

**Part Two: Ways of  
Life and Thought in  
Arab Culture**

**Chapter III:**  
**Population and**  

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**the Countryside**

# Introduction

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# Introduction

- Even at their strongest and most successful, understandings between the imperial powers and, local-nationalists would have expressed only a limited confluence of interests.

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- By the 1930s, changes were taking place in Arab societies which would in due course alter the nature of the political process.

# Introduction

- There was a rapid increase of population.
- It was perhaps greatest, and is easiest to estimate reliably in Egypt.
- ~~• A small part of the growth was due to immigration.~~
- Europeans in Morocco and Libya, 'Jews' in Palestine, Armenian refugees from Turkey during and after the First World War in Syria and Lebanon.

# Introduction

- This was counterbalanced by emigration: Syrians and Lebanese going to west Africa and Latin America.
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- Algerian workers going temporarily to France.

# Introduction

- The birthrate does not appear to have decreased, except perhaps among sections of the bourgeoisie: Birth control and having expectations of a rising standard of living.
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- For most people, to have children, and male children in particular, was both unavoidable (since effective means of birth control were not generally known) and a source of pride.

# Introduction

- The pride expressed an interest: children could work in the fields from an early age and to have children was a guarantee, in a society where the expectation of life was low and there was no national welfare system, that some of them would survive to look after their parents in old age.
- It was above all a decline in the death rate, because of control of epidemics and better medical care, which was responsible for the growth of population.



# Introduction

- This was true in of all parts of society, but particularly significant in the cities, where for the first time epidemics did not play their historic role of devastating the urban masses from time to time.

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- Partly as a result of the growth in population, but also for other reasons, the balance between different sectors of society also changed.

# Introduction

- The 1920s and 1930s were the period when nomadic pastoralists virtually disappeared as an important factor in Arab society.
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- The coming of the railway and the motor car has changed the activity on which the long-distance pastoral economy depended; the rearing of camels for transport.

# Introduction

- Even in areas where pasturage was still the best or the only use for sparse vegetation and scarce water, the freedom of movement of the bedouins was restricted by the use of armed forces enlisted from the nomads themselves.
- The market for sheep still existed, but in the sheep-rearing districts on the slopes of mountains or on the margins of the steppe.

# Introduction

- The extension of control by governments and changes in urban demand were causing mainly nomadic and pastoral groups to become sedentary cultivators.

## III.2 Great Political --- and Social Changes

# Great Political and Social Changes

- It was in this period that, perhaps for the last time, the armed force of the nomads was used in the political process.
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- When the Sharif Husayn revoked against the Turks, his first forces were drawn from the Bedouins of western Arabia.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- Any effective military action in the later stages of the movement came from officers or conscripts who had served in the Ottoman army.
- In the settled countryside, the changes were not due to a weakening of the economic basis, as they were in pastoral areas.
- In most countries, the area of cultivation expanded; in some of them and the Sudan, and Iraq Morocco and Algeria, Egypt irrigation was extended.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- In Egypt, it is true, that most fertile land had already been brought under cultivation.
- Other countries and where capital was available it was possible to increase the yield of land.
- Even an expanded area of cultivation could no longer support the rural population in some countries.



# Great Political and Social Changes

- Not only was the population growing by natural increase, but the most productive land no longer needed so much labour.
- Large landowners were able to obtain capital resources and use them for mechanization, and this meant that less labour was needed.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- There were large estates of fertile and irrigated land producing for export (cotton, cereals, wine, olive oil, oranges and dates), using tractors and fertilizers where appropriate, and cultivated by wage-labourers, a large proportion of them were owned by foreign companies or individuals.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- On the other side were smallholdings or land owned by a village, usually less fertile and less well watered, where small indigenous farmers with no capital resources and no access to credit produced cereals, fruit or vegetables by less advanced methods, either for consumption or for a local market.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- The situation of these farmers was made worse by the system of inheritance which fragmented smallholdings into even smaller ones.
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- In the 1930s, it was harmed also by the world economic crisis, which led to a lowering of prices of agriculture produce.
  - This touched all cultivators, but those who were already in a weak position were worst affected.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- Governments or banks stepped in to rescue the large landowners who had political influence or whose production was linked to the international economy.

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- The surplus population of the countryside moved into the cities.

# Great Political and Social Changes

- In previous ages, villages moving into the town had replenished an urban population ravaged by epidemics.
- Now the rural immigrants came to swell an urban population which was itself increasing because of improvements in public health.
- The cities, and in particular those where the possibility of employment was highest, grew more rapidly than the country as a whole.

- III.3 Life in the

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# New Cities

## Life in the New Cities

- The result was a change in the nature and form of cities.
  - Certain changes which had begun before 1914 were carried further after the war.
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- Outside the madina (city) there grew up new bourgeois quarters, not only of villas for the rich, but apartment blocks for the growing middle classes, government officials, professional men, and rural notables moving in from the countryside.



## Life in the New Cities

- In some places they were planned, in others they grew haphazardly at the cost of the destruction of the old.
- Families of wealth began to move out of their old houses in the madina for the greater convenience of the new quarters.
- Their place was taken by rural immigrants and the poor.

## Life in the New Cities

- This led to a certain degradation in the physical appearance and life of the madina.
- Not all the immigrants found shelter in the madina.
- ~~• There were also new popular quarters.~~
- Some of these quarters grew on the outskirts of cities, where workshops and factories offered employment.

## Life in the New Cities

- In cities with a large foreign population, European and indigenous quarters tended to be separate, although they might be near each other.
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# III.4 Social Consequences of Migration

# Social Consequences of Migration

- Rural migrants tended to settle among their own people and, at least in the first phase, to preserve their own social ways.
- They would leave their families behind in the village to begin with, and, if they prospered enough to bring them, their life in the city would be a continuation or reconstruction of that which they had left.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- In the end, however, they would be drawn into a way of life which was different not only from that of the village but from that of the madina, as well.
- Going to shops was not quite the same as going to the souq, although there was still a preference for small shops where a personal relationship was possible.
- Restaurants, cafes and cinemas offered new kinds of recreation and new places for meeting.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- Women could go out more freely.
  - The younger generation of educated Muslim women began to go unveiled, or very lightly covered.
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- Modern water and drainage systems, electricity and telephones spread in the 1920s while gas had come earlier.
  - Means of transport changed.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- Tramways were laid down in some of the coastal cities by the end of the nineteenth century, and then the motor car appeared; the first one was seen in the streets of Cairo in 1903, in most other cities later.
- By the 1930s, private cars, buses and taxis were common, and the horse-drawn carriage had virtually disappeared in all except the smaller provincial towns.



# Social Consequences of Migration

- Motor traffic demanded better roads and bridges, and these in their turn made it possible to enlarge the area of cities.
- These means of transport integrated the urban population in new ways. Men and women no longer lived entirely within a quarter. They might live a long way from their work.
- The-extended family might be spread across a city.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- People of one ethnic origin or religious community might live in the same quarters as those of others.
- The range of marriage choices might be extended.
- Invisible lines of division existed, however, intermarriage across the lines of religious communities remained difficult and rare.
- In cities under foreign rule barriers were created not only by religious and national difference, but by the consciousness of power and importance.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- For example, more Arabs spoke French or English, few Europeans knew Arabic or had any concern for Islamic culture. Many Arab students returning from study abroad brought with them foreign wives, who were not always fully accepted in either community.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- The changes in transportation linked city to city, country to country, in new ways.
- The railway network, which already existed in 1914, was extended further in some countries.
- Good roads for the first time connected the main cities.
- The most spectacular change was the conquest of the desert by the motor car.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- New media of expression created a universe of discourse which united educated Arabs more fully than the pilgrimage and the travels of scholars.
- Newspapers multiplied, and those of Cairo were read outside Egypt.
- The older cultural periodicals of Egypt continued, and new ones grew up, in particular literary ones such as al-Risala and al-Thaqafa which published the work of poets and critics.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- The publishing houses of Cairo and Beirut produced textbooks of poetry, novels and works of popular science and history, which circulated wherever Arabic was read.

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- By 1914 there were already cinemas in Cairo and some other cities.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- By that time, too, there were local radio stations broadcasting talks, music and news,.
- Travel, education and the new media all helped to create a shared world of taste and ideas.
- The phenomenon of bilingualism was common, at least in the countries on the Mediterranean coast; French and English were used in business and in the home.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- The habit of going Europe for summer holidays spread, particularly among rich Egyptians who might spend several months there.
  - Algerians, Egyptians and Palestinians got used to seeing and meeting European or American tourists.
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- Such movements and contacts led to changes in tastes and attitudes, not always easy to define: different ways of furnishing a room, hanging pictures on walls, eating at table, entertaining friends; different modes of dressing, particularly for women whose fashions reflected those of Paris.



# Social Consequences of Migration

- There were different recreations: large cities had race courses, tennis, and football.
- There was a decline in standards of craftsmanship, both because of competition from mass-produced foreign goods, and for internal reasons: the use of imported raw materials and the need to cater to new tastes, including those of tourists.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- Some painters and sculptors began working in a western style, but without producing much of great interest to the outside world; there were virtually no art galleries where tastes could be formed, picture books were not so common as they were later to become.
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- The large architectural commissions for government buildings were given for the most part to British or French architects, some of whom worked in an 'oriental' style.
  - The first gramophone records of Arabic music were made in Egypt very early in the century.

# Social Consequences of Migration

- Singers performed to the accompaniment of orchestras which combined western with traditional instruments.
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- Some of the compositions they sang had become, by the 1930s, nearer to Italian or French café music than to traditional music.