh Salem's unexpected but true to character answer was, "I trust you, and anything that is good for you is good for me". He said that he left it

entirely up to us to write what was in the best interest of our study. He even offered to attend the discussion and defense of our theses, so that he could vouch before our "teachers" that the information is valid and true.

This was the most touching moment of our relationship with the bedouins, who by this time my friend and I felt that we understood, cared for, appreciated, respected and last but not least were indebted to for a great deal of knowledge, understanding, and insight, about a people, a culture, a way of life, wisdom, honesty, hospitality valour, pride and courage; values that once assimilated into the surrounding society will be lost forever.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING

a- Historical Background of Nomads in Egypt:

Bedouins in the Middle East form an important part of the population. Even though the number of bedouins leading a nomadic life have decreased, the city population in many instances can trace its origin to one or other of the bedouin tribes, who over the years settled in the villages towns and cities. This is true of many parts of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Iraq, Jordan, and North Africa. Egypt on the other hand traces its origin from the fellahin - peasants - who for centuries cultivated the fertile Nile Valley and Delta.

Nomadic Bedouins in Egypt to-day form a very small part of the population that have been neglected in many respects.

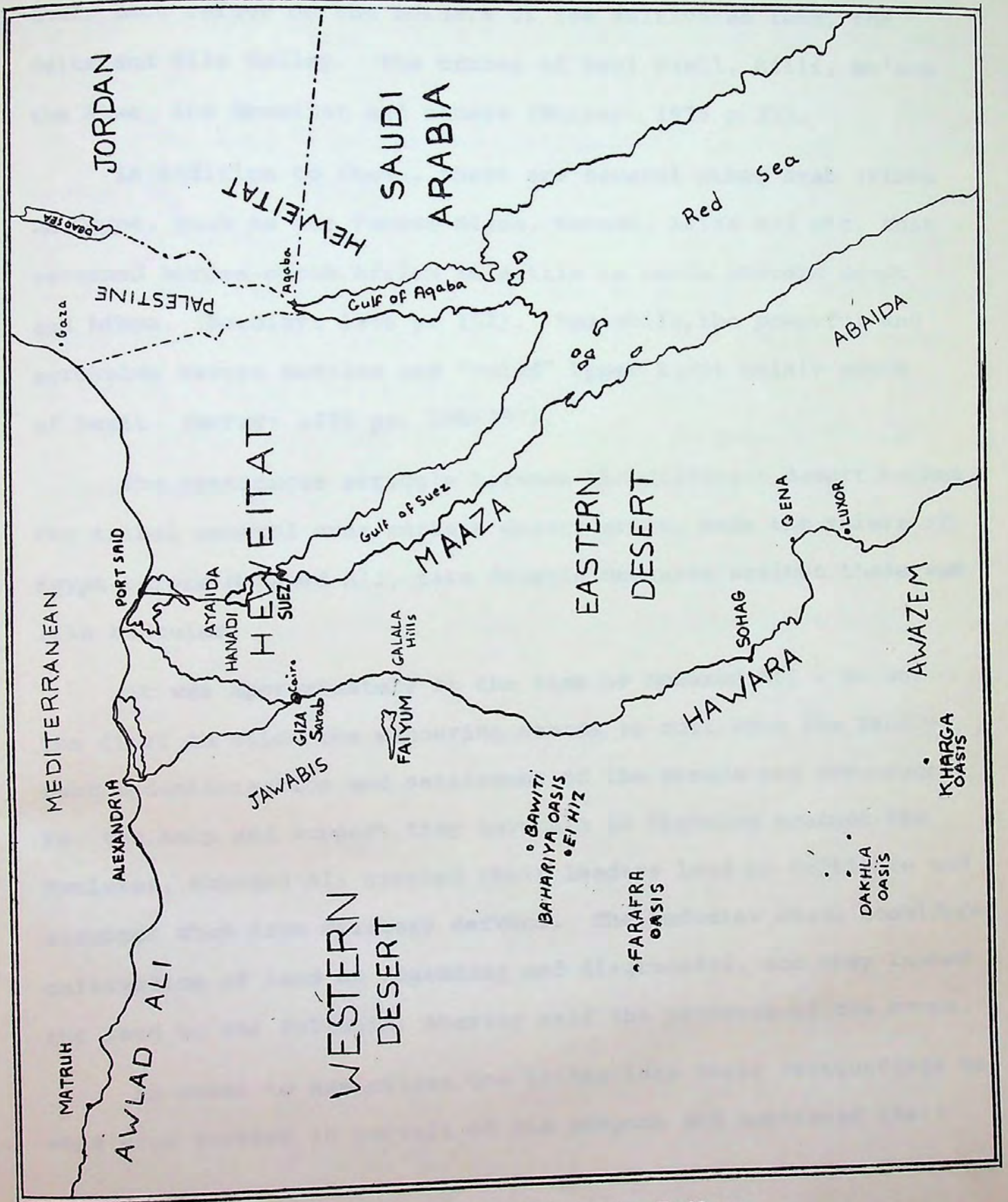
Historically, the bedouins came to Egypt from the Arabian peninsula in successive migrations, settling down in various parts of the deserts, roaming to different water wells in Sinai, the Red Sea, the Western desert, moving along the North African coast as far west as Alegria and Morocco. Some of these nomads have returned in counter migrations as far as Egypt again.

Economically, the bedouins were of marginal importance, they furnished transport and animal products. Professor Baer suggested

that "bedouins were to the desert what fishermen were to the seas". Settlement of nomads was a continuous process from the earliest recorded history. The notable North African Arab Scholar. Ibn Khaldoun believes that the bedouin have been a reservoir of new blood: "History is written as a rhythm of desert impulses and urban migrations". In recent history bedouins came as refugees rather than as conquerors (Baer: 1969, introduction).

Egypt witnessed two ~~distinct~~ and independent streams of nomadism, from the East and from the West. The predominant nomadic elements since the Arab conquest of Egypt have been Arab. Coming directly from Arabia, they were pure Arab tribes - referring to themselves as Arb Sharq - later nomadic elements coming from the Great Sahara Desert, also described themselves as Arabs, but their blood was mixed through intermarriage, with Berber blood (Awad: 1954, pp. 242-245). These nomads have come to be known as Arb Gharb, whom the Arb Sharq look upon as inferior because of the high percentage of Berber blood in their veins.

Looking at the map, (map No. 1) it is noticed that many of the well known branches of the Arabian tribes have settled in Sinai, in the eastern and western parts of the delta and the Nile Valley. (Al-Jawhair 1961). The bedouin tribes, one after another streamed into Egypt from Sinai, finding themselves in barren land and up against hostile tribes before them, pushed by those coming after



Map No. 1: Distribution of some Bedouin Tribes

them, took refuge on the borders of the cultivated land, the delta and Nile Valley. The tribes of Beni Wasil, Billi, Ma'aza the Atwa, the Heweitat and others (Murrey: 1935 p.31).

In addition to these, there are several other Arab tribes in Egypt, such as the famous Nijma, Hanadi, Awlad Ali etc. that returned across north Africa to settle in north western Egypt and Libya. (Barclay: 1966 p. 152). Meanwhile, the powerful and aggressive Hawara settled and "ruled" Upper Egypt mainly south of Asuit. (Murry: 1935 pp. 296-297).

The continuous struggle between the different desert tribes for tribal control over certain desert areas, made the rulers of Egypt before Mohamed Ali, take drastic measures against these war like bedouins.

It was approximately at the time of Mohamed Ali - he was the first to allow the wandering nomads to cultivate the land - that sedentarisation and settlement of the nomads was encouraged. For the help and support they gave him in fighting against the Mamlukes, Mohamed Ali granted their leaders land to cultivate and exempted them from military service. The bedouins still considered cultivation of land as degrading and disgraceful, and they leased the land to the fellahin, sharing half the proceeds of the crops.

In order to assimilate the tribes into their surroundings he went even further in pursuit of his purpose and appointed their

Sheikhs, for the first time to government officies, such as Umdas and Ma'murs.

By the end of the 19th century, many of the tribal Sheikhs became large land owners, such as the Abazas, Lamiums and others, while other members of the tribe were "lost" among the fellahin. In this manner Mohamed Ali's policy was able to weaken the strong economic and social ties between the Sheikhs and their tribesmen. This feature of the transformation and sedentarisation of nomadic tribal Sheikhs is not exclusive of Egyptian society in the 19th century, but is common to many Middle East countries with different degrees of success. (Baer 1969: pp. 4-11). Moreover, this policy solved the problem of nomadic tribes breaking up their tribal unity through the policy of "forced" settlement on their leaders by making them into large land owners.

The population census of 1897, which appeared in the report of the Director of Recruiting in 1904, shows according to Murry, Baer and Al-Jawhari inflated totals of bedouin tribes as follows:

290,095 Settled bedouins living in their own farm colonies

240,880 Bedouins living among the fellahin

70,472 Real Bedouins or nomads

601,447

This over inflated figure of the total bedouin population living in Egypt is probably due to the fact that many fellahin

claimed "Arab" or nomadic origin in order to be exempted from military service as mentioned earlier in the text and this accounts for the discrepancy in the figures (Murry 1935, p. 31).

Thus, it can be seen that there was good motivation for maintaining tribal affiliation and identification. Before 1944, "Arab" males recognised by the government were exempt from military service. It was a recognised responsibility of the Sheikh to register with the central authorities, those males that reached conscription age, in order to obtain exemption for them. In 1944 such a privilege for an "Arab" was abolished, and all males on reaching a certain age were required by law to serve their military term. With this law the last meaningful function of the tribe disappeared (Barclay 1966 p 151).

At this time the Bureau for Arab Affairs was the link between the "Arabs" and the central authorities. All matters concerning them were dealt with through this Bureau - being treated different from the rest of the Egyptians. With the revolution, and in its early years this Bureau for Arab Affairs was abolished and all "Arabs" were considered as Egyptian citizens enjoying the same rights and having the same obligations and duties. Those bedouins who did not want to adhere to this new situation were given the choice of returning across the borders where they had come from. This made registration with the authorities obligatory, hence,

identification cards etc. except a minority, such as the community understudy, are an exception with no forms of identification except the much older members having their names and place of residence tattooed on their forearms. The younger ones having no such identification. Moreover, no compulsory school or other public service facilities exist.

The settlement of the bedouins into their surroundings came as a result of different stages of assimilation, with some exceptions to the rule even today. Most of the raiding camel herders of the past century have settled to regular village life, with many of its social and economic implications.

The distinction today between the sedentary peasants and the nomads is described as between fellahin and Arabs (Awad 1954: p 254). This distinction shows its main expression in the prohibition of marriage between the two groups, based mainly on the differences in the customs relating to women (Barclay 1966, p 152), and the fact that the "Arabs" still consider the fellahin as an inferior race.

During a discussion of this point, an older member of the community said that he would rather see his daughter eaten by a crocodile rather than have her married to a fellah. "Ya koulha temsah, wala etgawazha fellah". But as time passes these differences will eventually disappear.

Since the middle of the 19th century, the main function of Sheikh was that of a liaison officer with the government vouching for members of his tribe for exemption from military service. This was his primary role with regards to the authorities. But as far as his tribesmen were concerned he had many more obligations and duties towards them than mere exemption from military service.

The Sheikh al-Arb settled disputes between families, and investigated through their Orfi laws and majlis al-Arb or "court" all the kinds of cases from petty thefts, fights, marriage disputes, to murder, brought before him and other judges from different members of his tribe as well as other tribes. They do not go to the local police for any of their problems but solve it in their own way. The court sessions result in the payment of a diya or blood money that is an obligation of the "group of five" in case the accused is unable to do so.

In these sessions the parties are asked to give a moslem "Oath" as as to the truth of their statement or refusing the oath have to go to the mebasha' "Helfan Yamin aw bashaat muslimeen". A custom not adhered to by many bedouins especially the Arb Gharb.

b- The Community understudy, its history, location and distribution.

The bedouin community that is subject of this thesis is of Eastern origin-namely from the Hejaz. They are known to be one of the most aggressive of bedouin tribes and boast of having raided as far north as Aleppo and as far south as Mecca. (Murray 1935 p. 33 & p. 245)

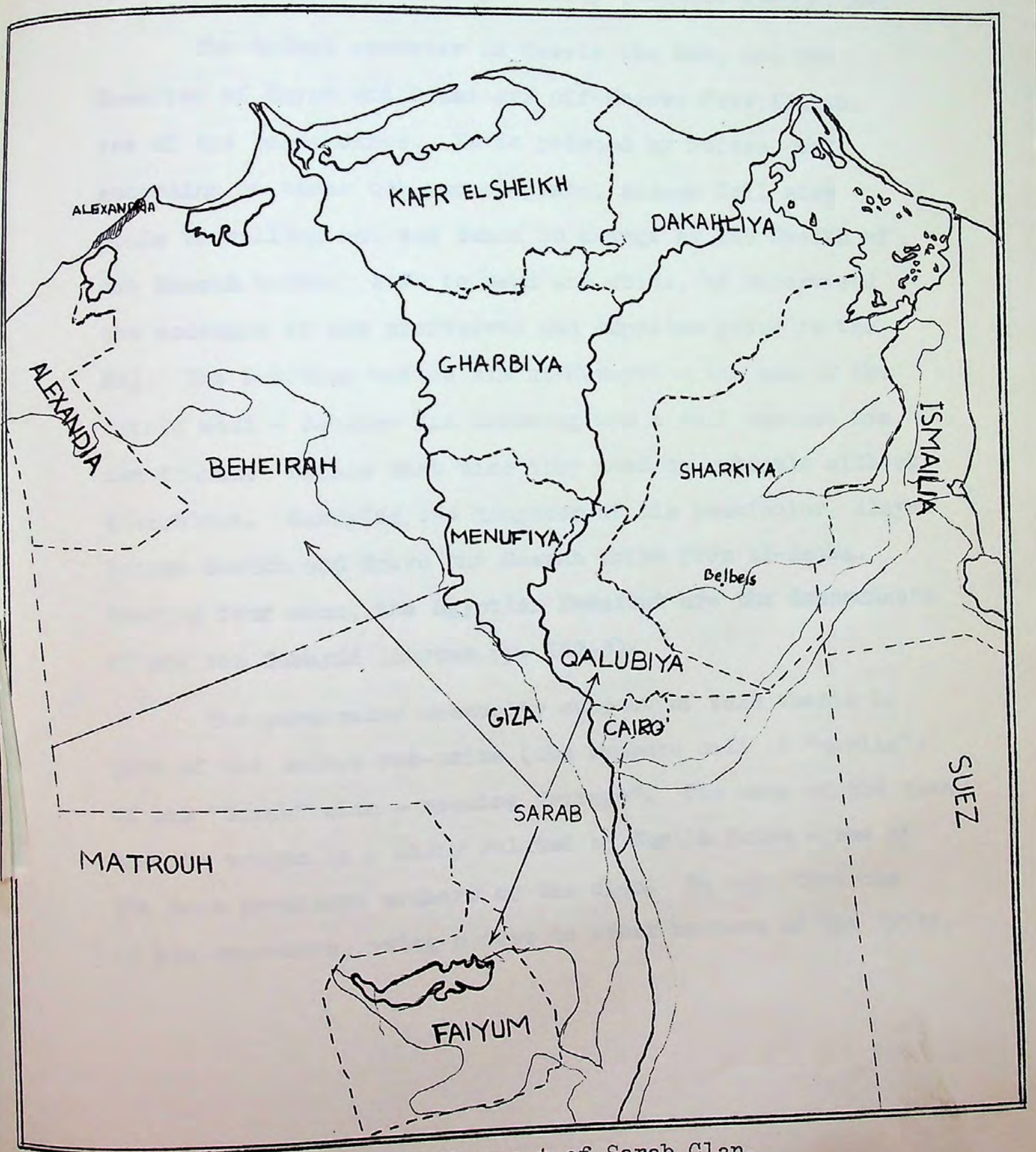
The Hewaitat tribe according to Burckhardt, Burton and Murray came to Egypt about the beginning of the 19th century, driving other tribes across Sinai. During the course of the 19th century, the Hewaitat, continuously pushing west wards, occupied a considerable part of Sinai - the Tiya, with a large part still remaining on the eastern coast of Aqaba. Some of them are still in Hejaz today and also in Jordan, where they are considered to be one of the major tribes. Crossing the Suez Canal into the Eastern Desert, they occupied the country south of the Cairo-Suez road between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea as far south as the northern Galala hills. (Oppenheim 1943 p. 297). Others have settled in the Governorates of Sharkiya, Beheirah and Qaliubiya, while still others have crossed the Nile to the Governorate of Giza, on the outskirts of Cairo, moving

as far south west as Faiyum. (Al-Jawhari 1961 pp. 79 & 100). (see map No. 2 for distribution of the Hewaitat tribe).

The Heweitāt derive their origin from the ancient tribe of Beni Atye (Attia), and around the beginning of the 19th century lived in the eastern gulf of the Red Sea in the district of Aqaba al-Sham. They kept up constant commercial contact with Cairo. Every year a caravan of more than 4,000 camels of these bedouins sets out for Cairo where they purchase wheat, barley and articles of dress. (Burckhardt 1967 vol. 1, p. 29 and vol. 2, p. 8).

The Egyptian Hewaitat at the time of Burckhardt (1831) numbered about 600 tents. The family of Ismail Bey Shedid of the Ghanamiyin living near Belbeis was recognised by the Hewaitat as their Sheikh.

This large tribe since the 19th century has been divided up into four sub-tribes. The Amirat, one of the sub-tribes is found in small numbers living a semi-nomadic life in the desert outside Cairo in the Governorate of Giza, Faiyum and, Qaliubiya. They still retain many of their nomadic characteristics, and with them their bedouin law even though they have



Map No. 2: Location and Movement of Sarab Clan.

close contact with sedentary society (Kennett 1968 p. 16)

The tribal ancestor is Heweit ibn Ham, and the Heweit of Egypt and Sinai are off-shoots from Alayan, one of his descendants. It is related by Burton that according to their own genealogists, Alayan fell sick while travelling and was taken in charge by the Sheikh of the Maazah tribe. Able to read and write, he supervised the accounts of the provisions and supplies going to the Haj. The bedouins called him al-Huwayti - the man of the little wall - because his learning was a wall against his own frauds. Before that time they used to embezzle without discretion. Marrying the daughter of his benefactor, Alayan became Sheikh and drove the Maazah tribe from al-Aqaba. Leaving four sons, the Egyptian Hewaitat are the descendants of his son Zuwayid (Burton pp. 162-3).

The particular community subject of this thesis is part of the Amirat sub-tribe (the members call it "qabila") of the "Sarab" clan - meaning "mirage". The name of the clan has its origin in a story related by Sheikh Salem - one of the more prominent members of the clan. He says that one of his ancestors, owing a debt to other members of the tribe,

managed to "yetsarab" - escape - in the dark of the night, without paying his debt. Next morning on finding out about the flight of the man they called him "Sarab", or "mirage", one minute he was there and the next he was gone. Since then his descendents have come to be known as "Sarab".

The Sarab clan is scattered along the outskirts of the villages of Giza Governorate, some in Embaba and others in Helwan. They live in small mud huts in clusters of between 4-5 huts in each field, with a distance of about 200-1000 metres between each cluster of huts. These clusters of huts belong to married brothers and sons with no outsiders. Within each cluster of huts, there is a shed to house the livestock water-buffelos (gamoussas) and in some cases cows. The donkeys and mules are tied out in the open during the summer months, while in the winter they are housed in the sheds. Only the camels are left in the open both in summer and winter. Many of the bedouin women raise their own chickens which are left to roam around the huts. Beside the huts, they build small coops for the chickens. Usually around the cluster of huts, a fence is built to prevent the chickens, goats and sheep from eating the crops that they grow.

Each mud hut houses a nuclear family, composed of father, mother and unmarried children. Once a young man marries he builds himself and his bride, a mud hut near that of his father. In some cases it was noticed that the hut was built in the vicinity of the bride's family. This could be quite a distance away - on the borders of another village.

Until 30 years ago and as far back as the older members of the community can remember, they have been wandering in these parts and their fathers before them. They refer to themselves as Arb Kheish (Arabs of the tent) as opposed to the settled bedouins in the surrounding villages. They were travelling backwards and forwards between Faiyum, and Qaliubiya, through Giza, transporting goods and furnishing animal products for the Nile dwellers and fellahin.

When the central authorities during the first quarter of the 20th century offered them land to settle on and cultivate, they refused because agriculture and tilling the land was a degrading occupation for a bedouin. Sheikh Salem and others go on to relate that when land became scarce

they decided to settle down and plow the land. The change in attitude came as a result of the completion of the Marutiya Irrigation Project and the increase in land reclamation and the building of roads and railways - the means of transport have been improved which made their services in less demand.

About 30-40 years ago, some of the Sarab clan decided to buy land and cultivate it, while others, less fortunate were able only to lease land from the fellahin to erect their tents on, and to work as hired help. About 15-20 years ago they gave up their tents and built huts instead.

The Sarab clan is divided into two lineages Awaad and Eid. Each lineage is composed of about 20-30 families. This research will deal mainly with the Eid lineage of which about 10 families were involved in the interviews and field research. About 4 or 5 families from the Awaad lineage of whom Sheikh Salem is a prominent figure, are also included. These families live separately in clusters of close kin groups scattered on the borders of the villages.

The total number of households that were under intensive study and observation were about 20. During many of

the celebrations, feasts and many of the visits especially to Sheikh Salem many more people came under observation - many of them coming from Faiyum Qaliubiya and Beheirah.

Although the bedouins under investigation have "settled" on the land, they are in a state of transition and are not assimilated into the surrounding, predominantly peasant society. Many of the villages in the area claim "Arab" origin, but have settled and assimilated into a different kind of life.

The next chapters of the text will probe further and in more detail, into the changes that have taken place and the implications that these changes entail, especially on the economic aspects of life of this semi-nomadic community that is so near physically and yet so far culturally from Cairo.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL ASPECTS OF
ECONOMIC LIFE

a- Traditional aspects of Economic Mode of Life of Primitive Societies

There has been a great deal said about the meaning of the term "economic" in the social sciences. According to Polanyi, there are two meanings or explanations to it: the substantive and the formal meanings.

The substantive meaning of "economic" is basically derived from fact and man's dependence for his living upon his fellows and the environment in which he lives.

On the other hand, the formal meaning of "economic" is based on logic and a situation of choice between alternatives that arises out of an insufficiency of means - the means - ends relationship. (Polanyi 1957: p. 243).

In primitive, tribal and peasant economics, the close calculation of costs is often impossible or merely irrelevant. The advantages in the use of time, resources and personnel are arrived at through the logic of social structure, through a calculus of relative values, and not in terms of the increase

of a single magnitude such as productivity. (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences vol. 4, p. 361).

For Polanyi there are three basic modes of allocation of resources:- reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange. Every empirical economy exhibits at least one of these principles of distribution, most economies exhibit two, while many others are characterised by all three.

Reciprocity involves exchange of goods - "gift" giving - between people who are bound in non-market, nonhierarchical relationships with one another. The relationship is not created by the exchange, but is part of the behaviour that gives its content. The most striking systems of reciprocity are those based on kinship obligations, but there are many other bases essential for reciprocal transfer of goods (Bohannan 1963: pp. 231-232).

This type of exchange rests on fixed sets of trading partners. Within any primitive economy, reciprocity exists only within a given kind of income distribution - the more homogeneous the society, the more likely is reciprocal exchange. Sahlins defines three kinds of reciprocity constructed from the scheme of social segmentation. Generalised reciprocity at one end of the continuum, is characteristic

of exchange between persons who share close kinship and residential proximity. Reciprocity tends to become balanced between distant kinsmen or non-kinsmen who reside at a distance from one another. Finally, reciprocity becomes negative in intertribal exchange. (Dalton 1971a pp. 50-54).

Redistribution is the movement of goods towards a centre - political or economic chief - these goods and services (defense or feasts) are reallocated and distributed among the social units and persons. The head or chief also has the right to distribute unused land for hunting or grazing sites.

Market exchange is the more advanced form of exchange. This phenomena is widespread among peasant societies. "Market" implies a site and a kind of exchange. It is a place where goods and services are exchanged for maximum returns to buyers and sellers of goods. It is a situation where prices are determined by the law of supply and demand. Haggling, bargaining stealing etc. takes place. There is freedom of entry into the market and it is competitive to a certain degree, with no chief or group determining the price or terms of exchange.

Up to the early part of the 20th century, the wandering nomads in the desert relied for part of their livelihood on the spoils of their loot from raiding travellers and pilgrim caravans. They moved in the desert from one waterhole to the next with their flocks of sheep, goats and camels. They lived off their animals, drinking their milk, eating their meat and using their wool for weaving their tents and some articles of clothing. Around the waterholes and wells, a certain amount of vegetation grew, with some palm trees.

Most bedouins especially in Egypt roaming the desert in seasonal migrations, had some knowledge of elementary agriculture. When rains permit, some barely, wheat and other crops were grown for domestic use, while desert shrubbery was fed to the animals. They also hunted wild deer, rabbits and birds for their meat. They used the skins for making saddles and other leather goods for personal use and in some cases to sell or exchange in the market places they visited.

Traditional bedouin economy relied also on animal husbandry. They took special pride in their animals, and wealth was calculated in terms of camels and to a certain degree in flocks. (Bujra in Nelson: 1973 pp. 146-147).

Bedouins bred the animals and raised them, using their milk and wool. They sold animals in the market places they visited to the peasants and traders. With the money from their sale, they bought articles of clothing and other necessary goods they needed, when the rain is scarce they bought wheat, barley, corn, dates and other food stuffs to keep them going until the following season.

The nomads visited the market places in the villages and towns that were on their travel routes. In these market places different forms of exchange took place. Cash transactions as well as exchanges for other items and commodities (i.e. barter). The bedouins of Sinai took to these markets and especially on their trips to Cairo, semi-precious stones such as turquoise, which they sold or exchanged. The Arabs also traded in the woven woollen blankets and klins that was mainly the work of the women. Sinai women also took pride in their embroidery which was sold in these market places. Food, clothing, essential commodities and arms were bought by the bedouins, who traded in animals, woven woollen articles embroidered clothes and semi-precious stones. (Al-Jawhari 1961: pp. 32-42 & 1965).

Reciprocity as a form of exchange was found in these nomadic societies to a high degree, in all its forms from generalised to negative reciprocity. Living in close-knit extended family form, the hardships of life made reciprocal exchange a part of daily living. Redistribution of goods and services and their reallocation to all members of the tribe was a common feature among the desert folk.

The nomads in the desert lived in groups of about 20-60 people. They formed the extended family as well as the basic productive group. The division of labour ran along the lines of sex and age like in many other societies. There were specific tasks which only the male members could do, while the women had their own household duties of looking after the children and aged, making the food, weaving and spinning, milking etc. The men grew the crops, cared for the camels, hunted raided and traded in the market places. The children were left to play around until the age of 8-10. The boys were then trained by the men to hunt and carry out all other duties expected of them when they grew up. The girls on the other hand, started their training at an earlier age than the boys. They were taught by the women how to weave,

cook, bake, milk, look after the young etc., preparing them for womanhood and marriage. The group thus formed a self-sustained economic unit, producing and consuming what they needed.

Trading formed an important part of their economy, they could acquire the commodities that they could not grow or make. Tea and coffee were, and are some of the more important articles on the bedouin's "shopping list" when they make their trips to the market places. (Al-Jawhari 1961 and 1965).

Bedouins traditionally never worked as wage labourers. But with the discovery of oil, and especially after the Second World War, Al-Murrah of Saudi Arabia and many other bedouins in the deserts of the Middle East have been drawn as labourers in the oil fields. This was a radical change in the lives of the roaming camel herding nomads. (Cole 1975).

Although the Sarab continue to be bedouins who still follow the kind of life described above, the larger part of this mode of life has changed.

The hardships of a complete nomadic type of life, and the increase of agricultural lands through reclamation, the

growth of industry, oil, mining etc., have brought about radical changes and encouraged many of the nomadic population, not only in Egypt, but all over the Middle East to be drawn into a different kind of life, namely that of settlement and assimilation into the surrounding society.

b- Stages of Economic Change From Nomadic to Sedentary Type of Economy.

Primitive, peasant, tribal and nomadic societies tend to pass through different stages of progress toward complete assimilation into the surrounding modern society.

Economic change is a special instance of social change. Most of the economic change in simple and peasant societies, comes as a consequence of the impact or influence of industrialisation on these societies. Many studies have been carried out on the changes that have taken place on these societies. These studies have indicated that there are three typical ways of contact the west makes on them.

The first type of contact is peripheral. Here the primitive societies are affected by the expansion of the west's money economy, but not their forms of social organisation; with the expansion of the money economy, an expansion of the scale of social relations takes place. Not only direct face to face interactions tie people together, but new sets of indirect bonds are created. Utility and gain emerge in the relationships of the people without considerations for ethics, status and traditions. Class differences emerge as a consequence of the shift in the distribution of

wealth, thus economic power gets separated from ritual and political dominance. Examples of this type of contact is seen in Firth's account of Tibopia, and Bailey's small village of Bispara in the State of Orissa in India, where the strict caste system had prevented the lower castes from gaining power. But the introduction of cropping and exchange helped this group, the Distillers to sell their liquor and to use the proceeds to acquire estates. Through the commercial sector, and with the aid of the new money economy, the Distillers were able to grasp an economic opportunity that the prevailing social structure in the community had withheld from them (Nash 1966, pp. 102-107).

Mediated contact is the second type of change that is brought on primitive and peasant societies. The interest of the imperial powers in the wealth of these societies, namely land and natural resources, encouraged them to stay for political, military or prestige reasons. Here the complex societies draw upon the natives for labour, exploiting their natural resources. The wages are kept at a low minimum which makes it impossible for the labourers to gain enough to support themselves, they have to return to

their villages. In this manner, the primitive economy works in a dual frame of reference, under local and cultural rules on the one hand, with the demands of the market and the world economy on the other. Africa furnishes extensive examples of this type of mediated contact.

Finally, direct contact of the international economy with primitive and peasant societies is the most radical type of contact. Through industrialisation, the setting up of factories, plantations, mines, oil wells etc., and drawing on wage labour on the scene, are the dominant vehicle of economic and social change for these societies. Since the last century and the beginning of the present, the impact of industrialisation has turned the wheel of change at a faster rate. (Nash 1966 pp. 110-119).

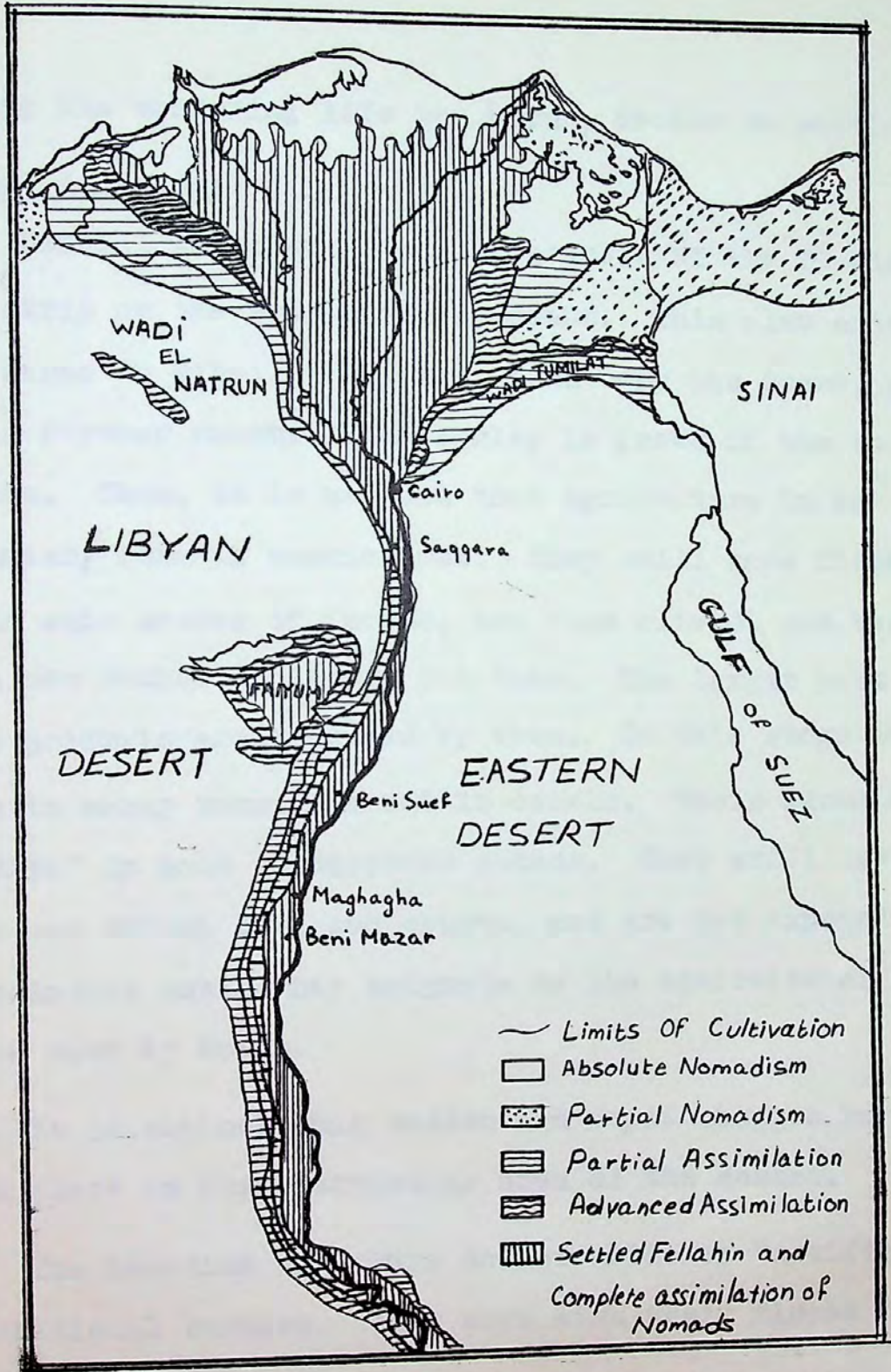
Assimilation of primitive societies is taking place at different rates all over the world. To-day, we still have societies at different stages of assimilation.

In this regard, nomads in Egypt are not different from other similar societies of the world. They are also

going through stages of change toward complete assimilation. The gradual assimilation of Egyptian nomads into the predominantly peasant society, with agriculture replacing the herding of flocks can be divided into five different stages (see map No. 3) from absolute nomadism to complete assimilation.

Absolute Nomadism:

There are still to this day wandering nomads in Egypt. These are found in Sinai, in the Eastern Desert between the Red Sea and Nile Valley. The Western Desert bedouins dwell south of the narrow strip of coast between the Libyan border and the delta. Though tribal boundaries are contested, they still have a fairly strong tribal organisation and strictly observe Orfi law. They usually live in goat-hair tents and their wealth is in camels and flocks of sheep and goats. Many of these nomads have relatives in the valley and delta, whom they visit and sometimes are persuaded to stay. On these visits they carry crops for the peasants for which they are paid, either in cash or in kind. Through this type of contact many of them settle down, either by marrying a daughter of a settled relative, or



Map No. 3: Stages of Assimilation of Nomads.

finding the wondering life too harsh, decide to settle.

Partial Nomadism:

Partial nomadism is characteristic of the 20 kilometre wide strip on the Mediterranean coast. This also exists in some forms in Sinai. Figs are grown near the coast, and olives further south. Some barley is grown if the rain permits. Thus, it is noticed that agriculture in an elementary form is carried out. They still have flocks as their main source of income, but figs olives, and barley are a new source of income for them. The larger part of these products are consumed by them. In this stage they think in money terms and not in camels. Their blood money or "diya" is paid in Egyptian pounds. They still have their own tribal laws and courts, and are not exposed to assimilation until they emigrate to the agricultural lands or the near by towns.

It is noticed that sudden and rapid changes have taken place in this particular area of the desert.

The bedouins by nature do not abide by "artificial" international borders. They move with their flocks of sheep

and herds of camels where ever the grass and shrubs are available.

In the past decade or so, a thriving "trade" or smuggling of animals and goods, back and forth across the Egyptian - Libyan border was started. With the discovery of oil in Libya, the expenditure pattern of the bedouins changed as their income increased. A large demand for animals, which have decreased in Libya, encouraged the bedouins of the desert to illegally "export" the animals for sale on the Libyan market. This movement is counterbalanced by an opposite movement of goods from Libya, where these goods are very cheap, into Egypt. The customs restrictions imposed on the import of luxury goods in Egypt and the high prices demanded for them, made it a very profitable business for the bedouins (Bujra in Nelson, 1973, pp. 149-151). This "trade" made the Western Desert bedouins very rich. Many of them own cars and trucks, leaving the herding of sheep and camels to the poorer and less ambitious ones.

A similar situation of smuggling is also common among the Sinai and Eastern Desert bedouins. For decades, these

bedouins made fortunes out of smuggling "hashish" into Egypt. On this particular point, Sheikh Salem says that it is quite common among the bedouins, especially of Sinai to smuggle "hashish". However, this keeps them in constant fear of the authorities inspite of the wealth they gain out of it. Also, there is no "diya" or compensation paid if the hashish is stolen.

Partial Assimilation:

Here, the bedouins occupy the agricultural zone adjoining the desert. They live in villages of their own completely separate from those of the fellahin. Some of their houses are built in part with stone while others still live in tents.

At this stage they do not own land, but live off their flocks. Many of them serve as "guards" to the neighbouring fellahin, to whom they sell their flocks and animal products. (Sheikh Salem settled as a guard about 40 years ago). They still pursue their tribal habits and customs and do not intermarry with the fellahin whom they despise and look upon as inferior.

With the passage of time, many of the bedouins staked claim to the lands they grazed their flocks on, giving the peasants only a nominal price for the land. Through leasing land from the absentee landlords, and sub-leasing it to the peasants or tribesmen, the chiefs acquired wealth, and becoming quite rich they bought their own land. Camels are no longer the basis of wealth; land and money are the new sources. Cattle - a typically peasant pride - was added to the bedouins possessions of camels, sheep and goats. Land is no longer used for grazing flocks, but a new interest in crops and agriculture developed.

Advanced Assimilation:

The bedouins, having realized the value of owning land moved further into the heart of the agricultural area, away from the desert in search of better and more fertile lands.

Not being able to have villages of their own, they are obliged to share those of the fellahin whom they still consider as inferior. In this stage they no longer have close tribal organisation but still take pride in referring to themselves as "Arabs" of such and such a tribe. They do not intermarry with the fellahin, yet their sole occupation

now is agriculture. Being a small minority in these villages, intermarriage is inevitable. By this time they have adopted many peasant customs and habits discarding many of their own.

Complete Assimilation:

This state is inevitable especially when living in a peasant village for decades and intermarriage takes place. The bedouins, pre-occupied with agriculture become indistinguishable from the fellahin and old relationships and customs are replaced by new ones.

The setback to complete assimilation was the law exempting "Arabs" from military service - this law encouraged many non-Arabs to claim Arab descent. However, this law does not exist any longer except with regards to pure nomads of the desert. The process of assimilation is continuous, and in the heart of the delta no group claims Arab origin of any kind. (Awad 1954: pp. 247-252).

Radical changes have taken place in the economic life of the Sarab as a result of their exposure to the new ways of life due to settlement. The reclamation of the desert area, previously occupied by the Sarab, into agricultural land as a result of the completion of the Marutiya Canal and its irrigation and drainage schemes, the increase in the network of roads and the facilities of modern means of transportation, made the community decide to give up their absolute nomadic ways of continuous wandering for a semi-settled type of life.

Change brought about by peripheral contact through daily face to face interaction with the neighbouring fellahin, created new relationships of gain and utility. The new and indirect bonds that emerged did not have far reaching effects on the ethics, traditions customs or values of the community. But direct contact, and the needs created by the new situation of settlement on the land made the Sarab, particularly the younger men, go out and work as wage labourers for the fellahin and contractors to make a living. This direct contact with non-bedouins brought about changes in the economic activity of the community. They gave up the harsh ways of the desert for an equally hard kind of life, that of agriculture and paid labour.

It can be fairly said that, the Sarab clan living in small groups, scattered outside the villages, on the borders of cultivation are in the third stage of assimilation discussed previously.

Although they have physically settled on the land, cultivating it, yet they still take pride in their camels, have flocks of sheep and carry crops from place to place. They are in a state of transition where both modes of life - herding and transporting, and agriculture - are carried out side by side.

Because of this state of transition many changes have taken place, in the division of labour, type of houses clothes, animals, occupations etc. These changes and their implications on the socio-economic mode of life of the Sarab community are discussed in greater detail in Chapter No. V.

CHAPTER IV

Changing Economic Aspects of Life of the Sarab Community

With physical settlement on the land, the Bedouin community of the Sarab, in a state of transition is carrying out a dual kind of economic life. On the one hand, they still retain their traditional mode of economic life - that of herding and camel transport, though the latter occupation has decreased enormously. On the other hand, with settlement many of them have turned to agriculture as a means of livelihood, either through the ownership of land, or working as farm labourers for wages.

a- Technological Complexity and Division of Labour

Agriculture is a new occupation for the herding bedouins. Many of them had experience with some kind of elementary agriculture relying mainly on the rains, but regular agriculture is a totally different situation. This change in the mode of production brought the bedouins face to face with many changes, and equally new technology and agricultural tools.

The introduction of the plough, axe, shovel, tambour and other tools are new to the bedouins. Before turning to agriculture the Sarab never had need for these tools. The agricultural

technology, though simple requires high levels of skill and performance. Not only did they have to learn how to use these tools, but also to use them skillfully - to put least effort and get the most output.

The Sarab had to learn about the different crops, when was the correct time to sow, water and gather, how to care for the crops, the various pests that attacked them, the different agricultural seasons and cycles etc. It was a totally new world for them. They said that by watching the fellahin they learned a great deal. They would ask about the things they did not know, and gradually they have become quite skilled. Through trial and error they learnt about the different kinds of soil, the most profitable crops to grow and when, the irrigation and drainage schemes - everything there is to know about agriculture - becoming as good as the fellahin.

The tractor for the Sarab bedouin is a familiar sight. Very often they hire a tractor with its driver from the nearby villages to plough their land instead of hiring a labourer to help. This is done when the person has no grown sons to help him.

In this state of transition the Sarab are occupied in agriculture, wage labour as well as their traditional herding and transporting.

In this technologically simple society, the division of labour follows the natural lines of age and sex. The transmission of knowledge takes place in the ordinary business of growing up. There is high interchangeability between tasks and workers, with small differences in skill.

The division of labour due to the dual economic activities of the Sarab community may be summed up as follows:-

The men folk are responsible for the ploughing and tilling of the land, sowing the seeds - which according to the bedouins is no job for a woman because she should not be bent over for long periods of time. The seeds must be sown in straight rows, spaced evenly to allow the crop to grow strong and healthy. Crops have different watering periods, every day, every other day, once a week etc. which have to be followed carefully. They have to make regular checks for pests and other plant diseases, fertilize the land etc. The women are allowed to help pick the crops and water them when the men are away. All other agricultural

tasks are left for the males. The children are sometimes allowed to water the fields and help pick certain crops.

Transport of crops (tasief) by camel from the fields to the village or nearest collection area is one of the main nomadic occupations which the Sarab still take pride in. The camels are used not only for the transport of crops at harvest time, but for the transport of wood, mud, dung, in some cases stone etc., from place to place for which the camel man gets paid either by the day or by camel load depending on the distance. The bedouin who does not own a camel, may rent or borrow one from a close relative. In the case of borrowing, the money gained is shared equally between camel owner and the rider.

Trade, the buying and selling of livestock, agricultural products, seeds tools etc. are the responsibility of the males. Those bedouins that do not own land of their own have to work as wage labourers in order to support their families.

Working for wages is new for the Sarab bedouins, it is out of necessity and the changing situation that many of them, particularly the young men with no land have to work as

agricultural workers, in the building industry, carrying bricks and mortar and any other job they may gain a daily wage from.

The bedouin women on the other hand, have many more duties and responsibilities. Besides the traditional task of wife and mother, cooking baking, milking, washing, and carrying water are among her daily activities, as well as spinning, weaving and dying of wool, the inherited cultural bedouin skills which are going out of date. Only the older women carry them out, the younger ones know nothing about them at all. These are the traditional duties of the bedouin women living in the nomadic state.

However, not only are they expected to carry out these tasks, but new responsibilities are expected of them as well. The Sarab women who have settled on the land, have to care for the domestic animals, cows and gamoussas. They have to gather grass from the sides of the canals and drainage canals, walking long distances, wading in water knee deep and carrying back heavy loads on their heads. They feed and water the animals twice a day. The poultry, chickens, ducks, pigeons and eggs are completely in the care of the women. They buy and sell

them on the market because it is considered degrading for bedouin men to do this. They are also expected to herd the flocks when the children are still very young. A typical day for a woman starts at sunrise with the preparation of tea, and ends, after all the above mentioned chores that are carried out every day, an hour after sunset.

The children start their training by helping around the house gathering twigs and dry grass for the fire, feeding and watering the animals and more often just playing around. The boys between the age of 10-12 start serious work by going out with the older boys to herd the flocks, they go out all day covering long distances. A few years later they are permitted to go out on their own, usually two boys together. At an early age the boys are introduced to the tasks of agriculture. This training is a gradual process, by helping, observing and asking questions, they develop the talents and all the knowledge required. They are taught how to ride camels, care for them and know the different types. Girls start their training at an earlier age than the boys. They are trained by the women to perform all the duties required of a woman. Thus by the time a girl is 15 years old she has learnt everything

and is prepared for marriage and a home of her own.

In this simple agricultural community, there is no technological complexity, life is simple and the number of tasks involved in any productive activity are few.

b- Structure and Membership of Productive Units

A simple economy such as that of the Sarab community, is distinguished by the structure and membership of its productive units.

In the past, the Sarab bedouins in the extended family structure, divided the work among the members of the group. These tasks could be interchanged among the group members with no effect on the task performed or its efficiency in many cases.

With settlement, ownership of land and shift to agriculture, the groups have become much smaller in size. Moreover, the members of the productive unit are the nuclear family as opposed to the extended family and large kinship group in the days of nomadism and desert life. The whole structure of the kinship group, its division into many smaller units, the economic separation from the larger extended family group gave

rise to economically independent households as a result of change from herding to a settled agricultural life. The bonds that held them together in the desert no longer exist.

The producing units are multi-purposed and economic behaviour is not its only purpose, but an aspect of its total activity. Almost all the productive units are duplicating the tasks, there is no centralisation of effort, and they are limited in the kind of personnel they are able to recruit, the capital they are able to command and the ways in which they can distribute their products (Nash 1966: p 24).

The productive units are the individual households. When a Sarab needs help on his land, to plough, sow, gather the crop etc., he has to resort to paid help, because his sons are either too young to help, or old enough to establish their own household. In the past no such thing was heard of, all worked as one, for the same group or family. Now with the division of the community into single households, with complete economic independence and separation, help is given either for regular wages or as a favour to be reciprocated at a later date. They call upon their near kin for help in the

belief that "al-qarib awla min al-gharib" close kin are more worthy of the benefit gained than the outsider. This is specially true when they need help for camel transport or "tasief". This attitude will be discussed in greater detail when dealing with reciprocity.

Many people in the Sarab community do not own land, nor flocks of sheep, they have perhaps a camel and or a cow which is not sufficient to supply them with the bare necessities of life. They have to work as regular hired help for wages especially when the seasons of "tasief" - crop transport - are over. They work as farm labourers for the bedouins or neighbouring peasants. They also work on building and construction sites, carrying bricks, stones, and mortar, because they still have not acquired the skills of building and brick laying, even though some of them are attempting it now. They think it is very hard work and is only attempted by the young men who neither have land nor flocks of their own, not even camels. Some of the young men said that they even worked as "extras" in some of the films that needed camel riders. They found this work very amusing. The older generation of bedouins will not think of working as hired labour, either in agriculture or

any other occupation. They are still under the belief that a true bedouin or Arab cannot work for wages for anyone else, especially a fellah!

Some of the Sarab, like Sheikh Salem, first settled on the land as hired "ghafirs" - guards - for the absentee landowners, in order to protect the land from squatters especially bedouins. In such cases, they first lived in tents, later building mud huts on the edge of land near the road or dirt path. They raised their own livestock, investing mainly in cows and gamoussas, with some flocks and riding donkeys. The younger members of the Sarab household usually have to work for wages, because income from the job of ghafir is not sufficient to support the whole family, especially when the young men take wives.

It is common for a household to work as a single productive group, sharing food, any income from hired labour, caring for the flocks and animals until a marriage takes place. Immediately a separation of "economic" interests is in order. The older generation look upon this phenomenon as a necessity brought about by change in the economic mode of life, and the fact that the women, especially the younger ones, no longer can live or accept

the dictates of the older women and head of the households. They want to have their own "home", free to do what they want and when. A great deal of misunderstanding and friction arose between the members of the group which made it necessary for the head of the household to call for a separation of economic interests, yet still living in friendly and neighbourly kinship clusters for safety reasons. Separation decreased a great deal of friction and misunderstanding that resulted from sharing work and food.

When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of separation with the different members of the Sarab community, the reactions were two polar opposities. The young and old held extreme views. The young were all for separation because they believed that they were taken advantage of, and were unable to form capital or wealth of their own as long as they worked with their fathers. They were just supplied with food and little clothing which was not sufficient to start a family of one's own. The young women are all for separation.

At the other extreme, the older generation look upon separation as a forced necessity brought about by change.

Speaking about the younger generation they said that they are no longer obedient and are different from them when they were young. In the old days the father's word was law and under no circumstances was it to be disobeyed. The young, born on the land not knowing any other kind of life, had a mind of their own. Through mixing with the fellahin they preferred separation.

Cooperation, however, also takes place within the Sarab community. There are strong kinship relations and ties that hold them together. In times of celebration and disaster, all form a united group helping out in every possible manner. This is a common feature in many primitive societies even today.

c- Systems and Media of Exchange

In any society there are one or various combinations of exchange systems. The community under study, in a state of transition, experiences all the types.

i- Markets:- are widespread in the area, and the Sarab bedouins carry out a great deal of exchange of products, goods, animals and services in the different market places they visit.

Markets are of different kinds. There are central market places such as Giza, Cairo and other major governorates, and there are many rotating markets held on different days, in the neighbouring villages that have some degree of specialisation. Many of the bedouins frequent particular market places to buy and sell camels, while others are known for cattle, sheep

agricultural products, seeds etc. Some of the markets are at a distance of 35-50 kilometres, well known for their wide collection of camels. Other markets are only a few kilometres away in the nearby villages.

The bedouin often goes on his own to the market place not to disturb the others. But when he wants to buy something as important and expensive as a camel or cow, he will not go alone, but will take a person who is alert and has experience in the purchase of camels and cows. On such a mission, a bedouin will not take a fellah with him but a fellow "Arab", brother cousin kin etc., because many of them believe that the peasant will not give an honest opinion, neither about the price nor the animal in question. They also believe that incase the price is suitable the fellah will negotiate the deal in his own favour, although he had no intensions of buying when they started. This situation in their opinion makes the owner of the animal demand a higher price or at least makes him unwilling to negotiate. Most of them do not like to employ the services of a broker, because his interest lies in terminating the deal and not with the person making the purchase. Thus, in order not to clash with the fellah,

the bedouin will not ask him to go on such a trip. Sarab and Arabs in general do not compete with each other for the purchase of livestock, because they consider such an action not fit for a proud, generous and chivalrous race.

Women do not go to the market except in rare instances to buy such things as chickens ducks, onions, a sieve and ornaments. It is not correct for a man to be seen purchasing or carrying about such goods. On the other hand, there are women nowadays who are obliged to go to the market to buy and sell because they have no close kin folk, husband, brother, son to do it for them. The bedouins have no objections about buying from women in the market places provided the prices they offer are suitable.

The women folk go to the market with other bedouin women or fellahat (peasant women) from the neighbouring villages. These are usually ones with whom they have a great deal of contact and trust. The Arab woman going to the market with peasant women usually removes her "nuqba" and covers her mouth with her head dress out of modesty and for fear that it may be stolen.

The Sarab community carryout a great deal of their economic transactions through market exchange. It is in these markets

which they visit, as often as their needs require, that they buy and sell their goods and livestock.

ii- Redistribution: as a mode of economic exchange of goods which entails obligatory payments of money, goods services or labour to a socially recognised centre, chief king, Sheikh etc., who in turn reallocates part of what he receives to other members of the community in the form of services such as defense or feasts, does not exist among the settled bedouin community except when certain members are in grave need of food or assistance. In the nomadic state, when the bedouins were living in a more primitive and isolated state, with strong tribal affiliation, organisation and interdependence on the group as a whole, redistribution of goods and services was a common feature of their social and economic structure.

Now with settlement and the division of the clan into individual households with complete economic independence, this mode of exchange has diminished.

iii- Reciprocity: "is obligatory gift and counter-gift giving between persons who stand in some socially defined relationship with one another" (Dalton 1967 p. 71).

Like other similar societies, the Sarab practice reciprocal exchange in all its forms. The strong kinship ties and clan affiliation bring the members of the community closer to each other. This cohesion is mainly to help them protect and keep their bedouin identity.

Reciprocal exchange is widespread and is clear in many of their dealings with each other. The most formal type of reciprocity is that seen in their celebrations and festivities. When a wedding or circumcision takes place, the guests are usually kinsmen from near and far, members of other clans and tribes with whom they have close ties, either through marriage or trade interests. The guests also include some fellahin with whom they have established friendship and neighbourly understanding.

At these ceremonies, of which we attended quite a few, a "nuqta", a monetary or nonmonetary gift is in order. This is usually paid to the bride's or circumcised boy's father or mother depending on the person one wants to complement.

This "nuqta" is either in the form of money or nonmonetary gift such as sugar, rice, soap, bottles of syrup etc. The "nuqta" given by relatives, neighbours and friends is expected to be

reciprocated at some later date when a similar occasion is celebrated by the donar. The Sarab and all other bedouins consider the "nuqta" as a debt that has to be repaid on the first appropriate occasion. When reciprocating, the "nuqta" has to be given in the same form it was received, i.e. money for money, sugar for sugar etc. Moreover, the return "gift", whether money or goods, has to be more than the gift received. If one pound (£ 1) was paid, the return gift must be the original pound that was the "debt" and something extra as the new gift. This is also true if the gift was given in any other form - one kilogram of sugar must be returned as 1½, 2 or more kilograms, depending on the financial situation of the donar and his closeness to the receiver.

The "nuqta" given during these celebrations is usually recorded by a person who can write, specifying the name of the person, the amount and type of gift. Such a record is kept in order to return to the list when a counter-gift or "debt" has to be presented to one of the guests that were at the celebration. The "nuqta" can start with as little as 5 piasters with no limits or maximum amount. In answer to the question, what is the most suitable amount, the bedouins said that it varies

from one individual to the next, his closeness (kinship relation) and above all his own financial situation and ability to pay.

The "nuqta" paid to the father of the bride or circumcised boy, is usually applied towards the payment of the festivities of the occasion.

"Nuqta" in the form of money is also given by some of the guests to the barber who performs the circumcision. Similar offers can be made to the entertainers and musicians. All these gifts are expected to be reciprocated at similar festivities. Sometimes the "nuqta" is given to the bride or groom and then it must be returned by them. All these exchanges are recorded and payment is reciprocated by the individual who received the nuqta. It is considered as a debt that has to be returned at the first opportunity.

If for one reason or another, a person was unable to attend a celebration in which a counter-gift was due, he has to go before or after the celebration and present his gift and good wishes. But if this is not done, the person expecting the return of the "gift" will remind the individual concerned at the first opportunity that he owes him a debt which has not been returned. Such a situation is very embarrassing for a bedouin, the Sarab say, and

is considered as "āeb" or (shameful). They will borrow or sell a goat in order to repay a nuqta.

The Sarab reciprocate all gifts received even with the neighbouring fellahin. Women receiving nuqta are expected to make return payments as well. Often they would offer us dates, maize, vegetables, eggs etc., which we tried not to take, in return for the presents we used to give them.

When someone dies, any money or food offered to the family is not expected to be returned. It is not a "debt" in the sense that "nuqta" is, but a feeling of closeness of the bedouin folk in times of difficulty.

On the other hand, bloodmoney or "diya" is a debt that has to be returned. It is a compensation paid by the "five" or "khamsa", i.e. members of five generations of the accused person's family. The "diya" is payment for a crime done, such as murder, theft, injury etc. Each crime has its price or compensation. In the past, the "diya" was 40 camels for a murdered man, but now the bloodwit is usually paid in cash, either by the accused or by his family jointly. The amount varies from one crime to the next and is determined by the majlis-al-arb according to Orfi law in the presence of both parties. Moreover, the diya is not only a

debt that the accused has to repay in his life time, but is also inherited by his sons after him.

Reciprocity takes other forms besides the gift and counter gift. Among the Sarab community, services are also reciprocated. These can take many forms, such as help during festivities, harvest, building a hut, curing an animal, ploughing a field etc. During celebrations the women may help in cooking the food, while the men pay their compliments by joining in the festivities, singing "dahiya" and clapping the "soab", at almost all bedouin celebrations. The women dance only when their husbands, sons, brothers permit them to do so. Young girls are allowed to dance, but neither the young girls nor women are permitted to dance at peasant celebrations, nor will the men join in the clapping or singing.

Bedouins will call on each other when help is needed or some chore or job to be done, for which payment is due. The near of kin are more worthy of the benefit. They believe that when a person is in need, he can always find his close kinsmen beside him, supporting him over the hard periods. Usually, the bedouins work for each other for regular wages, but when just a day's work is required, the person hired may refuse to take

the wage for the work done. In such cases the payment is made in tea, sugar etc. Help in the form of work on the land is offered free between certain members of the group, such as among brothers, between father and son, uncle and nephew, father-in law and son-in-law etc. In kinship relations of this type, where help and labour are offered free, something in return is always expected even though it is not announced. A young wife speaking about the help her husband gives her old father on the land, says that when the crop is harvested her father will not forget to give them part of it for the house. On the other hand, a few of the younger men said they would rather work for wages with outsiders and not help father or uncle, because they either expect them to work for free or for less than the regular wages. Some believe that these kinship relations are a basis of exploiting them.

Individuality and economic independence are felt more among the younger generation who are more income conscious. In most cases, they own no camels, and few animals of any kind apart from those raised in partnership with distant owners or village traders.

Inspite of all this, reciprocal exchange based on kinship ties is still very strong among the Sarab. They will go out of their way to help or aid a distressed member of the clan.

d- Control of Wealth and Capital

The chief capital goods in primitive societies are land, men and animals. The bedouins in their nomadic state took great pride in their camels which were the main source of their wealth. Land was more of a tribal domain to be used by the tribe to wander from place to place pasturing their flocks on the sparse desert vegetation. The more men a tribe, or section of it, had, the more control over their environment, and thus more capital and wealth it had. Manpower is allocated according to the social constitution of the society. The more men and animals they had, the more land under their control, thus the more wealth.

In the community under analysis, that is semi-sedentarised, and in a state of transition, ownership of land is of recent date. Many people rent a plot of land on the edge of the fields to build their huts. The few that own land inherited it from their fathers, the original investors in land. The plots of land that were bought were very small, about 2-3 feddans each. These plots of land have been inherited by their sons, who lived at first as an extended household, but since then it has been divided among them into yet smaller plots of land.

The land not being of equal fertility, was divided into many small plots, each son taking a piece in each of the different areas. When they first settled on the land about 30 years ago, they lived together as an extended family, sharing food and work. As time went on, and several years after the father's death, this family structure was no longer convenient. Many misunderstandings and quarrels took place, a separation into nuclear households with complete economic independence was called for. They continued to live in the same mud huts, but each working and eating alone. Total land holding decreased with separation.

Ownership of land among the Sarab bedouin is not a major source of wealth. Only 4-5 households owned land, the rest of the community rented land to build their huts on. The Arabs that owned land also had a camel or two each with several cows, gamoussas, sheep, goats and riding donkeys. On the edge of their land they grew many palm trees. Bedouin land owners possess from 2-3 feddans to 4-8 kirats each (a feddan is equal to 24 kirats). The land holdings are small and no cash crops, such as cotton onions etc. are grown in the area. They usually grow a variety of vegetables, maize, alfalfa etc. depending on the agricultural

season, resting the land for appropriate intervals. The bedouins have learned a great deal about agriculture and are as skilled as the fellahin themselves.

The wealth of a settled bedouin is in the agricultural land he owns if any, and the livestock - such as camels, cows, gamoussas, sheep, goats, donkeys, mules and poultry. Palm trees also furnish the Sarab Arab with income from the sale of the dates. Land prices have risen tremendously in the past few years, especially since 1973. A feddan of agricultural land that was sold in the late 1960's for £ 1,000 - 2,000 depending on its distance from the Pyramids road is now worth £ 15,000 - 20,000.

Income from the land is in the form of agricultural products that are usually sold in the nearby market places or villages. Sometimes part of the crop is kept for household use i.e. vegetables and dates and also to feed the animals. The maize crop is mainly used for making flour after drying and grinding, for household consumption. If the crop is plentiful and more than domestic needs, some of it may be sold for cash to other bedouins who have no land to grow their own crop, or in the nearest market place. Sometimes, part of the maize

crop may be given as "gifts" to persons who have rendered services in the past for which they refused to take payment, such as ploughing the land, herding the sheep etc., or even as payment to the local barber who performed a circumcision or minor "operation" on one of the members of the family for which he was not paid.

Vegetables, unlike maize have to be picked every other day, every 3 days or once a week. Some of it is consumed, while the rest is carried by camel or donkey to a nearby village for immediate sale. The money received goes for buying new seeds for the next crop, goods for the house or kept aside to be later invested in a goat or perhaps a larger animal. It may also be used to hire a tractor or farm labourer to plough the land.

Camels are the pride and joy of the Sarab bedouins, yet many of them had to give them up for the more practical and profitable farm animals - cows and gamoussas -, while others could not afford to buy them. I interviewed several men and inquired about the reasons for the shift in interest. They all came up with almost the same answer. Camel ownership and transport have been the main bedouin occupations inherited

from father to son for centuries, but with modern means of transport, camels are becoming outdated and an alternative must be found. However, many still believe: what good is a bedouin without a camel? He is no different from a fellah! A survey of the community shows that about one third of the men do not own camels of their own but dream of the day they will be able to do so.

Camels are of 3 kinds: Maghrebi: are camels raised by the bedouins of the Western Desert (Ārb Gharb). Mewalid - are those that are born and raised on the agricultural land al-Rif. Sudani: are camels from the Sudan, these are fattened and sold for their meat only, because they cannot be trained for transport and hard labour.

Both the maghrebi and mewalid camels are used for carrying and transport. They have patience and great endurance for hard work and labour unlike the Sudani camels. The Sarab bedouins teach their young boys at an early age to love their camels and care for them, they also teach them how to recognise the different kinds. These differences are in hair and shape of the forehead of the animal. The camels are given different names at different

age groups. A foal is called "Hawar" until the age of two years, he is left under his mother to suckle milk and roam about. At the age of four he is called "marbout" - tied - or "ribaa" meaning four, in other words tied and is under training. "Metāadid", refers to the camel at the age of five which is the time when the ĩda or equipment is placed on his back and he is able to start work. At six he is a full grown camel and is called "gamal", the training is completed and he is ready for work. The best age for a camel is seven years. A riding camel is called "hagin", while the name for a female camel is "naga". The life span of the animal is 15-21 years. By the time the camel gets out its sixth and last incisors it is too old to work any longer. The price of a camel ranges from £ 200 for a small camel that has had no training, up to £ 400 for a full grown one. Prices also vary according to kind.

The female camels or nagas are more expensive than the male, because of their ability to reproduce. The naga gives birth to one foal every three years. She carries the foal for 13 months and the rest of the period is for suckling. The naga is full grown and ready to reproduce at the age of four. Both the male and female camels go through the same periods of

training and are both used for carrying and transport.

The bedouins prefer to own the mewalid camels because they are born and raised among them, they know the terrain and are more hard working. The maghrebi are also good for work, but they think luck plays an important role when purchasing one. The Sudani are no good for work because they cannot cross over ditches and do not train easily. They are raised for 2-3 years after which they are sold for their meat and profit is made from their sale.

Camel diseases are many and varied. Only a very few of the Arabs know how to treat the different sicknesses. This is usually done by firing with a hot iron, different places for different ailments. The other animals are also treated in this manner and quite often people. One of the small boys had a burn on his forehead just above his right ear for treatment of a serious inflammation of the eye which the local barber (a fellah) was unable to cure. Another little boy had a burn on the lower part of his neck below his throat, this we were told was to cure him from an ailment which when described sounded like diphtheria. We had an opportunity to observe Sheikh Hammad (who acquired this skill from his father) perform an operation

on a donkey that had a severe limp in his foreleg. About a week or ten days later, the donkey was "as good as new" with no signs of a limp what so ever.

Camels are sometimes bitten by a fly which the Arabs call "debab". This makes the animal sick for a period of about 3 years, it loses its appetite and looks at the sun. This malady can be treated by using a hot iron on the "milk vein" crossing its belly to its hind leg. (see diagram). For the

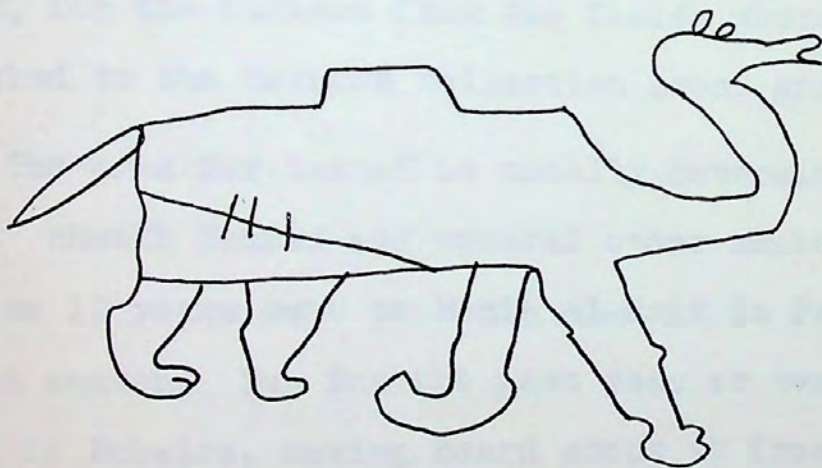


Diagram by Sheikh Hammad indicating the vein that cures from the "debab".

3 years the animal is sick he is absolutely of no use, but

after that period it returns to normal and is able to work again.

"Tasief" - transport of crops on camel back - is a typically nomadic occupation which the majority of the Arabs still carry out until today. The Sarab go on these trips in groups of 5-8 men, each on his own camel. In the past the women used to go with them, setting up tents, making the food and taking care of the men. The crops carried by them are usually wheat, maize, rice and other crops, depending on the season, for the farmers from the fields where it is harvested or picked to the nearest collection area, granary or village.

The area for tasief is usually determined by mood and habit. Sheikh Hammad and several other members of the community, for over 12 years went to Menia al-Hait in Faiyum for the harvest season. But for the past year or two they changed to al-Hamoul in Beheira, having heard about it from some camelmens. The reasons for this change of direction are several as Sheikh Hammad said, primarily the form of payment in "Bahari" (lower Egypt and the delta) is better.

In Faiyum payment is made in grain, while in Beheira it is in wheat stalks and according to Sheikh Hammad this has

more "baraka". Although there is more work in Faiyum, where estates are larger, but the terms of payment are less because Faiyum has its own Arabs. The payment for carrying one feddan of wheat in Faiyum is two "kelahs" of wheat grain. The average wheat crop from one feddan is 8-10 "ardab". It varies from place to place depending on the fertility of the land. (One ardab is equal to 12 "kelahs". Ardab and kelah are measures of volume and differ from one grain to the next. The government has made fixed approximations for these measures and calculates them as follows:-

One ardab of wheat = 155 kilograms.

One ardab of maize = 140 kilograms.

One ardab of fowl = 155 kilograms.

Thus one kelah of wheat is approximately equal to 13 kilograms).

In Beheira payment differs, it is done by camel load. For every 8 camel loads of wheat the bedouin gets 12 "ghamrs". One ghamr is an arm full which is a bundle. Thus 8 camel loads are paid by 12 bundles of wheat stalks. The Arabs find this deal quite profitable because they remove the ears of corn and take the stalks as fodder for their camels.

Tasief in Faiyum is for a period of 35 days and the trip takes about 3 days on camel back; while in Beheira it is for 15 days only and the trip takes 2 days. Usually the terms of payment are negotiated with the owner of the crop before the work starts. It takes two camels to transport the wheat from a feddan to the village. The terms have to be negotiated because the distance the crop has to be carried differs from one farm to the next. The distance from the farm or area of collection to the granary is between 1-4 kilometres. Thus, payment has to be negotiated on this basis.

In recent years, some farmers have changed the form of payment to cash. The Arabs all agreed among themselves when asked that they prefer to be paid in kind instead of cash i.e. to receive a portion of what they carried, especially wheat and maize, instead of cash because they said this remains in the house, and money is "lost" - spent.

Young men who do not own camels can "hire" them for the tasief trip from a close relative such as father, uncle, brother, or cousin, who is not planning to go. The proceeds are usually divided equally between the owner of the camel and the person making the trip.

The Sarab use their camels to carry wood, mud, dung, stones, straw etc. for short distances in the surrounding area. Payment in this case is in money, either by the day or per camel load depending on the distance it has to be carried. A camel load carried for a distance of 200-300 metres is between 4-5 piasters a load. However, when payment is made by the day, it is agreed upon before hand how many loads are expected to be transported, or the amount is specified before agreement takes place.

If a bedouin is not using his camel he can hire it out by the day or load. But this is not applicable to his donkey. The donkey is considered as a personal possession of the owner that cannot be hired. It is used for personal purposes only. A close relative may ask to borrow the donkey for an errand but this cannot be done often. If an Arab needs a donkey, he can hire one from the fellahin and this costs about 70 piasters for a whole day. The bedouin owner's small children are allowed to ride the donkey to the nearby village to perform errands for the household members - buying tea, sugar tobacco etc. - but his elder sons who have separated and have households of their own, can only borrow the donkey and this is considered as a

favour on the part of the father, uncle etc. that has to be reciprocated by helping out on the land etc.

Raising and herding of sheep is another of the nomadic occupations that the community still takes pride in "Camels and sheep have been our profession for centuries. Farm animals, land, work for wages are all new to us, but we learned them". This is repeated by almost all of the community in the interviews. Wool from the sheep is shorn twice a year, once after the "foul" crop and once after the maize. The sheep are washed before the wool is shorn, and the shearing of the wool is done by a special person usually a fellah never an Arab. To shear one sheep costs 5 piasters. The wool in the past used to be spun and dyed by the women, then woven on looms which the men helped to erect and made into "humul" - rugs - tents etc. Now, the wool is sold because people are forgetting the techniques, they are no longer worth while.

With sedentarisation, the possession of farm animals gamoussas and cows have become a common phenomenon among the settled Sarab. They are raised primarily for the sale of their offspring and milk. This is one of the important changes noticed,

which they explain as a necessity induced by settlement on the land. The irrigation projects over the past 30-40 years have increased the agricultural plot of land at the expense of grazing areas used by this community for their camels and sheep. Thus, shepherds have to take the flocks for long distances to graze, while cows and gamoussas feed on grass gathered from the sides of the canals and drains.

The young men between 18-25 years of age, after marriage and setting up of individual households, are unable to buy livestock of their own have to go in partnership with absentee partners. In this situation, the young bedouin pays half the price of the animal and is responsible for feeding and taking care of it for a certain amount of money. The offspring are sold and each receives half the proceeds. In case the Arab on forming the partnership did not pay half the price of the mother, the money from the sale of the calf goes to pay back his share and the remainder if any he receives as profit. The money from the sale of the milk is also shared between the partners. The women take the milk to the dairy in the village where it is skimmed and the cream is separated from the milk. The cream is sold by the "rhatl" (Egyptian pound weight) and

the milk is sold by the kilo to the dairy where the cream is churned into butter and sold in Giza. Many of the young men resort to this kind of partnership to start making their own "maliya" - capital. One animal will in the future lead to several others. This type of partnership also applies to sheep and goats as well as cows gamoussas and camels.

Labour wages is a totally new source of income for the Sarab bedouins. Before settlement, it was unheard of for an Arab to work for wages - especially for a fellah - but with settlement of the community and the change into an agricultural surrounding, those members unable to have land of their own had to work as hired labourers. This change in the means of making a living has made many of the young Arabs turn to agricultural work for wages. They also work in the building industry and any other non-skilled manual work that requires no previous training such as carrying bricks, mortar, digging foundations etc. that need physical strength only. For this type of work, the bedouins receive the regular wage rate, which is about 70 piasters per day. Work usually starts at about 8 a.m. ending at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, with a short rest at mid-day. Many of the younger generation rely for their livelihood on

income received from labour wages, the animals if any are left for the women to take care off. It is regarded to be shameful for a bedouin woman to work for wages.

The bedouin woman may have wealth of her own, in the form of land - inherited from her father - or animals. She may also "share" in a goat, cow or gamoussa with her own money from "nuqta" received at her wedding, childbirth or money saved from the sale of eggs, chickens etc. Investment in poultry is the sole responsibility of the Arab woman, the men do not interfere at all. When buying, selling or "sharing" animals, the woman's husband, grown son, father, brother, uncle etc. are expected to carry out these negotiations for her, she is not expected to go to the market for such dealings, unless she has no close kin.

The money earned by the bedouin woman from such transactions is her private income and it is considered a "shame" among the community for her husband to inquire how much and what she did with it. However, what actually happens is that the money earned from the sale of eggs and poultry usually goes as daily expenses for the house and children. If the amount earned is large enough some of it is spent on increasing the poultry or perhaps the Arab woman takes a fancy to buy some gold article such as ear-rings,

nose-ring, "naqalish" usually gold or plated, small round ornaments the size of a millime for a "nuqba". This fact is also true of income from the sale of animals and milk. Some try to save any money received to invest in a goat or cow to help with the household expenses because life is becoming very expensive and difficult. A Sarab woman must try to help her husband with the expenses in any way she can. There are women who have no one to support them and have to take care of themselves and not be a burden on the others. One of those interviewed was a widow with no children and had to make her own living. This she did by buying and selling eggs, chickens and custer seeds that grow wild along the canal banks etc. trying to save, in the hope that one day she will be able to buy a goat in partnership with someone to help support herself.

The new type of life that has imposed itself on the community has brought about slow but definite changes on them. There is a case of a young bedouin who sold his camel and bought a gamoussa, because living here makes this change painful, but necessary and more practical.

The habit of loans is accepted among the Sarab, but they believe that a loan is called for only when very necessary.

They will borrow from a close relative to buy a camel or cow when the amount they have is not sufficient to pay the price. But loans are disapproved of when made to cover expenses of a wedding, circumcision etc. One should celebrate only within one's own means and should not borrow to do so. Borrowing from a close relative is usual and from a neighbouring fellah possible if there are close and friendly ties between them. Loans transacted between bedouins are based on mutual trust, while for those between an Arab and a fellah it is customary to write a receipt or I.O.U. for the amount, specifying the date of repayment. But they say that some fellahin do not accept this procedure and have learnt to trust the Arabs and take their word only for the date of repayment.

After this survey of some of the economic aspects of the Sarab community's life, it is justifiable to say that they are in a state of transition and that change in their economic mode of life is taking place slowly but surely, imposed upon them by the surrounding environment which they as a minority cannot prevent or stop.

CHAPTER V

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF SETTLEMENT

Settlement of the Sarab community came gradually and as a result of the completion of the Marutiya irrigation project in 1936. This increased the area of cultivated land that had been predominately desert with very little vegetation. The bedouins used to move about in this area with their camels and flocks of sheep, erecting their goat - hair tents and living their traditional nomadic life. They were happy go lucky, moving from place to place grazing their herds on desert vegetation, leading a life of complete freedom with no restrictions until the area was taken under cultivation.

Makboul, one of the older members, recalls clearly the days when they used to wander about in this area before his father decided to buy $3\frac{1}{2}$ feddans and settle on the land. This incident was about 30-40 years ago, because he said his father realised that the wandering life is no longer profitable, especially with the increase in the network of roads and railway lines. As time passed, other families took similar decisions

and gave up their continuous movement for a settled type of life. This decision with time imposed gradual but definite changes on the economic and social life of the community.

Those who bought land had to learn a new occupation, which a generation ago they would not have dreamt of doing - to change into farmers and tillers of land - which they called mud. They considered farming as the most degrading occupation possible for a proud Arab, but the shift was made out of necessity.

This was a major decision and the turning point in the lives of the Sarab community. It had gradual effects and the implications of slow change, and assimilation into a different kind of life are clear in the economic and social activities of the community as a result of settlement. In spite of this principal decision - to settle - they have managed to keep themselves isolated, holding on to many of their nomadic customs, habits and modes of life. But change has occurred, indicating that they are continuously being affected as a result of this decision.

a- Change in Family Structure

When members of the community decided to settle down,

they erected their tents on the agricultural land which they bought to farm or rented for this purpose. They continued to live in the traditional extended family structure, working, sharing, and eating together just as before. When a son took a wife, he would erect his tent near that of his father, who was still the head of the household, in control of everything and responsible for feeding and clothing the whole group.

This situation continued for many years, father and married sons with their children living peacefully, learning the new occupation they chose for themselves. A few years after the death of Makboul's father, about 8 years ago, Attia the son of the elder brother Makboul got married and continued to live with his father and uncle. Makboul did not give Attia money, not even for tobacco, but made him work for his food and clothing and that of his wife.

The family expenses were now in the hands of Makboul's old mother, Mansoura - the eldest member of the group after the death of her husband - she had raised Sheikh Hammad, her husband's son by a second marriage, after the death of his mother. Attia, who had many half brothers and sisters felt that after his marriage, his father did not give him his rights

and worked him too hard, decided to separate and set up his own house-hold. By this time Makboul's second son Abdu got married and the father decided to separate and divide the land and animals inherited from their father. Makboul, the elder brother had married off two sons, while Hammad's children were still very young. He was given £ 80 after everything was divided among them. Old Mansoura decided to remain with Hammad and Makboul's two younger sons by a third marriage as a single house-hold.

But this new situation did not last long, complete separation and the establishment of single nuclear house-holds took place, because too many misunderstandings and quarrels arose. When discussing the reasons behind the separation of the families into small independent units, Mansoura said that the young wives of today no longer obey their elders and want to imitate the fellahin and live alone. Women are behind the division and separation of families, and the men follow them. She recalls how happily they used to live when she was young. It is scandalous what these women want to do; they want their husbands to themselves.

The younger women when asked about their opinion about separation said, they think it is better for each one to be responsible for her own family. Some women were lazy and left the hard work for the others to do, which was unfair. Also some of the men worked more than others, while all received equal benefits. With several sisters-in-law living together, a tendency of leaving hard work and doing the easy, was always behind the misunderstandings. A young wife said, "I am not her servant, each one should do her own work".

The men on the other hand, believe that separation is a necessity imposed by settlement, there is more peace of mind and fewer quarrels. Each person is free to work and eat what he wants. Before it was different, because life was different, every individual had his heart on the other members of the family. Now each one is thinking of himself and the interests of his wife and children only. It was better in the old days living as a large family, but with change in the mode of living separation is better.

Sheikh Salem believes that separation is due to the fact that the young generation now is different, they have mixed a great deal with the "ahali" and have started to acquire some of

their habits. They no longer obey their elders and have a mind of their own. Nowadays, girls have no shame, they say they want to marry so and so. Everything has changed, times have changed, so the Arabs have to accept some of these changes!

b- Housing

Implications of change are evident in the houses. Even though the Sarab community still refer to themselves as Ārb Kheish (Arabs of the tent), now they live in huts made of mud straw and dung. (The fellahin in the neighbouring villages live in houses made of either mud-bricks or stones). The Sarab build their huts by themselves with no outside help. Both men and women may build the hut, whoever is free does so. It is built in layers of about 20cms in height, one on top of the other, like placing bricks. The walls are about 20 cms wide, and after the first layer is built, it is left to dry and harden in the sun for 2-3 days before the second layer is placed on it and so on, until the walls are higher than the height of a full grown man - about 2 metres - The hut is almost square in shape with rounded corners about 2.5 x 3 metres. Some are smaller while others larger depending on the size of the family and number of children. The roof is made by stretching

palm leaves or maize stalks across a few wooden or bamboo poles for support. There is just room enough to sleep because the hut is not in use during the day. The walls are not white washed, neither on the inside nor on the outside.

Usually, the hut has an entrance with no door attached, just a piece of cloth or sack of jute to cover it, which faces the south or east. A small round hole "window" is made about 40 cms above ground level on the north wall - door and window on opposite walls - to allow the smoke to go out when they light a fire inside on windy days, so that they do not choke. The window is built near the ground to allow those inside the hut to see passers by and not be seen by them. When not in use the window is blocked with some article of clothing to keep out the cold.

c- Clothes and Food

Settlement and contact with near by peasant villages brought about change in the clothing, especially those of the Sarab women. They wear long galabias styled in peasant fashion, usually three garments are worn over each other, while the inner ones may be coloured, the outer glabia must be black. The bedouin women wear a large black shawl over a small cloth scarf (mendiel) which they

tie their head with. Their faces are covered nose down with a "nuqba" or "burqu" which is ornamented with beads and coin like "nakalish", gold, plated, silver or metal depending on their financial situation. The "nuqba" is exclusively bedouin and is not worn by peasant women, while both wear shawls over their heads. The women can also be distinguished by the girdles, often made of wool and sometimes plain cloth which they pass over their waists several times. In the past, the girdle was made only of wool woven by the women and dyed red or left in the natural colour of the wool. The change that has occurred is that many of them no longer wear the wool girdles whose place is taken by a long narrow piece of cloth which they wrap around their waist. This is mainly a back support, especially when carrying heavy loads, grass, and bending over. It is worn by the women all the time, and the men, like the peasants, tie similar material around their waist when ploughing, picking or harvesting crops, especially when working bent over for long periods of time.

Bedouin women like to wear ornaments like most women all over the world. They wear many rings - in their ears, nose ("Shenaf") always in gold, and around their ankles, as well as

bracelets on their arms. Beads are quite a favourite, all of different colours and sizes worn around their necks, and it is common to have plastic bracelets instead of the gold and silver around their arms. Nose rings, common among Arab women are not worn by the peasants.

The young girls wear coloured clothes until they become engaged to be married at which time they must wear black. At the wedding the bride is dressed in white with a veil and flowers around her head. She also wears make up on her lips and cheeks besides the "kuhl" on the eyes, which is worn by all women because it is cooling for the eyes from the glare and heat of the sun. The bride wears coloured clothes for seven days after the wedding when the "Seboua" is celebrated. After the seven days, she wears black for the rest of her life and is expected to wear the "nuqba" over her face.

The bride whose wedding we had an opportunity to attend, did not wear the "nuqba" after her marriage and remains with her "mouth" uncovered like the peasant women who are not in the habit of veiling their faces.

Before the wedding, a young wife of one of the younger men did not wear a "nuqba", we were told that she is an Arab from

the city - Cairo - her family live in Roda and she is "modern" and spoiled, she does not wear a "nuqba", nor does she cover her mouth with her shawl in the presence of Arab men. Her husband agrees to this behaviour, even though his attention was drawn to this fact by his old mother! He answered, she is different, she is from the city and not from here, you do not expect her to be like the rest of the women that were brought up here. The other women, especially the wife of his brother, envy her and are jealous because her husband agrees to everything she wants.

The "nuqba" is worn by the women at all times of the day and night except when sleeping indoors. It is not removed, not even at meal-times. When going to the market with other Arab or peasant women, she removes the "nuqba" for fear that it may be snatched and stolen because of the gold coins on it, the woman covers her nose and mouth with her shawl instead. However, many of the young women have a tendency of not wearing the "nuqba" nor covering their mouths when working around the house and in the presence of some male members of the family. They only do so when a stranger is present.

The older generation, both men and women, comment on this by saying: this is what happens when you mix with the fellahin, the girls no longer want to abide by our customs, are jealous of each other and want to imitate those around them. They are becoming "modern".

The clothing of the men has not changed, except that now they no longer wear the tradition Arab "kufia and 'uqal" but instead wear a skull cap - "taqiya" - made of wool left in its natural colour, for use all day and when making a visit they tie a turban around their heads on top of the skull cap.

Children, both boys and girls, are dressed in glabias in the same manner the fellahin children are. Many of the children do not own any foot wear and are left to run around bare footed.

The women no longer make their own clothes but have them made by dress-makers at the nearest village. Sewing charges for an ordinary woman's galabia cost between 15-25 piasters. The men's sewing charges are more and range between 40-65 piasters.

Both men and women walk bare footed while working on the land or around the house, but they wear closed sandals or "bulghas" when visiting or going to the market.

The bedouin is responsible for the clothing of his wife and children, he chooses the colours and kinds of material according to his taste and wishes. In some cases, the wife's father may at a feast bring clothing for his daughter and her children, but this is not a wide spread custom now, because life has become so "hard" - expensive.

A change in the food habits of the Arabs has also taken place. They no longer bake all their bread now, but find it easier to buy bread from the near by village. A change from coffee to tea drinking has also taken place. The main meal is eaten in late afternoon which is made up of cheese - the women learnt to make - cream, vegetables or fowl. Meat is eaten once a week usually on Thursday night. Average household expenditure varies from one family to the next, depending on the number of members, the financial ability and the day of the week - meat or no meat - This is usually between 30-70 piasters per day while on meat days it can go up to 125-150. A great deal of money goes on tea, sugar and tobacco.

Change in the clothing and eating habits of the Sarab are due to settlement and contact with the sedentarised fellahin.

d- Change in sources of income and mode of production

The greatest change that has taken place in the Sarab community - is economic in their sources of income and mode of livelihood physical settlement on the land has imposed and opened up new scope and opportunities for these bedouins, especially the younger ones. Cultivation of land, either as owners or farm labourers was not practised by this community before.

As time passes, this occupation is becoming the predominant source of income for the settled bedouins who without consciously realising it, are becoming assimilated into the surrounding society. Their pride in origin and ancestry makes them subconsciously cling to their traditional nomadic ways of camel transport and animal husbandry. They are carrying out both modes of production and occupation - nomadic and peasant - side by side with equal effort and interest.

The older members are more reluctant to changes brought about by settlement, and often speak about the old care free days of nomadic wanderings, of seeing different places and faces. Now, each new day is like the one before it, the same place and same faces, every day, day in day out. There is no more change

and excitement in life. This remark was made very often, especially by Sheikh Salem - about 75 years old and settled down as ghafir since 1940 - who had wild stories of his travels and wanderings from place to place. He goes back to admit that times have changed and that the Arabs realising this change had to settle and make a new kind of life for themselves. However, he goes on to say, they must never forget that they are Arabs and must continue to practice their forefathers' occupation - camel transport and sheep herding - along with farming and "new" animals (he owns about 3 gamoussas and 2 cows and only one camel besides his riding donkey) that are part of this new life in order to support themselves and their families - a necessary evil -

A change from only camels and sheep 30 years ago, to farming land, raising cows and gamoussas side by side, is a gradual and definite shift. More and more of the Sarab are buying these animals as a source of income for themselves and their families. Not only a change in animals, but also a change in occupation and mode of production - farming - labour wages forms a basic source of income for the young men. Thus, it can be summed up that, land, income from wages (discussed in more

detail in Chapter IV) farm animals and agriculture are the new sources of income for the settled Sarab bedouins. They are in a state of transition and have not been fully assimilated. They are carrying this out side by side with their traditional occupation of camel transport and herding.

Changes have also taken place in the women's work. They no longer know how to spin, dye and weave, their traditional "humul" rugs and blankets. The change resulting from settlement and raising of cows and gamoussas has created new responsibilities in the daily activities of the women. Most of the day they are out covering long distances, gathering grass for the new animals that cannot feed themselves but have to be fed. This grass gathering is done every day, and sometimes twice a day. It takes up most of the time of the women, besides their traditional obligations of wife and mother. They must prepare the food, bake the bread (this is done less often now) milk the animals, wash as well as help her husband gather the crops etc. Thus, there is no time left to spin and weave. They have learned how to make cheese from contact with the peasant women. By sunset she is too tired to do anything and is ready to sleep, as a woman's day starts before that of the man, long before sunrise she has to prepare the morning tea.

e- Legal Status, Education and Religion

In the legal and administrative sense this community is isolated not only from the peasants surrounding them but also from the rest of the population in Egypt.

They have no official identification, do not belong to any administrative unit, and are not registered in any way at birth, marriage death etc. They live an isolated life with no government control at all. They are not conscripted in the army - compulsory military service required by every Egyptian male citizen. As far as the government is concerned they do not "exist", because there is no official record of them. This was one of the reasons for their suspicion of us. They feared that we might be sent by the government to inquire about them.

This "legal" position makes them unique in a society where all citizens are registered in one way or another, in government records especially at the time of birth. Bedouins in the past were exempted from military service and were recorded in the 1907 census as different bedouin tribes numbering 600,000 out of a population of 11,287,00. But this distinction was discontinued in subsequent censuses. (Awad 1959: p 40).

In 1944 the privilege of exemption of Arabs from military service was abolished and all became equal before the law. A few years after the 1952 Revolution the Bureau For Arab Affairs was also abolished and bedouins settled, and were registered as inhabitants of a particular administrative unit. But this community is not affiliated in the legal sense anywhere. Bedouins living in the different governorates and Oases all have identification cards, registering their births marriages and deaths in their corresponding areas all males serving their military terms.

The whole community is illiterate inspite of the fact that school for children is compulsory in Egypt until the 6th grade. All the villages in the area have government schools as well as the "kutab", but none of the members have attended either. There were a few boys that had attended the local "kutab" in the nearby village, but they never stayed for long. They did not go beyond learning the alphabet which they forgot eventually. We brought them some books and tried to teach some of the children but it was no good, perhaps because we did not have much time for that. A young man with a 1½ year old son asked us about the possibility of getting a birth

certificate for his son, because he wants to send him to school. He wants to give him an opportunity to learn to read and write like us and not have to grow up to be ignorant and illiterate like himself. Without a birth certificate he cannot send him to school. We told him to ask at the local village health office.

This change in attitude towards education, especially among the young men, came as a result of settlement and contact with the villages, market places and especially work sites and factories. Sheikh Salem on the other hand, does not have any feeling of inferiority because of his inability to read. He says proudly, although he cannot read, where legal matters and Arab Orfi law are concerned he is an equal with any university law degree holder!

The whole community adheres to Islam, but I never saw any male or female perform any of the 5 daily prayers. They do not even perform the Friday mid-day prayer which the least religious fellah is keen to observe. On the other hand, all observe the fast during the holy month of Ramadan, and some have even gone to Mecca for the pilgrimage.

Very few, with the exception of those members that regularly attend majlis-al-arab or courts, can recite verses from the Koran because most of their legal code is based on it. The others have no proper religious education except what they hear from their elders about the Prophet and what is "halal and haram" - virtue and sacrilege.

There has been no change whatsoever in the legal status of the Sarab as a result of settlement. They have managed to remain "isolated" legally from any kind of administrative authority, as if they are still nomadic desert dwellers. They are quite happy and content about this state of affairs. As a matter of fact, they resent contact, which they believe would limit their freedom.

As for education, no change has taken place, they are still illiterate. However, a change has occurred in the attitude, especially of the younger males. They feel that they have been deprived of education and want to make it up to their children by sending them at least to the "Kutab" to learn how to read and write. They believe that being able to read and write is necessary, especially after settlement and contact with the surrounding society.

Religion on the other hand, has not witnessed any changes since the days of the Sarab wanderings. They adhere to Islam the religion of their forefathers. However, the majority do nothing about gaining any religious knowledge or education. This is due perhaps to their inability to read, and the fact that they do not attend Friday prayers at the Mosque, during which religious sermons are read.

f- Law, Marriage and Inheritance

The Arab institutions that have had the least or no change at all are the institutions of Orfi law, marriage and inheritance.

The Sarab community never go to the authorities in any of their quarrels and disputes, even murder or thefts are not reported to the police. All these are settled in their own way and through their own mediators, judges, courts and tribal legal system. They believe that Orfi law is more exact than the national legal system and its decision are more just.

Some disputes that involve a fellah as a second party, are settled through Arab mediators and judges, because the fellahin believe that these are more just and a solution is

found in no time, unlike the police who take ages in finding and punishing culprits and returning stolen property. The fellahin also believe in the "bashaa" and "mebasha" as a way of settling disputes through their contact with the Sarab.

The Sarab, among a few other bedouin tribes believe in the "bashaa". This is the case where the accused of theft, murder etc., on either refusing to take the oath, or when the majlis or court are still under the conviction that the person is guilty and that he has taken a false oath, has to go through the ordeal of the "bashaa", which is performed by a "mebashaa".

There are certain families only that can perform the "bashaa". It is believed to be some supernatural power or ability, found only in certain families. This ability or power remains in the family and is passed on from one generation to the next, but not necessarily from father to son. After the death of the mebashaa, certain signs appear on one male member of his family, son, nephew, cousin etc., after which he is recognised as the new mebashaa on whom these powers have been bestowed.

The nearest mebashaa lives in Belbeis. The Sarab resort to him for the solution of problems, when they are unable to do so through their regular "courts". We were going to attend such an ordeal, but the problem was solved, and it was no longer necessary to make the trip to the mebashaa in Belbeis. The last time the Sarab resorted to the bashaa was about 3 years ago.

The "bashaa" determines the guilty from the not guilty. The accused is taken before the mebashaa who kindles a fire and heats a long flat spoon like iron until it is red hot. The mebashaa then wipes it with his hand and licks it with his tongue to prove that the ordeal is not harmful to the innocent. The accused is then allowed to rinse his mouth with water, where upon the mebashaa touches his tongue, pressing the spoon well down upon it. This is repeated three times. If the accused, after this ordeal escaped unharmed he is innocent, but if he suffered injury, he was obviously guilty of the crime.

Sheikh Salem explained that, if the man is guilty, his mouth becomes dry with fear, and he is burnt at once; while the mouth of the innocent, who knows he will not be burnt,

retains its saliva and thus, goes through the ordeal unharmed.

Marriage between first cousins and inter Arab marriage will be one of the last social institutions to disappear. It is mainly through the prohibition of mixed marriages, especially with the fellahin that the community is able to keep its isolated social identity and will do so for quite some time to come. Should an Arab take a peasant wife - there are a few cases but not in this community - his children will be considered as fellahin and no Arab will marry his daughters and it is unheard of for a bedouin girl to marry a man whose mother is a fellaha. When an Arab marries a peasant woman, he usually leaves his family to live among the fellahin, because they no longer consider him as one of them.

Since there are no official records of births, marriage takes its legal form from traditional Islam that of "ish-har" - announcement - before "shehoud" - witnesses from among the family and more prominent members of the community. This is done without any formal written documents. Divorce is also in the same manner. If reconciliation is not possible, the marriage is terminated in the presence of the girl's father

or uncle, "kabir-al-aila" and other respected members of the community. Children are recognised as offspring of a particular marriage because it was announced and there is no instance where a father denied his parenthood of a child.

The change that occurred is in the bride's dowry. This is no longer paid in camels to her father. Nowadays it is settled between the groom and the bride's father, according to the financial ability of the young man which is limited. It is paid in the form of money, about £ 115-215. The bride's father is then responsible for buying the bride's clothes - very few - two cooking pots, an aluminum washing dish (this was brass before), some glasses, dishes and a wooden chest (usually plywood now) to keep her clothes in.

Inheritance is according to Islamic law, where the female receives half the share of the male in land money and animals.

g- Social Activities

The Sarab participate in singing and dancing in their own bedouin feasts and celebrations. They attend some of the weddings of the fellahin but neither the men nor women take

part in the singing or dancing - "my wife is not a gypsy to dance for the fellahin", a young man said. The shooting of fire arms is no longer heard at Arab weddings - "we are among people and someone may get hurt". Many of the young girls sing the songs they hear over the radio, using the same tune, they change the words to suit their conditions and environment.

Listening to the radio is a popular activity among most of the people. The first thing the groom whose wedding we attended did was to pay the first installment for a transistor radio from the "nuqta" he received at his wedding. A young woman named her daughter "Aida" after one of the singers of folk music. Many own radio sets and listen to a variety of programmes, listening to the Koran-older males - programmes for peasants, songs by Um Kalthum and Abdel Halim, folk music etc. One young man bought a radio instead of a "Premus" for cooking. His wife said the radio is better, she can listen to it while working, they have always used an open fire to cook on, the radio is fun.

The men are not in the habit of sitting in the village coffee house, because like Sheikh Hammad said he does not want to get involved or have to reject something he disapproves of -

smoking hashish for example - many of them have watched T.V. in the village coffee house just out of curiosity to see what it is, but they say that they do not have the time to waste like the fellahin, to sit idle and watch for hours. If they have time, they usually pay each other visits, either on business or social calls to keep in touch with news of relatives and friends.

Women rarely make social calls, but pay visits of "wagib" - duty - when someone is sick, married, given birth to a child etc. Those living within short walking distance both males and females, when free, walk over to chat (especially when they see us).

They do not mingle with the fellahin except when there is some kind of business or a visit of duty. Social calls for chatting are unheard of especially between Arab and peasant women. A fellah may walk over and sit with the bedouins for a chat and a glass of tea, a favourite passtime of both Arabs and fellahin. But a bedouin will not go over to a peasant for a similar chat and glass of tea, because they believe that the fellahin are inferior. This point was

clarified by Sheikh Salem who said, "we, the Arabs, were converted into Islam out of true belief and faith in its teachings, while the fellahin became Moslems by force and fear of the sword".

The Arabs of Sinai and Hejaz are coffee drinkers, but the Sarab have changed to tea drinking a long time ago. This change was a result of contact with the peasants.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Settlement of the nomadic population in Egypt came as a result of two methods - direct and indirect.

The direct method is the establishment of large irrigation and drainage schemes by the central government, the reclamation of desert land and increase of the cultivated areas. There were sedentarisation projects especially in the Western Desert. Industrialisation and the agricultural development of the arable areas in the desert were introduced through the establishment of co-operative societies in 1959 and the setting up of a local system of government in 1962 to replace military rule in the Western Desert (Abu Zeid 1959 pp 550-558 and Bujra in Nelson 1973 pp. 145-149). Also the building of schools to educate the young.

The indirect methods that had great effects on the sedentarisation of nomads are the construction of railway lines and a large network of roads. The discovery of oil in the Middle East brought the most important changes to the lives

and mode of livelihood of the bedouins especially in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

Both direct and indirect methods affected and encouraged the settlement of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

In 1936 a very important ecological change took place that had gradual but far reaching effect on the lives of the Sarab community which is the subject of this research. The construction of the Marutiya Canal, irrigation and drainage schemes in Giza were completed. This transformation of desert to agricultural land was the turning point in the lives of the Sarabs. As a result of this they decided to settle down, which had many implications for their social and economic life, and to a lesser degree for their kinship relations and family structure.

With the growth in the network of roads and railway lines, the main source of livelihood and mode of production of the community - that of camel transport began to dwindle and decrease; they had to find a new way to support themselves. There was a marked and growing tendency to abandon the tremendous hardships and insecurity of the nomadic life, to settle

down and find a supplementary way to support themselves - agriculture and later on paid labour.

This change from a predominantly camel transport and sheep herding community, to one involved in agriculture, paid labour and being physically tied to the land is a progressive step towards sedentarisation and assimilation, of a nomadic community who in the past found agriculture as a distasteful occupation for a nomad because it deprives him of the freedom so dear to his heart. According to the Sarabs this change was out of necessity due to the change in the circumstances and environment.

The implications of change are many and varied on the different aspects of life of the community. These were slow and gradual. Over the years only minimum change was accepted among them and they remain culturally and physically isolated from the villages on whose outskirts they dwell.

Change is more obvious in their economic life brought about by the changing circumstances. They are more reluctant to change with regards to their traditions, customs, habits, values, beliefs etc. The community is in a state of transition

of semi-nomadism and semi-sedentarisation. Both modes of life and types of occupations are carried out side by side.

The Sarab community through intermarriage with members of the same clan or other Arab tribes only has managed to prolong this transitional stage and maintain its unique identity. In spite of the fact that they have continuous contact with the fellahin, easy access to the neighbouring village markets and that of Giza, and contact with urban Cairo; they take pride in being able to say that they are pure Arabs and that their blood has not been mixed with that of the fellahin. They can be placed in Awad's third stage, that of partial assimilation, with both nomadic and sedentarised occupations, camels and cows, transport and agriculture etc.

Even though the traditional kinship ties are strong among the Sarab, yet the economic independence of the individual members, especially the young, directed by necessity of the changing situation has led to the consequent trend towards separation, primarily economic. The core of the nomadic system of life, the cooperation of a large number of agnatic kin constituting a corporate economic unit in which the individual

is entirely submerged by group interests is no longer true. The changing situation has cut deep down into the structure of the traditional economic community, the young men are free from the authority of their elders and are economically independent of the kin group.

As for the future prospects of the community, progress towards complete sedentarisation and assimilation though slow are inevitable with the continuous and fast spread of the network of roads, the fields and farms will be within reach of the trucks and there will be no future need for crop transport by camel back. This will make the Sarab eventually give up their camels which they are keeping now along with the other animals, and rely more and more on agriculture and paid labour as a means of supporting themselves.

This transitional stage where both types of economy and modes of production traditional bedouin and sedentarised prevail, will gradually disappear in the next 15-20 years. The Sarab will have to give up their camels and instead turn to cows, gamoussas and paid labour. They are aware of this fact and yet continue to prefer their isolation.

The older generation that has lived and experienced the complete nomadic way of life and has settled down now, form the link between the two generations; they bridge the gap between the past and the present; they transmit the traditions of their forefathers to their children and slow down the speed of change by holding on to their traditions, custom habits and unique way of life. However, change is unavoidable, it is slow and gradual. Bedouins cannot become farmers over night, they are learning and many of them have become as good as the fellahin. The young men with no land of their own, look further away and go out as wage labourers, working at different kinds of jobs.

Several of the young Sarab, born in the settled community have come to realise the importance of education (being able to read and write) and feel that they have been denied this opportunity by their parents, will try to make amends with their own children. The government will probably play an important role in this area when this community and the few remaining ones that still lead an isolated life will have to register their births and deaths and comply with compulsory education of the young, sedentarisation will be speeded up.

It is my opinion, and after long contact with the Sarab community, that complete assimilation will come long after complete sedentarisation. This is because of the fact that the Sarab, so proud of their Arab ancestry, will continue to marry among themselves. Not until marriage between them and the fellahin takes place for several decades, new relationships will replace the old, they will only then become indistinguishable from the fellahin.

In this research I have tried to point out some implications of change that have been experienced by the Sarab community as a result of ecological factors that made sedentarisation of the community and a change in their way of life inevitable.

A follow up research on the community in about 10 years time will be valuable from the point of view of ethnography. The status of a unique cultural group - a minority - who inspite of change around them were able to retain many of their customs, traditions, values, habits etc. is worth documenting. It is a conflict between two cultures, value systems, ideals, habits, customs, traditions, hopes etc. that are being resisted but with time, change and assimilation are inevitable. The Sarab

for a long time to come will continue to refer to themselves as "Arb" as distinct from the Nile Valley inhabitants they contemptuously call "ahali" or fellahin.

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