

THE NOMADIC AND THE SEMI-NOMADIC
TRIBAL POPULATIONS OF THE EGYPTIAN WESTERN DESERT
AND THE SYRIAN DESERT

By

A. M. ABOU-ZEID

INTRODUCTION

This study is based on data gathered during two field trips carried out in the Western Desert of Egypt and the Syrian Desert during the summer of 1958 at the request of the International Labour Office. Each trip took some eight weeks, and it was requested that the study should follow the lines of anthropological field research and use the methods and techniques of social anthropology. The I.L.O. provided me with a long list of problems and questions to investigate, but because of the short period spent in the field it was practically impossible to cover all the points included in that list. It is hoped however that the unanswered problems as well as the wide gaps which may be found in this preliminary survey will be dealt with in subsequent and more lengthy trips.

Anthropological field studies are usually carried out in more defined and smaller communities so as to reach a more intensive investigation. A full anthropological investigation takes usually two years, and in any case one should not stay in the field less than a whole year. Therefore, it was planned for these initial trips to make a general survey of the whole area, and to carry out at the same time some more intensive inquiries in a few more defined communities. The Mariut and Matrouh regions in Egypt and the Gezira region in Syria were selected for that inquiry. It was more difficult to carry out research of anthropological nature in Syria because of the wide dispersal of the clans in the vast stretches of the

desert. It has been easier to contact the Egyptian clans, for they usually, and more particularly during the dry season, cluster in the narrow coastal zone and along the railway line and seldom move very deep in the desert. However, some twenty days were devoted to the clans of the Gezira region, most of which were spent at Hassaka and the nearabouts.

In choosing these three communities for a more detailed investigation, it was taken into consideration not only the availability of clans during that specific period of time during which the study was carried out, but also the possibilities and the potentialities which these centres might offer towards the fulfilment and the execution of any intended sedentarisation projects. The three communities are excellent examples of what can be done if it is wanted to establish sedentary communities to replace the nomadic and semi-nomadic aggregates of the desert.

Apart from the shortness of the period spent in the field, some other difficulties were faced. The scanty, sometimes the non-existence, of means of transport imposed certain checks on my contacts. This difficulty was overcome, however, to some extent, in the Gezira region due to the kind courtesy of Col. Adeeb Qadi Ariha of the Clans Dept. at El-Hassaka, who kindly offered vehicle and guide, thus enabling me to contact the Shammar and the Jebour clans. The absence of reliable statistics has also been a real obstacle. All official figures quoted here should be taken with much caution; they are only very approximative.

I. THE GENERAL SETTING

The Area

A. The *Western Desert of Egypt* can be divided from the geographical point of view into three main divisions with outstanding different characteristics : (a) the coastal zone or the green stripe known as the *Dera'a Bahari* which consists mainly of the fertile and cultivated lands along the Mediterranean from the west of Alexandria to the Egyptian - Libyan frontiers. Bounded on the north by the sea, it stretches some 20 to 50 kilometres to the south, reaching its widest at eastern Mariut, but becoming narrower towards the west until it

nearly disappears at Sallum on the borders. Vegetation grows there because of the falling of rain and the existence of a number of artesian wells along the zone. (b) The middle region which lies south of the coastal zone, is a high plateau with some depressions, the most important of which is the Qattara Depression. (c) The rest of the area, i.e. the most southern region, is real arid desert. The coastal zone is the only really inhabited part of the Western Desert, and beyond it there is hardly any prospect for cultivation.

The climate of the area presents a transitional stage between the Mediterranean climate which prevails in the north and the sub-tropical dry climate in the south. The summer is usually cloudless and very warm, tending to grow hotter in the south, while the wet season, usually extending from November to March, is generally mild especially to the north. Rain, in the form of heavy showers of short duration, begins to fall early in November, but January is generally considered the wettest month of the year. The area which really enjoys the rainfall does not extend in fact to more than 50 kilometres to the south and in most years rain does not reach the inland except very occasionally. Rain also has a very erratic nature; it varies widely and sharply from year to year and from one place to another; it may come quite suddenly taking the form of torrents which sweeps everything away as it very often happens in the Sallum area.

B. The *Syrian Desert* covers some two-thirds of the whole area of the country, but most of it can be classified as semi-desert which is actually exposed to rain during the wet season. Only the further parts to the east of the inland, known as the *Hamad*, are really arid and uncultivable due to the scarcity of rain and subsurface water. The *Hamad* covers about 20 per cent. of the total area inhabited by the nomadic and semi-nomadic clans of Syria. The amount of rainfall is also variable. It reaches some 250 mms. in the semi-desert areas which separate the northern plains from the south, but it never surpasses the 100 mms. level in the *Hamad* area. Rainfall may decline sharply in bad years thus causing droughts and deaths of animals, as it happened in 1951 and 1958. Most of the rain falls in autumn and winter; spring and summer are generally hot and dry. A considerable amount of water is lost by the summer heat, and some authorities state that about one-fourth of the total amount of rain is lost by evaporation, but this loss can easily be compensated for by tapping subterranean water and by better utilisation of the water of streams and rivers.

Number and Type

A. The Bedouins of the Western Desert numbered 68,161 in 1947. Only 23,444, i.e. less than half of the total population, are livestock herdsman (mainly shepherds). The rest have different jobs such as agriculture, fishing, stone-cutting and trading with the Delta. It cannot be said, however, that nomadism or livestock raising is the exclusive monopoly of a certain specific sector of the population, for almost all the inhabitants own sheep, whereas those whom we call herdsman do practise agriculture at a certain time of the year. In fact all sectors of the population display much interest in livestock or rather in sheep, which are regarded as the most important and most highly esteemed item of wealth. Pastoral values are still ranking very high in spite of the recent obvious drift to other professions. But it should be noted that pure nomadism is not practised except by very small bands of camel-herdsman who usually live in the southern parts of the desert. The majority of the herdsman are shepherds whose movements are much more limited, in terms of space, than those of the real nomads. They also have their permanent settlements to which they retire, when the grazing season is over, to cultivate their fields.

B. The nomadic population of Syria are estimated to be about 150,000. There are also some 200,000 people who are classified by the Tribal Law of 1951 as either full sedentary or half-nomadic. The Land Reform Law of 1958 which was enacted to regulate land holding to the Region¹ "abolished" the "state of nomadism", so as to encourage the Bedouin clans to settle down in specific localities and to practise agriculture. But from a more realistic point of view, the Syrian Bedouins can be divided into three main divisions : (a) The full nomads or the camel-herdsman, generally called "the people of the camel" or "the people of the camel-hair". They usually roam deep in the heart of the desert and their trips may carry them across the borders to the neighbouring countries. The Rowalla is the best example of the nomadic clans in the Syrian Region. (b) The half-nomads or the semi-nomads, usually called *Ahl-el-Ghanam* i.e. "people of the sheep". They practise some agriculture as well, and therefore they lead a semi-settled life. Their movements are only seasonal and do not carry them to very far places except in exceptionally bad years. (c) The full sedentary clans, usually referred to as *felaleeh* or peasants, who have settled down in permanent dwellings and have given up almost entirely to agriculture. They may own animals especially sheep, but they trust them to professional shepherds.

(1) Syria was then part of the United Arab Republic.

Distribution and Origin

A. Most of the inhabitants of the Western Desert belong to the Awlad Ali clans who came originally from Libya. A few less important and less numerous clans, the Morabiteen clans, also live there as clients to the stronger and more powerful Awlad Ali. All the Awlad Ali descended from a certain 'Akkar ben Sa'ada or 'Akkar el-Sherif, who lived at Jebel el-Akhdar in Cyrenaica in the fifth century. They themselves distinguish between two major segments: "The whites" and "The Reds". Each segment is segmented in turn into smaller sub-clans and lineages with distinct autonomous personalities. Clan segmentation takes place as a result of the increasing number of the members of the kin-group to such an extent that the social relations become so confused that it is thought wiser to bifurcate into independent segments, or as a result of inner disputes and conflicts. There is a good deal of ambiguity and complication with regard to the question of segmentation. It is not very clear, for example, whether a certain kin-group makes a clan or a sub-clan or a mere lineage. It is also very difficult to know exactly the segments of a specific clan, or which segments belong to which clan. The most important of the larger kin groups, to all of which the word "clan" will be invariably used, are shown in the following list. This list has been collected after such laborious efforts and investigation, but I shall not be surprised if some inaccuracies occur in it.

THE REDS	THE WHITES	SENEINA	GEMI'AT
'Eshelbat	Sanaqra	Qatcefa	Qwassem
Kemeilat	Afrad	Sammallus	Shatloor
Mawalek	'Agarna	Farawa	'Awassa
Qunashat	Awlad Kharoof	Mahafecz	Nawaba
	Qarcedat	Garara	Awlad Solciman
	Menaffa	'Agana	Farawra
	'Azayem	Shawalba	Bakakra
	Mawamna	etc.	Mawassa
	Manawra		etc.
	El-Hahoon		
	Geheihat		
	Sarahna		
	Ze'airat		
	'Awamma		
	etc.		

It has been said that the Morabiteen clans are mere clients to the powerful and warlike Awlad Ali, but it is generally thought that they lived in the Western Desert a long time before the Awlad Ali came from the west. It may be that they themselves came from Libyan origin although one theory states that they are the descendants of the original Berber inhabitants of the desert. In any case they like to attach themselves to the Awlad Ali not as clients but rather as a branch or segment, thus alleging that they have also descended from 'Akkar. The most important clans of the Morabiteen are Fawakher, Qot'aan Shawa'er, Sheheibat, Taraki, 'Alawna, Awlad Nejm: and Sawame'e.

Clans and lineages in the Western Desert are not localised. For in spite of the natural tendency of kinsmen to cluster together and to live near each other, the members of the same clan-segment may be widely dispersed, while the inhabitants of any locality usually belong to different clans.

B. The distinction between nomadic and semi-nomadic clans and their distribution in Syria is even more difficult than it is in Egypt. The interference of the successive governments in reclassifying the clans by issuing laws according to which clans were arbitrarily considered semi-nomadic or even sedentary adds to this difficulty. The following table shows, however, the number and distribution of the nomadic clans in Syria according to the estimates of the Clan Department in 1951.

REGION	CLAN	NUMBER
Damascus	Rowalla	15.000
	Ashag'a-a	2.000
	Sawalma	1.000
	'Abdallah	900
	Weid Ali	2.500
	Bedoor	600
	Ghaith	1.500
	Na eer Nejd	450
	Masa'eed	3.000
	Sharafat	1.400
Seuda-a	'Admat	1.500
	Shanabelah	1.700
	Sardeya	1.000
	El-Hassa	3.500

<i>REGION</i>	<i>CLAN</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
Aleppo	El Ehsena	4.200
	Sab'e Beteinat	6.180
	Sab'e Beteinat Abdou	8.000
	Bani Khaled	7.980
	'Emoor	4.000
	Salceb	800
	Hadeedeen	35.000
	Bou-Khamees	6.500
	Lohhaib	2.500
	Wahb	5.000
	Shammar El-Khrossa	15.000
	Shammar El-Zor	10.000
		141.000

This means that the nomadic population in 1951 were 141.000. (Compare this with the figure given on page 4. Both figures were provided by the same Department).

The semi-nomadic clans are estimated at about 200.000 people. They tend to cluster round the water-points especially in the Hassaka and the Gezira regions where are found some important rivers such as the Euphrates, the Gagh-Gagh, the Beleckh, and the Khahoor. In any case, there is a general tendency among the clans to lead a settled life where water is found in abundance to enable them to cultivate the land, which means that the water situation is the main factor in determining sedentary or nomadic life. Thus the abundance of rain and river water can be regarded as the main factor which had led to the sedentarisation of the Tai and the 'Egcidat clans of Dair-el-Zor, and the Fed'aan clans of the Radd area. Whatever might be the case, it should be said that any distinction between nomadic and semi-nomadic or even sedentary clans in Syria is an artificial and arbitrary one; for all the clans do practice both ways of life, but with more bias towards the one or the other. The same clans which are considered from the official point of view as "sedentary" are compelled to nomadism in bad years.

Water Supply

A. The problem of water is, as has already been said, a crucial one in the Western Desert of Egypt, because of the meagreness of the

subterranean sources, the high percentage of dissolved salts in the underground water, and the shortness of the wet season. Because of the scanty of the subterranean water, rain is by far the main and the most important source of water. But it is an unreliable source because of the variability of the rainfall and the large amounts of rain-water which is lost by evaporation and seepage in the sand. The situation is further aggravated by the low cultural and technical standards of the people who fail to make the best use of the available resources. This unreliability and the erratic nature of rain have drastic effects on the economic and social life of the people as it will be seen in due course.

To compensate the loss in rain water, artesian wells have to be drilled so as to tap the subterranean water. A large number of wells have already been sunk in the past 50 years especially along the coast, and more particularly in the fig-producing area in the eastern part of the desert, between El-Dab'aa and El-Hammam. Wells tend to concentrate in general within a few miles of the coast and are more numerous in the east than in the west. The wells near the coast are usually more shallow (less than 30ft. deep) than those to the south (over 100ft. deep). In most cases water is extracted by means of rope and bucket, but sometimes wells are provided with wind pumps as it is the case in El-'Amriya, Burg-el-Arab and Ras-el-Hikma. Unfortunately, not all the functioning wells yield potable water or even water suitable for irrigation. The water of a large number of the artesian wells is saline and can only be used for domestic purposes. Certain experiments are now taking place at Ras-el-Hikma and Fuka to know whether this saline water can be used in the irrigation of pasture-lands.

Lastly, a water pipeline was constructed during the Second World War to carry fresh water, mainly for drinking, from the Nile (the Nubaria Canal) to as far as Mersa Matrouh and then by train to Sallum on the borders.

B. A similar situation occurs in the Syrian Desert, although certain places in the semi-desert area are more lucky than any thing in the Egyptian Desert with regards to rain. This semi-desert area which lies to the north of the imaginary line extending between Damascus and Abou-Kamal is a "region of wells". Most of the wells there do not go deeper than 15-20 metres, but a few of them may reach some 60-70 metres in depth. Here also, not all the functioning wells yield potable

water. The wells in the north of the area yield in general much more water than the southern wells, but the total output is meagre on the whole. The *Hamad*, on the other hand, is known as "the region of the *Khabbary*" i.e. the not very deep holes which become filled with rain water during the wet season. Unlike the wells, the *Khabbary* are natural reservoirs; i.e. they are not dug by man.

Rain, however, plays a major role in the life of the Syrian clans. Where rain is more abundant, the people tend to be more settled and more prosperous, while the low rainfall imposes drastic limitations to human activities.

Therefore, any development projects and sedentarisation schemes planned for either desert should give much consideration to the question of water and its availability. In fact, most of the contemplated projects, to which we shall refer later, envisage the possibility of better exploitation of the actual water supplies as well as tapping all the potential resources.

II. CONDITIONS OF LIFE

Habitation

A. Bedouin dwellings in the Western Desert of Egypt fall in two types: permanent dwellings and mobile dwellings. In the permanent dwellings further distinction could be made between the stone houses which are usually built of limestone, and the shacks which are usually made of war debris. The walls of the stone houses are usually covered with plaster and sometimes are whitewashed; the roofs are flat in most cases, and because of the scarcity and high cost of wood, the window shutters and doors are generally very small. In fact, many houses have no window shutters and sometimes no doors at all. Windows and doors do not open to the north on account of the strong northerly winds. Most of the houses are of two or three rooms only which are used for sleeping and receiving guests; domestic functions, cooking, baking and grinding corn are carried out in the courtyard which is used at the same time to shelter the animals at night. Shacks on the other hand are built in a very rudimentary way, and living in them can be regarded as the first step towards living in more permanent dwellings for they are usually replaced in time by stone houses. Shacks do not have windows and their sloping roofs are usually covered with earth so as to prevent rain water from penetrating. More-

over, a number of stationary tents have been erected near the railway stations and are occupied by the former semi-nomads who are working in paid jobs and who have not yet had the chance of building a shack or a stone house.

The tent is the only mobile dwelling in the desert. Most tents are of relatively small size and are made of rugs or sack (summer tents) or of goat hair (winter tents). Tents are generally erected according to the direction of the wind; the side facing the wind is always closed but they open the opposite side.

Permanent dwellings concentrate mainly near railway stations and along the northern cultivated stripe. The rest of the area is occupied by mobile tents. The two main centres of concentration of permanent dwellings are the 'Amriya area and the Matrouh area, the first being the principal fig-producing zone in the desert; the second being the seat of the local government of the Western Desert as well as an important trade centre. The number of permanent dwellings drop sharply in all other points. Tent clusters, on the other hand, do not follow any definite plan and are only temporary and are influenced by the seasonal changes. They tend to cluster near the railway villages during the dry season and some of these clusters may contain up to 200 tents or more. By the advance of the wet season these clusters tend to break up and disperse widely over the grazing grounds to the south of the coastal zone. One does not usually see more than 8-10 tents in any one place.

It could be said, however, that where better lands and better conditions for settling down are available the number of tents become smaller as is the case at 'Amriya and Mersa Matrouh where the people can easily find more permanent and more reliable sources of income. According to Weheba, there are three factors that seem to have largely given rise to these distributional features. "First, distance from the civilising influences propagated mainly by modern means of communications; secondly, and this is a corollary of the first, how far the inhabitants of a particular district or locality have taken to sedentary occupations; thirdly, the attraction of railway service villages and hamlets to tent dwellers. Where people live in closer contact with the Nile Valley and live more by sedentary occupations, as in the fig-producing coastal zone and El-Amyria, the mobile dwelling gives way to the static. Where people live far away either from the Delta (in the

El Dabaa district for instance) or the modern means of communication (as is the case in the southern tracts) the tent is predominant. And finally, where semi-nomads seek the service and amenities of railway villages and hamlets, tents cluster near by during the dry season varying from 30-200 tents" (Wahaba; *Eastern Mariut*; pp. 118-119). Generally speaking, where the number of permanent stone houses and shacks decreases the number of tents increases and *vice versa*.

B. The same pattern of housing prevails, more or less in Syria but with more apparent inclination to living in tents. The only exception is the Gezira area where the Bedouins have become more sedentary and tend to live in permanent dwellings. The semi-nomadic clans cluster in large numbers constituting what they call *Hilla*, or *Hwa-a*, or *Naj'e*, or *Dawwar*; all of which words mean village or hamlet. These mobile hamlets may contain more than 100 tents at a time, but it is not necessary for the whole clan to live in the same hamlet. Most of the tents are made of goat hair and are used all the year round in spite of the fact that they become very hot in summer. The more wealthy people usually make their summer tents of special cotton cloth, while winter tents may be made of camel hair or of pure sheep wool.

All the members of one family, whether it is an elementary or a polygynous family, usually live in one and the same tent. It is only the chief who may have more than one tent for his wives, children, servants and clients. Also the size of the tent and the number of the supporting posts correspond with the status of its occupants. A large tent may be lifted up on as many as seven poles and it may cover some 60-100 sq. metres. On the other hand, the smallest tent is that lifted up on only one pole erected in its middle. These very small tents are usually occupied either by widows or by very old lonely people or sometimes by clients and other persons who take refuge in that clan from their enemies. The only exception to this is the Rowalla clans which prefer to erect their tents, in most cases, on a single pole regardless of wealth or rank or status. However, any change in the number of poles of a tent is generally taken as an indicator of a corresponding change in the wealth of its occupants. The size of the tent, on the other hand, corresponds with the tendency to sedentary life. The tents of the semi-nomads who inhabit the Euphrates area, for example, are much larger than the tents of the nomadic clans who live in the Badiya. The clans of the Euphrates do not need, in any case, to move so frequently or so widely as do the more nomadic groups.

The interior of the *beit* or the tent is divided into two sections by a curtain so as to seclude the womenfolk of the tent who are always given the inner section called *maḥram* to live in and to retire to it when there are men guests. In the more settled groups, this curtain may be made of hard reeds which must, in any case, be higher than the ordinary man so as to prevent intruders from looking at the *hareem* or the female members of the household. This reed curtain is called the *zerb*, and it may be covered, among the more wealthy people, by decorated woollen cloth. Some nomads compile their luggage and grain-sacks in the middle of the tent to play the role of the curtain or the *zerb*.

Food :

A. The food of the ordinary Bedouin is generally very simple, consisting in most cases of nothing more than a piece of very hard bread dipped in tea or milk or butter or oil. Contrary to the common idea about the inhabitants of the deserts, the Bedouins of the Western Desert, or rather the more mobile or nomadic section of the population, do not regard dates as a principal item in their diet. It is not easy for the nomads to take with them *all* their needs of dates throughout their long journeys and their frequent movements. Moreover, date-palms are not grown in large numbers in the Western Desert except in Siwa Oasis. Large quantities of the *Sīwi* dates are actually consumed by the more settled population along the coast. Meat also does not play a leading item in their food. It is not consumed in considerable quantities except perhaps on the occasion of feasts and religious ceremonies. In ordinary life, an animal is seldom killed; for animals and sheep are not kept for the sake of their meat; they are rather reared for their economic as well as their social values. Vegetables and fruits are consumed in very small quantities by the more sedentary groups, but they are almost entirely absent from the food of the nomadic population. Rice is regarded as a delicacy, especially if sauce is added to it. The most important item in the Bedouin diet is cereals, mainly barley and little maize and wheat. Barley is grown on a large scale and represents an important and permanent feature in all their meals. Besides making their bread of barley, a certain delicious porridge which is eaten when still very hot is made of it. The inhabitants of the Matrouh area eat roasted barley after adding salt to it. Very little fish is consumed by the groups which live near the sea coast, but the Bedouins in general do not regard fish as an essential element in their food.

B. The Syrian Bedouins live on equally simple food because of their relative poverty and the difficulty of transporting huge amounts of food with them on their long trips. But on the whole, they consume larger quantities of meat in their every-day life than do the Egyptian Bedouins. This is due, perhaps, to the fact that they have more extensive and richer grazing grounds and consequently larger flocks. Also dates play a more important role in their diet especially in winter when they eat them boiled in milk. The nomadic clans which live in the eastern parts of Syria, such as Shammar and the Jebboor clans, bring considerable amounts of dates from Iraq when they cross the borders in bad years for pasture. Again, they have more inclination to wheat and maize than to barley. Wheat, more particularly, plays in their diet the same role played by barley in the diet of the Egyptian Bedouins.

Milk plays a major role in the diet of both the Egyptian and the Syrian Bedouins. It occupies a main principal place in their food especially in spring when the animals are replenished and milk becomes more abundant. In fact, it represents the main item in their diet for some five months i.e. during the wet season trips. Tea and coffee are also consumed in considerable quantities in both deserts. The Egyptian Bedouins are more keen on tea. They themselves allege that a man may spend on tea more than he does on all other items of food put together. The tea which they drink is a very strong and sticky liquid which they get by boiling together a large amount of tea and sugar for a long time. Tea is usually drunk in small glasses and is served at all hours of the day. The Syrians are much more keen on coffee and they spend quite a lot of money and time on it. A cup of strong coffee and a piece of hard bread make an ideal breakfast for most of them. The pots and utensils necessary for making coffee are the most conspicuous piece of furniture in the tent. Special care and consideration are given to the selection of coffee beans, their roasting and grinding just before making coffee. Coffee is also served in small cups, and only a little of it is offered at a time, but one is expected to drink at least three cups of it. Some clans would consider it an insult if the guest refuses to drink the coffee offered to him. Even strangers who are not accustomed to strong coffee are expected to drink once to show good will. Drugs and spirits are not known among the nomads and semi-nomads in both deserts, but the more wealthy of the sedentary population may drink date wine. Imported European spirits are consumed in enormous quantities by the wealthy tribal chiefs, especially in Syria.

Education

It is difficult to speak about the existence of any regular education among the nomadic groups in both Egypt and Syria. The nature and conditions of their life, their frequent movements and non-attachment to any specific locality prevent from establishing any effective and systematic education or a solid system of schooling among them. All that a boy can get under the prevailing unfavourable conditions is the knowledge of some passages of the Koran; and apart from a few persons, the whole nomadic population in both deserts can be regarded as completely illiterate. Yet education is spreading widely, on the other hand, among the more sedentarised groups and clans especially in Egypt. Serious and continuous efforts are also made in Syria to introduce primary education and to establish primary schools in certain desert points which are frequented by the nomads, on the assumption that education is the best, though perhaps not the shortest, way for breaking down the tribal organisation and erasing the nomadic mode of livelihood.

A. In the Western Desert of Egypt, primary schools are found in all the larger villages along the railway line. There are 11 primary schools in the whole area, attended by 2,383 pupils of both sexes. (1) Education at that stage is compulsory for children between 6 and 14 years of age. There is one intermediary school (169 pupils) and one secondary school (59 pupils) at Mersa Matrouh. There is also an agricultural school at 'Amriya. The average age of the pupils in all stages is higher than that of their mates at the respective schools in the Delta. The age of 18 or 19 for example, is very common among the first-year students at the secondary school, while the average age of students at that stage in the schools of Alexandria and other parts of the Delta is 15 years. The subjects taught at these schools are exactly the same as those taught in the schools of the Delta.

The agricultural school was established at first in 1944 at Mersa Matrouh to encourage boys, after finishing their primary education, to get agricultural training and practical instruction in craftsmanship as well. But from the very beginning, it was clear that the school would not meet much success. Only 66 pupils attended the first year, and these came, strangely enough from Alexandria and its vicinity. The inhabitants of the area did not show any interest in that sort of

1. These figures were obtained in the summer of 1958.

education and they preferred for their children to follow the pure theoretical education provided by the ordinary public schools, which might lead in the end to getting a post in one of the governmental departments. Therefore, the school was moved to 'Amriya in the summer of 1957 so as to be located in a better agricultural area with encouraging agricultural prospects, as well as to be nearer to Alexandria from which a considerable number of the students are still recruited. It is also said that the school did not meet the due success at Mersa Matrouh for the lack of a fixed policy with regards to the future of its students and because its curricula were not adapted to the particular nature of the area. Indeed, the other types of education suffer from the same defect.

B. The Clans' Department in Syria has tried hard to introduce modern education among the nomadic clans, but financial difficulties have put severe limitations to these efforts. The original plan was to establish primary schools at the more important centres in which the nomadic groups usually cluster for the longer period of the year and to recruit pupils from these clans. Education, food and residence were planned to be offered by the Clans' Department itself so as to encourage attendance. Because of the financial difficulties, only five schools were established in five different centres : the school of Domair for the Rowalla clans; the school of Ma'arra (near Aleppo) for the Hadeedeen and the Mawali clans; the school of Tudmor (Palmyr) for the Beni-Khaled, the Sbe'aa and the 'Emoor clans; the School of Raqqa for the Fed'aan and the 'Afadia clans; and the school of Hassaka for the Shammar, the Jeboor and some other less important clans which live in the Gezira region. The boys are expected to spend five years at school, during which time they read the same subjects taught in the ordinary primary school but with more care given to the local environment and physical conditions. Agricultural subjects were introduced as well in recent years. After finishing their primary education the young boys are sent to intermediary then to secondary schools in the large towns and more particularly to Damascus. Pupils are recruited from their respective clans by force, in the sense that the clans living in each of these five centres are obliged to provide the Clans' Department with a certain number of boys at the beginning of each academic year. The "Clans' Schools", as they are called, are five-class schools; and each class has 30 boys. Thus, each school has only 150 pupils at any specific time, and the number of pupils recruited every year does not exceed 30 boys in each centre. The Clans' Department, however, finds many difficulties in recruiting

such a small number for the schools, and much resistance is displayed by some nomadic clans, more particularly by the Rowalla clans.

These limitations and difficulties have rendered the schools and the type of education offered to the boys ineffective in the life of the nomadic clans, and it has been realised that it is impossible under the current conditions to achieve the main aim of this system of schooling, i. e. the breaking down of the traditional tribal organisation. Nevertheless, the period spent in the secondary school away from home is thought to be long enough to influence the students and to change much of their precious habits, values, patterns of behaviour and modes of thought. But in spite of this, it cannot be said that education has succeeded in erasing tribal feelings and sentiments or in abolishing tribal hostilities.

Hygiene

The hygienic situation is regarded with much dismay by the few physicians who are stationed at the local hospitals and clinics in both deserts. This is due mainly to the lack of adequate systems of hospitalisation and the lack of faith in medicine on the part of the people, rather than to the actual spread of disease. In fact, there are no localised diseases in the strict sense of the word, and the wide dispersal of the nomadic groups prevent indeed from the spread of epidemics. Outbreaks of typhoid or typhus may occur in a certain year, but these usually take the form of sporadic cases which could be dealt with successfully were the general conditions of the hospitals favourable and adequate means and medicines available. Hospitals are found only in the larger villages and towns in both the Egyptian and Syrian deserts, but on the whole they are understaffed and poorly equipped. Very little effort, if any, is made by the local medical and hygienic authorities to provide the people with hygienic culture or to change their concepts of cleanliness and dirt or to teach them new hygienic habits with regards to better housing, better ventilation and the destruction of noxious insects and vermin, or to encourage the people to bore holes for latrines, etc. The people themselves do not show any real interest in acquiring new hygienic habits. They accept illness with complete submission; for illness is God-sent and no hygienic measure can cope with it. Infectious diseases are regarded as a communal punishment for sin. Less dangerous diseases and troubles are generally attributed to witchcraft and to the evil eye. It is also thought that disease can occur as a result of the misdeeds of others; thus, sons may suffer because their parents have failed to observe a certain

important regulation of religion or because they have committed a sin or a crime. With such beliefs in the background, it is very difficult to introduce effective hygienic measures.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that the few hospitals and hygienic centres established at widely dispersed localities and villages in both deserts do not have sufficient number of beds for the patients. The necessary and essential medicines are also lacking. Aspirins and D.D.T. are the items found in abundance in most of the hygienic centres. Moreover, the hygienic workers, the physicians and the staff of these centres are generally overworked. The hospital at El-Dab'aa in the Western Desert, for example, has only one physician who acts as hygienic officer at the same time. He has to look after the hygienic situation, to treat diseases, to look after critical cases of child-birth, etc., in a very wide area which stretches to more than 100 kilometres along the coast. He has no ready means of transport to use in his visits and inspection. Thus, he has either to hire a taxi when he can find one, or to use the police car in cases of emergency. All this puts severe checks on the medical services and render them ineffective. The result is that the physician actually contends himself to first-aid and sends the more complicated and fatal cases to Alexandria, some 160 kilometres away from El-Dab'aa. With the exception of the hospital at Mersa Matrouh, all the hospitals of the Western Desert suffer from the same shortage and defects. The same could be said about the hygienic situation and the hospitals among the nomadic and semi-nomadic groups in Syria. Hospitals in the Syrian Desert are not better equipped or better staffed than those in the Western Desert of Egypt and so, they cannot offer adequate medical service to the people. For example, the Raqqa region, with its area of about 400,000 sq. kms. and a population of about 126,000 (of whom 35,000 are nomads), has only one hospital or rather a public clinic with one physician and one male-nurse. Severe cases are transferred to hospitals at Aleppo, about 200 kilometres from Raqqa town. There is no one single pharmacy in the whole region and all medicine has thus to be brought from Aleppo.

The main diseases in both the Western Desert and the Syrian Desert can be classified into two categories :

- a) Diseases which are caused by the lack of well balanced nutrition and adequate diet and by the absence of suitable hygienic habits with regards to food, drink and habitation. The most important of these diseases are tuberculosis, gastric troubles, stomach ail-

ments and hemorrhoids. In the absence of reliable statistics, local physicians estimate that about 40 per cent. of the adult population in the Western Desert and about 25 per cent. of the total population in the Syrian Desert have T.B. More than 70 per cent. of the adult population in both deserts have got piles as a result of the lack of vegetables and fruits in their diet. Gastric diseases are very common, but they are more prevalent and more fatal among children.

- b) Diseases which are caused by the lack of cleanliness such as skin illness, ophthalmia, diarrhoea, etc. Measles could also be included in this group. It is widespread among both children, and grown-ups. Venereal diseases are also very common. Local authorities say that they are more common than T.B. and it is estimated, for example, that more than 80 per cent of the adult male population in the Syrian Desert have syphilis. Promiscuous sexual intercourse among the Bedouins must be regarded as responsible for the widespread of venereal diseases. Since women are not allowed to be examined by male physicians, it is impossible to know exactly how far venereal diseases and other illnesses are prevalent among the Bedouins.

In general, the Bedouins of both deserts do not go to the doctor unless something is very wrong. They have much more faith in their folk medicines and home remedies such as cupping, massage, cicatrization, using a large variety of herbs, etc. Modern hospitals, medical practices and medical doctors are regarded with much suspicion, especially by the nomads who may overlook them completely. Perhaps the wide dispersal of the nomadic groups and the difficulty to convey medical services to them in their remote and mobile dwellings are responsible for this suspicion. But even the more sedentary groups who live in villages and towns where hospitals are found have not yet abandoned their traditional remedies. They rather try to get the best of both kinds of medicine. To give a few examples : A scorpion stings a man. The doctor, if available, is immediately called to give the patient the anti-scorpion serum and any other medicines that may be useful. The instructions of the doctor are followed strictly and literally, but at the same time and as soon as the doctor disappears, the wound is burnt by fire and a piece of dry ass-dung is put on it to "suck out" the poison. Wounds are carefully cleaned and treated with medicines and dressed in the hospital by the doctor in the morning, but later in the day the bandages are taken off and a roasted

onion with some salt, or a piece of cob-web and some olive oil are put on the wound. Next day the patient goes in the morning to the hospital to get his wound cleaned and dressed again. Cases of ophthalmia are also put under the careful supervision of the doctor who gives eye-drops and medicine which the patient never fails to use according to prescription, but at the same time, the sick eye is treated with the warm blood of a newly killed rabbit or by applying a piece of raw and fresh meat to it.

III. OCCUPATIONS

Stock Raising

A. The rearing of animals in the Western Desert is subject to the unreliability of rain and its erratic nature. For the growth of pasture plants is affected not only by the infertility of the soil but also, and to a larger extent, by the amount of rain falling in any specific year. Low rainfall entails acute shortage in pasture and herbage, and leads to the death of animals of both starvation and thirst. Statistics indicate that two of every five years have rain failure.

Grazing lands extend generally to the south of the cultivated northern stripe; i.e. in the middle zone where the infertility of the soil and the meagreness of the rainfall put limitation on cultivation. Herbage may grow also in the fallow patches within the barley land. The southern boundary of the grazing grounds depends mainly on the extent of rainfall inland. Pasture plants comprise a wide variety of bushes, scrub and many other species of grasses most of which have a very short life cycle, but a few of them are annuals. In any case, most of these plants persist between December and May, then the land turns during the summer into arid hard desert with only a few dispersed patches of dry grass. The grazing season *per excellence* extends therefore between November and April, during which period barley stands on the fields. After the first showers of November, barley is sown and the young men move with their flocks to the pastures leaving to the older people the task of looking after the fields. As the dry season advances, the flocks are moved northwards to the cultivated lands so as to be nearer to fodder and to the waterholes which stand usually very near to the coastal zone. During this time, animals live mainly on barley straw and very little drying grass. However, the movements of the flocks are rhythmic and regu-

lated by the division of the year into the two major seasons — the dry season and the wet season. The wet season is the season of plenty in which the animals are replenished; the dry season is the period of starvation during which the flocks are fed mainly on straw. Any movements of animals that may take place in this season are carried out on a very limited scale. In exceptionally bad years the people are compelled to dispose of their animals, or at least a large part of the flocks. Sometimes they may send them away to their friends and relatives who may be living near vegetation. In bad years the shepherds find it necessary to cross the frontiers to Cyrenaica for pasture. The grazing grounds are traditionally divided among the clan and the lineages, in the sense that each lineage has definite rights in specific grazing areas to the exclusion of all other lineages. This exclusiveness, however, is not strictly followed in bad years when the people feel that they must co-operate and help the needy and the distressed.

The size of the herds varies widely from place to place according to the availability of pasture plants and herbage. Most of the herds comprise goats and sheep which are dominant in number. Camels are usually herded separately, and in any case one does not come across large herds of camels except perhaps further to the south. In fact, sheep also graze in small flocks especially in the eastern part of the desert where most of the herds comprise of from 5 to 30 or 40 animals. The size of the herds tends to become larger in the western parts, and one often comes across herds of 300 sheep or more. In terms of popularity, sheep come first and the people show more interest in them than they do with regards to other animals. In some districts, the number of sheep is larger than the number of all the other animals put together. Goats rank second to sheep. The number of camels tends now to decrease since their importance as a means of transport has declined after the advent of the railway and the construction of motor roads. This is more apparent in the eastern part of the desert where the people have become more settled. According to Weheha, there were some 15,000 sheep in Eastern Mariut in 1953, about 13,500 goats and only 3,300 camels. Donkeys are also kept by the Bedouins and more particularly by the settled clans. They serve as load, riding and draught animals and are mainly used in agricultural work, especially in ploughing. Therefore, donkeys are never kept in large numbers. A family so seldom keeps more than one or two donkeys, but on the whole, the distribution of livestock tends to be more sparse in the eastern parts than in the western parts of the desert.

Whatever may be the case, it seems that the nomadic raising of livestock is the best mode of living the inhabitants of the desert can lead under the existing conditions with such unreliable rainfall. Low rainfall may entail the complete destruction of the cultivation of a person but never all his animals. Stock raising, however, is supplemented by agriculture and some other occupations, and there is an unmistakable drift now to those more sedentary occupations. There is a remarkable decline in pastoral nomadism in favour of agriculture and trade, especially in the eastern parts which are nearer to the Delta and its markets. People there depend mainly on horticulture, and the raising of livestock is not very much liked because of the possible damage that sheep and, more particularly goats, can do to their plants and trees.

B. The raising of livestock is practised in Syria on a much larger scale than it is in the Western Desert. Animals are reared in much larger numbers and it is common to come across herds of some 600 to 800 sheep and goats, especially in the Hassaka and the Gezira regions. Besides sheep, goats, camels and donkeys, the more sedentary clans, especially in the Gezira region, take much interest in the raising of cows. But sheep and goats rank first; they are kept in much larger numbers than other kinds of stock. Grazing conditions are, on the whole, much more favourable than those prevailing in the Egyptian Desert. Grazing plants and grasses cover vast stretches of land and thrive abundantly in most years because of the relative abundance of rain; but exceptionally dry years have similar drastic effects on both the herds and the pasture plants.

The best grazing lands are found at Deir-el-Zor and its vicinity; but bad years and exceptionally dry seasons usually compel the people to move to the Gezira region which is generally regarded as an agricultural area. The actual existence of a number of rivers there allows for sufficient fodder for the famine-stricken animals coming from Deir-el-Zor. The occasional shortage of pasture and herbage may also compel the herdsmen to cross the borders to Iraq. Other excellent grazing-lands are found at Hama and Homs where grass thrives in good years; but here also the decline in the amount of rainfall leads to the death of large numbers of animals. Similar conditions prevail in the Aleppo region.

With the exception of the Rowalla clans who are mainly camel-herdsmen, the Syrian clans are deeply interested in the raising of sheep

and goats. Camels are regarded by the Rowalla as constituting the most important item of one's wealth. This does not mean that they do not care for sheep or that they do not keep them. It only means that because of the harsh physical conditions and the arid desert and the scarcity of rain in their regions they have to roam widely for search of pasture. Their Journeys may take them to as far as Saudi Arabia. The camel is the only animal which can endure such a long and exhausting trip. The number of camels also tend to increase among the more nomadic sections of the Shammar clans who are allowed in bad years to graze their flocks in Iraqi lands.

The only available statistics about livestock are the following figures which show the number of animals kept by the semi-nomadic clans of the Gezira region in 1955 and 1956 :

	<i>sheep</i>	<i>Goats</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Oxen</i>	<i>Camels</i>	<i>Donkeys</i>
1955	622.000	220.000	26.000	16.000	11.000	14.000
1956	629.000	225.000	28.000	17.000	8.000	15.000

From these figures we can see that there is a sharp fall in the number of camels and a remarkable increase in the number of all the other species of livestock, and goats in particular. Camels cannot comply with the requirements of the sedentary or semi-nomadic life.

Cultivation

A. Cultivation, in the Western Desert of Egypt, is also affected by the erratic nature of rain and the scarcity of the underground water in most places. As has already been said, the land suitable for cultivation lies along the sea coast but the cultivated area varies from year to year according to the rainfall. In bad years, the cultivated area may be reduced to a comparatively narrow stripe of only a few miles in breadth.

Land is not owned by the people; it belongs to the State with the right of usufruct conceded to the people. Barley is the staple crop and most of the people hardly use any other cereal in making their bread. Barley straw is also used as fodder for animals. The variety of barley which is grown in the Western Desert has the privilege of having a comparatively short growing season; something between 75 and 90 days. It can also stand drought if the rains fail to come in time.

Seeding usually takes place after the first showers in November; yet the period between October and December can generally be regarded as the sowing season. Not very much care, if any, is given to the fields or to the plant. The harvest season usually extends from the second half of April to the first half of May. The people are never sure of the crops and in most years they get poor return. The failure of the crop may be so acute that whole lineages may find themselves obliged to migrate, with their flocks, to the Delta. In such critical years, grain and flour are urgently sent by the Government from the Delta so as to evade the dangers of famine. As far as this is concerned, the semi-nomadic clans of the Western Desert represent a real burden on the national economy of the country.

The semi-nomadic groups which have recently become sedentary and have settled down in the eastern parts of the desert are taking much interest in horticulture and in the growing of fruit trees, especially fig trees, as well as in the growing of tomatoes and vegetables. El-'Amriya is regarded as the most important centre for producing figs and it seems that all the fig crop finds ready market at Alexandria and the other cities of the Delta. In 1953 there were about 3,488 acres of fig trees in that region. The average number of trees per acre is 120 trees and thus there should have been some 418,560 fig trees in that region alone. The growing of olive trees is a recent innovation in the Western Desert although the inhabitants of the Oases have known it since immemorial times. The Burg-el-Arah region is the most important centre for the cultivation and the growing of olives. The official figures show that some 250 acres are planted with olive trees. The average number of olive trees per acre is 80 trees, and thus there should be about 20,000 trees in that region yielding about 2,000,000 lbs. of olives per year. Much less care is given to the growing of other fruit trees such as orange trees, almond trees and date palms, but there is increasing interest in the cultivation of almonds especially at the Ras-el-Hikma and Matrouh regions. In any case, the inhabitants of the western parts are less interested in the growing of fruits and vegetables than the inhabitants of the eastern parts. There is no doubt that the nearness to the markets in Alexandria and the facility of transport by railway have encouraged the dwellers of the eastern regions to change to horticulture and, consequently, to settled life.

B. Wheat and maize are the staple crops in the Syrian Desert; the people hardly grow any large amounts of barley. Unlike the Egyptian

Bedouins who grow barley mainly for their own consumption, wheat and maize are grown on a comparatively large scale, especially in the Gezira region, and a considerable proportion of the crop is actually sent to the markets of the larger towns and cities. On the other hand, horticulture which is so much thriving in certain parts of the Western Desert, is almost entirely absent from the scene in the Syrian Desert. The people are not interested in fruit or in vegetable cultivation. Yet cotton is grown in certain parts of the Gezira where the Bedouins have settled down and are leading a more or less sedentary life. It is not, however, the Bedouins who grow the plant by themselves, for they have neither the knowledge nor the experience necessary for this kind of more advanced cultivation. They rather concede the right of exploiting their lands to what they call the "big farmers" who come from the city, and more particularly from Aleppo, and get in return a certain percentage of the yield. They do not take any part in the cultivation of cotton, not even as ordinary workers on the land, partly because of lack of experience as has already been said, and partly because they despise all peasantry work. In a few cases, the chief of the clan or of the clan-segment may play the role of the "big farmer". He is thus entitled to exploit the lands of his clansmen as well as their services for a certain proportion of the yield. But usually the necessary peasants and workers are recruited from Aleppo.

Cultivation, on the whole, flourishes in the northern parts where more favourable conditions prevail and where the people have been encouraged by these conditions to settle down and to change to sedentary occupations. There is little chance for the Rowalla clans of the south, for example, or for the Shammar clans of the Hasaka zone to change to such a permanent sedentary life because of the aridity of the land, the comparative scarcity of rain and the rarity and salinity of the underground water in the areas where they live. But generally speaking, there are better agricultural prospects in the Syrian Desert than in the Western Desert, and the Syrian Bedouin has much more chance to practice extensive cultivation, especially in the Gezira, if due care is given to the water resources.

Trading

A. Trading is not an important feature in the life of the Bedouins as a whole, although in the past the nomadic groups used to carry goods from one district to another or even from one country to

another in the course of their wide movements, thus facilitating in an indirect way commercial transactions. Now this function has fallen to disuse after the advent of railway and motor transport in the desert. However, the semi-nomadic groups of the Western Desert of Egypt still play an important role in trading with the Delta. Trade and the exchange of goods were limited to certain seasons in the past; i.e. to the season of lambing and the harvest seasons and sometimes to some religious seasons and occasions such as Ramadan and the two Bairams. These transactions have increased recently and are taking place during the whole year though with some seasonal fluctuations. The most important item exported from the desert to the Delta is livestock, and more particularly sheep and goats. Besides the animals raised by the inhabitants themselves, the Western Desert is a good market for the Libyan animals which are imported in large numbers every year from Cyrenaica. The village of El-Hammam is the most important centre for the marketing of livestock. Because of its nearness to Alexandria, butchers and stock-traders from the city go to the market on marketing days for their purchases. El-Hammam is actually the first organised market which traders from Libya come across on their way to Alexandria and the Delta. Unfortunately, we do not have any records showing the sales effected at that important market. The following figures, however, show the number of sheep sent by rail to El-Hammam; no figures are available concerning the animals transported by lorries to that market. Animals transported by lorries are much more than those transported by railway.

	1955	1956	1957	1958
January	—	—	7	100
February	—	737	250	1,046
March	—	3,540	681	6,401
April	—	5,585	1,362	9,215
May	—	4,061	5,179	5,316
June	—	2,154	8,600	231
July	795	362	1,996	—
August	364	236	1,067	—
September	628	684	551	—
October	206	513	378	—
November	11	—	4	—
December	—	57	—	—

Trading in fruits (especially figs) and in vegetables (especially tomatoes) is carried out on a much limited scale and is confined to certain seasons. The village of El-'Amriya is the most important centre for this trade. Traders from Alexandria go to that village in the respective harvest seasons to conclude their purchases of the different crops. It is a common practice that those traders provide the private producers with all their needs of cash money (and sometimes of goods as well) during the year to secure for themselves the yield of their cultivation. Here also, no reliable estimates of the value of trade is available. However, trading in figs ranks first and the fig crop in average years is roughly estimated to be round L.E. 200.000. The value of the other crops such as tomatoes, olives, almonds, etc. may not be more than a few thousand pounds. Barley is grown mainly for private consumption.

So much for trade with Alexandria. As far as fixed trade is concerned, it is easy to notice that such trade is quite flourishing in the settlements constructed along the railway line where the people are becoming settled in increasing numbers. Such important centres as Mersa Matruh, Sallum, El-Dab'aa, El-Hammam, El-'Amriya, etc., have a large number of shops; but even in the less important settlements there may be found one shop at least. The number of shops corresponds with the degree of sedentarisation and settled life. Though small in size, most of these shops are general stores where all the modest needs of the inhabitants, especially sugar, tea and cloth, are sold. Canned food is a new advent in these shops and it is usually consumed by the Government officials, most of whom come from the Nile Valley.

Although we have no records to show the volume of trade and the transaction of goods carried out through these shops round the year, it can easily be said that this volume fluctuates according to seasons. In any case, the purchasing power of the inhabitants is very poor. Therefore, the shopkeepers are obliged to follow the credit system which enables the clients to pay for their purchases after the barley harvest.

B. Our data concerning trade and commercial transactions among the Syrian clans is even more meagre and scanty. The conditions which have led in the Western Desert to the establishment of permanent settlements along the railway and the main traffic route and, consequently, to the emergence of flourishing trade centres do not exist in the Syrian Desert. Therefore, the few modest needs which Bedouins require (e.g. coffee, sugar, soap, etc.) can only be fulfilled at the large

towns. Few small shops are found in the main centres where clans usually cluster for most part of the year. The Syrian Bedouins still bear much despise and contempt to trading, and in a number of cases (e.g. in the village of Raqqa) all the shopkeepers are strangers who come from outside the area. The pastoral and nomadic values are still vivid and very highly esteemed. But trading in livestock is looked at differently; it has strong connection with these pastoral values. It is not demeaning to trade in stock. On the contrary, this trade comprises an important item in the national economy of Syria, and the exports of stock raised by the Bedouins forms a comparatively high proportion of the external trade. Available records show, for example, that 385,815 heads of stock were exported in 1951; 469,000 heads were exported in 1952, and 537,000 heads were exported in 1953. These figures represent 6.9 per cent., 6.5 per cent. and 6.1 per cent. of the total value of exports in the respective years.

Crafts and Industries

A. Bedouins as a rule bear no respect to manual work, but the more sedentary groups in the Western Desert do not mind getting themselves engaged in the new industries which have recently been established in certain centres. A number of crafts, however, are actually practised by the Bedouin women. Thus, rugs and the cloth of the wet season's tents are woven by them from sheep wool; mats are made of a certain reed which grows wild and extensively in different parts of the desert, especially in the Wadi-el-Natrun area; olive oil is pressed in a very primitive way for private consumption, etc. But all these crafts are practised to meet the personal and private needs only. They are not carried out for any commercial or trading purposes. Perhaps only the mats are sent, in insignificant quantities, to certain small towns of the Delta. Where olive groves thrive, the crude oil which is generally pressed in larger quantities, is sent either to Alexandria or to Bur-el-Arab to be clarified.

But besides these simple handicrafts which are practised mainly by nomads and semi-nomads, certain other industries have recently been introduced in the desert. All the unskilled labour necessary for these industries are recruited from the more settled inhabitants. The more important of these industries are : the gypsum industry at Gharbaniat (about 6,000 tons per year), the extraction of salt and natron (carbonate of sodium) from Wadi-Natrun, the rug industry at Wadi-el-

Natrun also, oil pressing at Burg-el-Arab, sponge-extraction from the sea in the Matrouh area, etc. Foreign oil companies which are still surveying the desert and carrying out their exploration testing employ a large number of workers from among the local inhabitants. Unfortunately, we do not have any figures to show the exact number of workers engaged in these different industries, but there is a general and noticeable drift of manpower from pastoralism to these more settled occupations. A number of projects which envisage the possibility of establishing new industries in certain centres in the desert are still under consideration. We shall give account of these projects in due course.

B. The Syrian Bedouins practice similar handicrafts to those found in the Egyptian Western Desert. Apart from the intensive efforts made by some American and German oil companies to explore the sites of oil fields in the desert, no industrial activities or projects for industrialisation are carried out. Some success has already been achieved in the petroleum industry. A number of wells have been drilled in different parts of the desert especially in the Dereck area, but oil has not yet been exploited on commercial terms. No workers from the local inhabitants are employed in the petroleum industry, but it seems that a considerable percentage of the unskilled labour will be recruited from among the Bedouins when the wells are put into use for commercial purposes.

Seasonal Employment

A. The scarcity of rain in the Western Desert, the fact that pastoralism does not occupy all able-bodied persons at all times and the desire to get some more secure source of income, all allow for the engagement in temporary paid jobs. This usually takes place outside the season of cultivation which is at the same time the season of grazing. As we have already noted, barley is sown after the first showers in November and the young men move southwards to the grazing-grounds leaving their elders to look after the fields, then they begin to move towards the north when the dry season advances. It is during this season, when most of the people cluster in the northern zone, that seasonal employment takes place if work is available. The most important seasonal jobs in which young men get themselves engaged are fishing, road-making and unskilled labour in the rug factory and salt and natron industry at Wadi-el-Natrun. Fishing, however, is an occupation which is practised all the year round by a very small number of skilled fishermen

especially at El-Dab'aa. In spite of the fact that the catch is always more abundant in the winter than in summer, the dry season encourages the drift of a comparatively large number of men to jobs especially at Mersa Matrouh, which is an important summer resort, where they can sell their meagre catch at a higher price to holiday makers. A considerable number of young men also get temporary jobs during the summer months in the restaurants, cafés and hotels at Mersa Matrouh, while a limited number work as drivers and coachmen of the horse cabs which are virtually the only means of transport preferred by the holiday makers for their promenades and movements in the town.

B. Apparently the only drift to temporary jobs in Syria is that which takes place during the harvest season when large numbers of peasants go to the Gezira to help gathering the crops. But only a comparatively small number of Bedouins take part in this sort of work, for all agricultural work is still looked down on by most of the nomadic folk. It has already been said that the more settled Bedouins avoid, as much as they can, working in their own fields and they usually concede the right of exploiting their lands to the "big farmers". Most of the labour employed in the Gezira during the harvest is recruited from the Aleppo region.

Wages

A. Apart from the paid jobs in which some of the Bedouins of the Western Desert are temporarily engaged, such as roadmaking, serving in restaurants and cafés, etc., the inhabitants of the desert are usually paid in kind for their services. These services are related mainly to animal husbandry or to the cultivation of barley. Payments for both kinds of services are more or less stable and are generally determined by custom, according to a traditional and strict system of partnership, which allows for the partition of the crops between the "owner" of the land and the "peasant" on the one hand, and the division of the produce of animals between the shepherd and the owner of the animals on the other.

Although the common practice in the Western Desert is that the land which belongs to a certain kin-group should be cultivated by the members of that group, the need for extra labour may rise especially at the harvest season. This labour is usually recruited either from the desert itself, or from among the poorer lineages and clans who do not have much

cultivation to look after, or from certain parts of the Delta and more particularly from the village of Idku near Alexandria. Some peasants may also be brought from Siwa Oasis for that purpose. The more important lineages may even abstain from doing any job or work that has connection with tilling the land. In this latter case they concede the rights of cultivating the land to other persons whom they call "peasants" and sometimes "tenants". But in fact, the people who are assigned to use the land in this manner are not real tenants. They do not pay any rent or substitute for their "tenancy". Instead, they exploit the land and grow the seeds which the owner himself provides. After the harvest, the owner gets back the same amount of seed he has given to the tenant and the remainder of the crop is then divided between owner and tenant in a certain proportion. Usually two-thirds of the crop go to the owner and one third to the tenant, but sometimes the crop is divided between them in equal shares. Thus, the relation between the two parties is more like a relation between employer and employee rather than one between owner and tenant. Here, all the elements of production are offered by the owner, while the tenant contributes the necessary physical work and gets his wages in kind from the crop. When the tenant plants his own seeds, he gives 20 per cent. of the crop, after reducing from it an equal amount to what he has sown in the first place. On the other hand, the wage labour recruited for the sole purpose of helping in the harvest are given 10 or 15 per cent. of the yield.

A similar, but less strict and less solid system is followed in the herding of livestock. The more sedentary Bedouins usually trust their animals to the care of a *kallâf*, or herder, who tends them and in return he is entitled to a certain part of the animals and their offspring. The share given to the herder varies from case to case, but he is invariably entitled to all the dung and all the milk if the animals are grazing far away from the settlement where their owner lives. He is not considered responsible for the death of the animals.

B. The same system of partnership prevails in Syria :

- a) Peasants are given up to 40 per cent. of the yield if the owner of the land provides the seeds and the necessary tools besides the land and water. The tenant retains up to 80 per cent. of the crop if he uses his own seeds and cattle and tools.

- b) In herding flocks, the professional herder is given 10 per cent. of the total number of the animals entrusted to his care. The offspring are regarded as the exclusive property of the original owner. The wool and milk are also given to him unless the grazing grounds are too far from the dwelling place of the owner, and in this case the herder is entitled to consume the milk. The owner also provides the herder with the necessary clothes.

IV. TRIBAL SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The System of Chiefs

A. It has already been said that clans in the Western Desert are not localised in the sense that the lineages of the same clan may be found scattered all over the desert. Thus the correlation between the territorial distribution and the clan segmentation is not so rigid as it is, for example, in the case of the Syrian clans where each clan has a certain area of land to move within its borders. Each clan has a certain dominant lineage in which the political office has traditionally been vested. Thus in any one locality whose inhabitants belong to a number of clans, one usually finds an equal number of chiefs who represent these clans and who belong to the respective dominant lineages. The inhabitants of that locality follow, from the political point of view, their respective chiefs. The word *omda* which is originally used for the village headman in the Nile Valley is also used here invariably to refer to all those Bedouin chiefs. Chieftainship is hereditary in the same lineage (which we call the dominant lineage); i.e. the political office does not shift to other lineages except for very exceptional reasons. But this does not entail that it is necessarily vested in the same line or in the same family; it may actually shift between the families of the dominant clan but without any challenge from the other lineages of the clan. In other words, the succession to mayoralty does not follow a certain rigid principle as long as the office is kept in the lineage. There is a general tendency to give the office to the eldest son of the previous mayor, but this is not an absolute rule. The most suitable person in that particular branch of the dominant lineage living in each particular village or locality is likely to be chosen for the office. The elders of the different homesteads in that branch choose the person whom they think suitable to be local chief, and their decision should be accepted by all members of the clan who live in that locality. Competition for political power and authority is likely to involve the

lineages of the same clan in long and bitter strife. But owing to the sense of kinship solidarity the Bedouins do their best to avoid being involved in such internal strife and conflict. The desire to keep the social equilibrium and to evade potential hostilities within the clan is a guarantee against such challenge and competition. On the other hand, the political office is held for life unless its occupant demits it or is removed by the general decision of the lineage or by the Administration for one reason or another. The important thing that we should notice here is that whereas chieftainship in the Nile Valley is held on a purely territorial basis, i.e. on the basis of the village, it is held in the Western Desert on a kinship basis.

Local chiefs are responsible for keeping peace and harmony and settling the disputes that may rise among the members of their respective clans who are living in the respective localities. But when a dispute flares up between members of two different clans, a different procedure is followed. We shall come back to this point later when we speak about the Bedouin customary law. All that we want to say here is that local chiefs obtain their power and authority from the clan chief, who is regarded as the supreme chief of the whole clan with all its segments and lineages and who, also, belongs to the dominant lineage in the clan. He is the most authoritarian of all chiefs. His word is law, he is usually well informed in the customary law and in the traditional ways and patterns of behaviour that should prevail within the clan. He must also have wide knowledge of the history of the clan, the previous ancestors and their wars and victories and achievements, of the economic interests and possessions of the clan as a whole and of each segment independently, etc. He is thus the last reference in the questions of law and of action as well. He looks into disputes which occur between the different segments or lineages of the clan especially when these are living in different localities or when a dispute is too grave to be left to the secondary chiefs or mayors. He is also the last reference in questions of wars, raids and peace with other clans. His orders are executive. Therefore, the questions of age, wisdom, knowledge, personality wealth, etc. are taken into consideration when choosing the supreme chief of the clan.

Above the supreme chief of the clan there is no other traditional chief in the Western Desert. Complicated cases which cannot be solved by him are referred to the Administration, but this very seldom happens. In so far as the system of traditional chiefs is concerned, the clan can be regarded as the largest autonomous political unit. All disputes within the clan are regarded as private and domestic affairs.

B. The system of chieftainship in Syria follows the same organisation, with the sole exception that all the clans which constitute one tribe recognise the headmanship of one "tribal chief". In each tribe there is one dominant or chiefly clan in which this office is vested. This is more apparent in the nomadic tribes than it is in the semi-nomadic groups. The best example to illustrate this tribal organisation is the case of the Rowalla clans who recognise the supremacy of the Sh'alan clan. The Present tribal chief of this cluster is the famous Sheikh Fawwaz Sha'alan. This organisation may be due to the fact that the nomadic clans of Syria have been, until very recently, a warlike people who have been involved in continuous raids and wars with each other. Their military life has obliged them to organise themselves under one chief and to accept his authority. The dominant clan, in this case, does not only outnumber the other clans, but it must surpass them in matters of wealth, nobility and honourable traditions. The Awlad Sha'alan have certain kinship relationships with the Royal Family in Saudi Arabia.

Ritual Chiefs

A. Besides the political authority practised by the local chiefs and by the chief of the clan, there exists another category of chiefs who hold a different and perhaps a more effective kind of power, i.e. the religious power. The role of these chiefs, however, is not confined to the performance of the religious rites, for they also play a very important role in settling disputes and, consequently, in keeping the social equilibrium. The most important of these functionaries in the Western Desert are the Imam and the Maazoon. The primary function of the Imam is to lead prayers, especially the Friday prayers, while the function of the Maazoon is nearer to that of a marriage registrar. Both functionaries are expected to be well-read in the Koran, in the traditions of the Prophet and in Islamic literature in general. Being mainly men of religion, they are looked at with confidence and are regarded as wise,

honest and disinterested persons, to whom the disputants can carry their disputes. In a few cases, the political chief may hold the religious office as well. But the general rule is that the latter office is held by a different person who may even belong to another lineage. Religious chiefs are thought, on the whole, to be better arbitrators than the political chiefs.

Although the religious or the ritual office is not hereditary, certain families and clans in the Western Desert are famous for providing a large number of these men of religion. The Morabitoun clans on the whole, and more particularly the Habbooni lineage (who like to consider themselves as a branch of Awlad Ali) are considered a religious group in this sense. This enhances their prestige among the Awlad Ali, although they are only clients to them as it has been said. However, in looking into disputes, the ritual chiefs cannot in fact give any final or executive judgment as do the political chiefs; they can only give advice to the disputants who usually accept them willingly.

B. As far as I know, there is no one single clan or one specific lineage in the Syrian Desert which provides ritual chiefs in the manner found in the Western Desert of Egypt. The two religious functionaries, i.e. the Imam and the Maazoon, are found in the Syrian clans and have the same functions and enjoy the same authority. The Maazoon may be sometimes called the Qadi, i.e. judge.

The Relations Between the Native Chiefs and the Administration

The position of chiefs is not an easy one; it involves contradictory situations and conflicting attitudes which emerge mainly from the duality of affiliation implied by the nature of chieftainship now. A chief has to act as a member of his community and at the same time as a representative of the Administration. He has thus to reconcile the demands of the two sides. However, the native chiefs do their best to solve all the problems which rise in their respective communities without reference to the administrative authorities who, on their part, and especially in the Western Desert, try to evade interference except when the chiefs fail to reach a solution or when the situation proves to be explosive.

In any case, the political authority of the native chiefs is now deteriorating and their prestige is suffering badly. This is, perhaps,

more clear in the Western Desert than it is among the Syrian Bedouins and the nomadic clans in particular. The factors which have led to such a situation can be summed up as follows;

- a) The growing desire of the disputants to settle their disputes privately or through the good offices of the ritual chiefs. This tendency is clearer in the smaller villages and localities than in the larger towns (Mersa Matrouh, for example).
- b) The prejudice felt against the chiefs because of their obvious connections with the Administration. This prejudice is also more apparent among the more settled groupings in both the Western and Syrian Deserts.
- c) The restrictions imposed by the Administration on the chiefs with regards to their exercising coercion have rendered the whole system of chieftainship, especially in the sedentary communities, almost non-effective.
- d) The propagation of modern education in the Western Desert and migration to the Nile Valley for work have made the younger generation less willing to submit to the authority of the chiefs.

For all these reasons, the disputants tend to overlook the native political chiefs and to bring their causes in front of the ritual chiefs. In fact, the political chiefs are generally regarded as the representatives and agents of the Administration. They are expected to execute the orders and regulations issued by the local administrators. In the Western Desert, chiefs cannot exercise the obligations and duties of their office except after their appointment is ratified by the Administration, or more precisely, by the Frontiers Department. The appointment of the chiefs of the nomadic clans in Syria had, in the past, to be ratified by the French Higher Commissioner, and still should be ratified now by the Ministre of Interior who holds the right to dismiss any of them on the grounds of abusing his power or challenging the Administration or at the request of his own clansmen. But on the whole, the chiefs of the nomadic groups still retain much of their traditional authority and power over the members of their clans and lineages. The power of the chiefs is waning in the sedentary communities and more particularly in the Western Desert of Egypt. Taking all this into consideration, we can sum up the functions of the political chiefs, and more particularly those of the nomadic clans, in the following points :

- a) The right to plan for the movements and migrations according to the season and to the availability of pasture;
- b) The right to settle disputes which arise among members of their respective clans or clan segments. Among the nomadic tribes the word of the chief is law;
- c) The right to declare war and to conclude peace with other clans;
- d) Collecting taxes on behalf of the Government from his clansmen. A chief usually collects more money than the sum imposed by the Government; this surplus of money is kept by him to be spent in due time on matters of hospitality and other social obligations.

Sometimes, the Government may appoint as chief a different person from that on whom the clan have agreed. In such cases the clan would have two chiefs instead of one; i.e. the traditional chief and the official chief who is generally met with much resistance from the people. His orders are usually defied unless approved at first by the traditional chief. Such a situation has arisen in a few cases in Syria, but never in the Western Desert, at least as far I know. An example of this is what happened recently among the Shammar El-Khrossa clans when they chose their present chief, Sheikh Maizer El-'Abd El-Mohsen, but the Government appointed Sheikh Mesh'al Pacha al-Fares as chief. Sheikh Mesh'al was met with much reluctance from the people and at one time it seemed that the clan was on the brink of internal conflict and bloody feuds. The Government had finally to accept the view of the clan and Sheikh Mesh'al was relieved from his office.

The Role of Chiefs in Economic Change

It is difficult to decide to what extent the political chiefs are willing to help in the execution of economic development schemes. Such development would entail the raising of the standard of living for the ordinary man and most probably to his economic independence. This may encourage the ordinary clansman to defy the authority of native chiefs. Therefore, projects of economic development are generally resisted by the native chiefs and more particularly by the chiefs of the nomadic clans, especially in Syria, who actually live and behave as feudal lords. For in spite of the fact that the land is owned by the State and that every clansman has the right to exploit it for his own benefit, the chiefs consider themselves the "sole" owners of the land and regard

the ordinary clansmen as mere serfs who can only work on the land for their food and clothes, besides a certain proportion of the crop. This is represented more strongly in the Syrian desert than in the Western Desert. Most of the Syrian chiefs play the role of the absentee landlords. They live a luxurious life in the large cities, leaving the duties of herding and cultivating the land to the "peasants". Thus, the chiefs of the Rowalla live in their palaces in Damascus, while the chiefs of the Jeboor live at Qamashli, etc. Under these circumstances, we should not expect them to encourage economic development which may deprive them from their actual privileges.

The feudal system, in the sense of the type of tribal organisation and system of chieftainship found in Syria, does not exist in the Western Desert. Clans are less numerous and less rich. They have already become more settled; pure nomadism has no place here except perhaps in the far south of the desert. The absence of large cities, apart from Alexandria, enforces the chiefs to be tied down to their native homeland. Therefore, the native chiefs in the Western Desert do not display much dismay about development programmes. Some of them are, indeed, very keen on such schemes for they will actually lose nothing because they have nothing to lose. The better-off chiefs usually live in the eastern parts of the desert where they have their own large gardens of fruits, and figs in particular. They have abandoned the life of herding animals and have lost the values of pastoral life; their power has been much curtailed. Their contacts with Alexandria and with the more sophisticated circles have helped towards changing their outlook. Some of them encourage or even invite development and may suggest certain practical projects which may prove to be useful to the whole area.

However, all the chiefs play in fact an important role in economic change through the new methods which they apply in exploiting their lands and which ordinary people may like to imitate. Furthermore, they can, by their personal prestige, convince their own people to accept new development projects, besides giving much good advice to the development boards concerning these projects. Much of the resistance and dismay which they show with regards to schemes for economic change is due to the fact that they are usually overlooked by the concerned authorities in this respect. An effective means for introducing new ways of living in the Western Desert may be through encouraging the more progressive chiefs to adopt these ways. Then the ordinary people will most likely follow their lead without much hesitation.

Religious chiefs also can contribute heavily to the advent of new economic ways and techniques. The people have much confidence in them and are quite ready to accept their advice and views, not only on questions of religion, but also on ordinary problems of everyday life. In fact the Imams have played in the very recent past a leading role in introducing the cultivation of olive trees and almond trees in the Western Desert when the people showed much reluctance and resistance to the efforts made by the Government to introduce them. Through their repeated speeches and advices, the Imams could enlighten the people about the benefits they were likely to get from that cultivation. Now, the cultivation of olives is thriving in some parts of the desert, partly due to their efforts.

V. THE PROBLEMS OF LAND

A. It has already been said that the land in the Western Desert is generally regarded, at least by the Government, as the exclusive property of the State with the right of usufruct granted to the people. This does not mean that the land is exploited jointly by all members of one community, or that a man can cultivate any part of the land that he may like to; for actually there is a certain correlation between the right of usufruct and the distribution of the clans on the one hand, and the inner segmentation of the clan on the other. Land is not an object of ownership in itself, and wealth is not spoken of in terms of land. In spite of the wide dispersal of its members, each clan and consequently each clan-segment is attached to a certain area and has always been associated with it for generations. Thus, despite the distinction between ownership and usufruct, the two are practically welded together, and although the people know that they do not own the land, they still defend the boundaries of the area with which their lineage has always been associated. The clan whose name is associated with a certain area not only has the right of usufruct to that particular area, but this right is also vested in it to the exclusion of the other clans. Within this total area, each clan-segment has the right to a portion of land to the exclusion of all the other segments, at least from the theoretical point of view. Thus, the right of usufruct amounts almost to be a form of ownership of the land. Nevertheless, an individual member of the clan cannot proclaim a certain patch within that total area as the subject of his exclusive exploitation. He usually cultivates different patches within that total area as the need may arise; but he cannot cultivate a patch in an area associated with another clan except under certain conditions to which

we shall refer in due course. The same principles apply to the grazing grounds, but with less rigidity.

This system of using the lands of the Western Desert is thought to go back to Mohammed Ali who divided the land between the different Bedouin clans, then inhabiting the desert. The lands conceded in this way to each clan was partitioned in turn among the lineages and then among the families of the clan. Not all the lineages were given equal areas of land, and the basis of this partition is not known.

The boundaries of the arable land associated with each kin-group is defined by tradition so that a man knows not only the boundaries of the land of his own kin-group, but also those of the lands associated with other groups as well. Disputes may arise about the boundaries of the neighbouring fields, but these are usually settled quickly either by going back to the old documents which show the traditional distribution of these lands among the clans, or by referring to the leaders of both groups or other older men who are known generally by the word *'Awaraf* or "those who know", or else by taking the oath. In this latter case, the oath should be made or uttered by 20 persons on each side. Since the people think that perjury entails grave results and that a perjurer will certainly suffer severe agony, illness and perhaps blindness, the people do not swear the oath unless they are positively sure of their claims.

Taxes are paid to the Government for using the land. Taxes are estimated on the crops and so they differ from one year to another according to the yield. A four-member committee on which both the Government and the people are represented visit the fields while the the grain is still standing on the stalks and estimate the amount of the expected crop. One-tenth of the yield is paid as tax.

B. The same principles concerning land tenure, or rather the usufruct of the arable lands, prevail in Syria. The correspondence between certain clans or tribes and specific areas of land is more clear here than it is in the Western Desert, and this may be due to the vast stretches of land which separate the different clans one from the other. In 1916, however, individual members of bedouin clans were allowed to claim for the ownership of any specific areas of land which they had reclaimed, under the condition that they could prove they were culti-

valuing it for ten successive years without interruption. The clans do not fail to refer to that law of 1916 whenever the need arises to support their claim of possessing the land on which they live or which they are exploiting in the form of fields or grazing ground. On the other hand, the land which is definitely regarded as owned by the State could be easily bought by the individuals at nominal prices, which could be paid on long terms. These measures have been taken to encourage private ownership of land and, consequently, to encourage the Bedouins to sedentary life which depends on agriculture. These efforts did not meet much success at first, but soon after 1950 when the growing of cotton was introduced for the first time in the Gezira, the clans became very anxious to prove their ownership of extensive areas of fertile lands in that region. It may be significant to say that the two main clans inhabiting the area of Gezira and Euphrates, i.e. the clans of Shammar and Jeboor, both of which are considered nomadic clans, claim the ownership of not less than 2 million donems each.

Grazing grounds are similarly distributed among the clans according to traditional and well-established rules, that each clan actually gets enough pasture for its animals. Therefore, pasture lands are not subject to conflict or dispute on the side of the different clans. Even in the Gezira region where vast areas of land have been cultivated, there are still enough grazing grounds for the rearing of large numbers of animals owned by the nomadic clans of Shammar and Jeboor, at least during the wet season. Conflict on pasture land may, however, flare up between two clans in really bad years.

VI. SCHEMES FOR SETTLING NAMADS

Rightly or wrongly, nomadism and semi-nomadism are generally regarded, both in Egypt and in Syria, as an impediment to development and that they represent a deteriorated phase which complicates no more with the actualities of modern life. Therefore, the general trend now in both Egypt and Syria is to abolish it completely. The following reasons are given for adopting that view :

- a) Nomadism and semi-nomadism are wasteful and destructive. Vast stretches of land which can be reclaimed at little cost and cultivated intensively are simply left for grazing without any serious attempt to make better use of them.

- b) Nomads and semi-nomads suffer much from the harsh conditions of life prevailing in the deserts, and are frequently exposed to famine as a result of the failure of rain. It has already been said that such conditions usually compel the people to migration and put certain strains on the economy of the Delta in Egypt.
- c) The continual movements of the herdsmen, especially the camel herdsmen, make it difficult for the Government to put the clans under control. The nomadic groups are actually a real source of unrest and of perpetual menace in the desert. They organise raids against hostile clans; they smuggle goods across the Egyptian-Libyan frontiers on the one hand and across the Syrian-Iraqi frontiers on the other and they give refuge and protection to criminals and help them to cross the borders and escape punishment.
- d) The abolishing of nomadism may entail the amalgamation of the pastoral communities on the one hand and the rural and urban communities on the other into one solid and integral whole, thus removing the present rift which separates the two sides from one another.

Therefore much attention has been paid in the last few years, both in Egypt and in Syria, to the question of settling the nomads. A number of plans and schemes have been drawn to this effect, i.e. to create new sedentary agricultural communities instead of the actual nomadic and semi-nomadic groups of the desert. All these contemplated projects intend to increase the cultivated area, to improve the pastures by introducing new pasture-plants of higher nutritive value where agriculture cannot thrive, to tap the unused resources, to polish the existing primitive crafts and to establish new industries. The question of water is considered the corner-stone in all these projects especially the projects which are executed in the Western Desert. In the following sections, we shall give a brief account of the main projects suggested by the concerned authorities in both Egypt and Syria.

A. IN EGYPT

I. *The Wadi-el-Natrun Project.*

Wadi-el-Natrun is an extended depression which lies some 22 metres below sea level and generally extends from the north-west to the south-east. The length of the depression is about 60 kilometres

while its average width is about 10 kilometres; its southern end is 80 kilometres far from Cairo, and its northern end is about 85 kilometres far from Alexandria. A Number of shallow lakes cover about the half of the total area of the depression. Some of these lakes become completely dry during the summer. The *Wadi* is known as a rich source of salt and natroon (carbonate of sodium). Also a certain reed called *halfa* grows wildly there and is used by the inhabitants in making rough primitive mats for their own use. Some of the mat production, however, finds limited markets in certain parts of the Delta. The Depression has always been regarded as a grazing ground for sheep and goats, that only 25 *feddans* were under the plough in 1952.

According to the project, the extraction of salt and natroon, which has been the monopoly of the Alexandria Salt and Soda Company until June 1952, was put under governmental supervision. Because of the high cost of the extraction, work is carried out for only a short season each year and then workers are diverted to agriculture and to work on the reclaimed lands. To exploit the wasted and neglected arable lands in the Depression, subterranean water was tapped in a number of places. By the end of 1954, some 400 *feddans* were brought under the plough; by the end of 1955 about 800 *feddans* were under cultivation; and by the end of 1957 more than 1,000 *feddans* were actually cultivated by the inhabitants of the area. Serious efforts were made to introduce the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. On the other hand, much attention was paid to the question of improving the production of animals through different methods of breeding, and encouraging the inhabitants to change over to the improved breeds which excel the local animals. This was met at first with much reluctance and resistance, but there are signs that the people are beginning to estimate the benefits of owning the improved breeds. Moreover, a factory for manufacturing carpets and rugs was established by the Government. It gets a considerable proportion of the raw wool for the industry from local resources, whereas its relatively small production finds ready market in the larger cities in the Delta.

The point of particular interest here is that all the unskilled labour employed in both the carpet industry and in the extraction of salt and natroon are recruited from the local inhabitants. These workers have become so accustomed to settled life that when the season of extraction is over and work is temporarily suspended, they do not go back to herding the animals, but they rather prefer to get themselves engaged

in agriculture, either as paid labour on the governmental research farm where fruits and vegetables are grown, or as private cultivators of small patches of barley for their private consumption. Paid jobs in the factory or in the extraction industry and on the farm are very tempting and inviting to the young men. It is understood that the reclaimed lands will be sold in due time to the people, and it is also hoped that the development of these farms, which will be dedicated, according to the project, to the growing of fruits and vegetables, will lead to the introduction of the canned food industry. Thus the ultimate end of the project is to enhance sedentary life by introducing new industries which depend mainly on the agricultural products of the area. The distribution of the arable lands will serve as a supplementary means to attain that end.

II. *The Qattara Depression Project*

This project, which is still under consideration, was not originally planned for the sole purpose of enforcing sedentary life upon the inhabitants of the area, although it will achieve this result in the end. The project was primarily planned with the definite aim of the industrialisation of the zone, besides enlarging the area of the cultivated land there. From what is already known about it, it seems that the starting point in it will be the digging of a long canal to connect the Mediterranean at the village of El-'Alamain and the Depression which lies some 10 kilometres to the south of the coast. The Depression is situated in the middle of the distance between Alexandria and Mersa Matrouh, covering a total area of about 200,000 square kilometres. The lowest point in the Depression lies some 134 metres below sea level. The digging of the canal will be carried out with the intention of transforming a part of the Depression into a large lake covering an area of about 14,000 square kilometres. It is expected that the sea water will rush towards the Depression at such a force of 600 cubic feet per second. The force of the rushing water can then be used in turning factories in the area, and in generating electric power necessary for the industries which will be established there. It will certainly take a very long time for the lake to be filled up with water. Experts estimate, for example, that it will take some 40 years before the water reaches 70 metres below sea-level, and about 150 years before it reaches the 50 metres height below sea-level. Some 1,300 years should pass before the Depression itself is completely filled up with salt deposits as a result of evaporation.

The creation of this vast artificial lake will temper the heat of the area and, owing to the perpetual evaporation from the lake, it is hoped that large amounts of rain will fall every year, thus making possible the cultivation of vast stretches of land. Lands will also be sold to the people at nominal prices so as to encourage them to settle down and to change to agriculture. As in the case of the Wadi-El-Natron project, all the unskilled labour needed for these industries will be recruited from among the local inhabitants.

III. *The Ras-el-Hikma Project*

This project endeavours to deal with the problem of sedentarisation from a different angle. Unlike the Wadi-el-Natron and the Quattara Depression projects which consider industrialisation and increasing the cultivated area effective measures for settling down, the Ras-El-Hikma project tries, on the contrary, to achieve that end through improving the grazing potentialities of the Western Desert in general and the Fuka-Ras-Hikma area in particular; and also through organising the use of pasture. It has been noted that the excessive misuse of the pasture-plants and the uncontrolled grazing in the semi-desert area have caused aridity and have, consequently, led to nomadic life in search for grass. Therefore, if pasture-grasses could be developed and grazing could be organised, it would then be easy to render the herders to a form of sedentary life in which they can practise animal husbandry in certain specific areas all the year round, without any need for nomadism or for seasonal movements. It is thought that the execution of this project will lead to the increase in animal production as well as to the interest in intensive agriculture; a feature which hardly exists among the nomads and the semi-nomads. This project, however, like all the other projects contemplated for the Western Desert, takes into consideration the fact that the whole area extending along the coast was very fertile and densely populated in the past. Since there is no evidence of any major changes affecting the climatic conditions or the amount of rainfall, then it is assumed that the apparent aridity of the soil and the nomadic way of life prevailing in the desert were due merely to negligence on the part of the people.

The area of Fuka and Ras-el-Hikma has been chosen for the execution of the project for the following reasons :

a) It is midway between Alexandria and the village of Sallum on the Egyptian-Libyan borders.

- b) It is easy to reach the area by different means of transport, for it is located between the coast and the railway line, and is crossed through by the desert route running from Alexandria to Sallum and then to Tripoli.
- c) There is enough land in the area for the realisation of the first stage in the project. The project envisages to grow pasture grasses in an area of about 25,000 *feddans* in that region alone.
- d) The availability of fresh potable water from the water pipe-line going to Mersa Matrouh as well as from a large number of wells.
- e) The region represents the whole variation of soil and environmental conditions prevailing in the Western Desert, and more particularly along the coast.

The small village of Ras-el-Hikma has been chosen as a suitable place for the pilot project. A research station was established there and the project itself was put under the sponsorship of the Desert Institute of Cairo. An area of about 7,500 *feddans* was selected and fenced round for the pilot project. Long researches have been conducted to obtain adapted species of palatable pasture grass which can stand the drought and the summer heat, and other local conditions. Considerable areas have been reseeded with a large variety of grasses and put under close observation to examine the rate of their growth, their resistance to drought and heat, their ability to adaptation to the local environment, as well as to investigate how palatable they are especially to sheep. Attention was given to the question of sand dunes fixation, and thousands of drought-resistant trees were planted to that effect. Great efforts were made to make better use of the available water resources. A large number of the old neglected wells and cisterns were cleaned out and put into function again. New wells were sunk and provided with wind pumps. Selected breeds of animals have been imported and put under examination to study grazing management on the one hand, and to what extent these breeds could be used in improving the local breed on the other. Besides, some less efforts were made to introduce the cultivation of fruits and vegetables in the area. Small quantities of peas, beans, tomatoes and other vegetables are grown, and the local inhabitants are encouraged to get into the habit of using them in their daily meals.

But to encourage sedentarisation and to tempt the Bedouins to settle down and to make best use of these improved conditions, the people need to be provided as well with adequate habitation which suits this new life. Therefore, a section of the land devoted to the pilot project was divided into smaller plots in each of which was built a "model" house to meet all the requirements of the Bedouin in the new life. Each house has its own small garden where vegetables and fruits can be grown for private consumption, and its own animal byre. Wells, provided with wind-pumps, were also constructed to provide the settlers with water for daily use and for the irrigation of their gardens.

The pilot project has achieved, from the technical point of view, excellent results, and there is every reason that the original project itself will realise similar results if it is handled with the same care and determination. The social entailments, however, are not yet clear. But it can be generally said that the inhabitants of the area have not yet shown encouraging signs of interest in the project, in spite of the great efforts made by the staff of the research station to stimulate this interest.

IV. Other Projects

Governmental circles are also considering some other minor projects for a better exploitation of the available water resources, for increasing the cultivated area and establishing new industries which depend on the local agricultural products, and consequently, for the sedentarisation of the nomadic groups. The most important of these projects are those concerning the drilling of artesian wells and the construction of water cisterns to conserve water. A number of cisterns are now under construction in different parts of the desert. The most important cisterns are those to be built at Wadi-el-Kharrouba near Mersa Matrouh. A dam was constructed in 1955 at 'Ageeba, also in the Matrouh area, to keep the rain water rushing down from Wadi-el-Ramleh from being lost in the sands or in the sea. Also, some 120 artesian wells have been sunk in the last few years; more wells are still under construction. All these wells are drilled along the coastal zone and their yield of water will be used in the irrigation of the olive groves which will be grown soon. Most of the projects concerned with water are carried out by the Desert Irrigation Department¹.

Serious efforts are also made to extend the area cultivated with barley in the coastal zone and more particularly in the El-Dah'aa zone, and to encourage the more settled inhabitants to increase their

1. The statements made here refer to the situation as it was in 1958:

production of figs, olives, water-melon, etc. A research centre has been established at Burg-el-Arab to carry out experiments concerned with the improvement of the production of fruits and vegetables. About 400 *feddans* are dedicated for that purpose.

B. IN SYRIA

It has already been said that the physical and environmental conditions in the Syrian Desert are much more favourable than those prevailing in the Western Desert. The Syrian Desert enjoys a larger amount of rainfall, besides the actual existence of a number of rivers and streams. There are also vast stretches of cultivatable lands which either lie fallow because of the shortage in labour, or are exploited by a small group of "big farmers" who secure high profits for themselves. Therefore, all projects of sedentarisation of the nomads deal at the same time with the problems of land-ownership, land-reform and land-redistribution. The principle of conceding the ownership of State lands to the people was explicitly stated in the 1950 Constitution (Article 22). But this was not brought into effect except much later when the Ministry of Agriculture tried, in November 1952 and again in January 1953, to sell away a part of the State lands to private individuals at very low prices. The land was divided into plots of 50 hectares or 10 hectares each according to whether it depends on rain or is irrigated directly from the river. This has enabled certain nomadic groups to own vast stretches of land. Perhaps the best example to illustrate this is the distribution of some 100,000 hectares (1,000,000 donems) of the Gezira lands among the Shammar, the Jeboor and the Sharabiteen clans, in what is generally known as the *Southern Ridd Project*. The plots were sold to the "poor" nomads who wanted to settle down and live in the villages which were built for that sole purpose; i.e. to be the dwelling places for the new sedentary owners. The following conditions were taken into consideration in selecting the new owners :

- a) original inhabitants of the area, particularly married persons, were preferred to others;
- b) really poor persons, i.e. those who did not hold any land either by ownership or tenancy, but who, nevertheless, owned means of exploiting the land were given priority;

- c) new owners should themselves till the land for three successive years and should not dispose of it except after 15 years. Taxes paid by the new owners should not exceed one - tenth of the crop at harvest time.

The plans as well as the execution of the project were carried out by Col. Mostafa Hamdoon, the then Clan Officer at Hassaka.

A similar project is now under consideration which contemplates the distribution of some 50,000 hectares, apparently on similar terms, among the clans in the Roje area to encourage sedentarisation. Besides, there are some other projects of sedentarisation (all of which are still under consideration) such as the project of Jebel Sam'ann to the north-west of Aleppo which will introduce the growing of vines in vast areas of land; the Ghab project which envisages the construction of two dams to harness the River Asi at Halfaya and Roston and to conserve the water necessary for the irrigation of some 65,000 hectares in the Ghab area and the 'Asharna plains; and the Jebel-el-Drooz project which also envisages the extensive planting of vines. All these projects contemplate the possibility of settling down, in the end, several thousands of the nomads and semi-nomads who live in the respective areas.

In point of fact, the Syrian authorities are contemplating the realisation of a number of projects to enlarge the cultivated area, and which will certainly affect the lives of the nomadic and the semi-nomadic groups there. Details of these projects fall beyond the scope of this survey, for they are primarily concerned with problems of irrigation. An account of these projects could be found, however, in the *Economic Development of Syria : A Report of a Mission organised by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*. (John Hopkins Press, 1955).

General Remarks

The following points emerge from the above account of the projects of sedentarisation in both the Western Desert and the Syrian Desert.

- a) Most of the projects tend to achieve sedentarisation at the expense of animal husbandry or at least, they do not give this vital question the due care and consideration. Perhaps the only exception

is the Ras-el-Hikma project which was originally planned to realise pasture improvement in the Western Desert and to arrange for a better management of the grazing resources. This policy may prove, in the end, to be harmful to the animal production and may entail bad effects on the animal wealth, and aggravate the meat situation. These bad effects will be more obvious in Egypt where the animal wealth is comparatively meagre that thousands of heads of animals are imported every year from Cyrenaica, the Sudan and Syria itself. The giving of too much consideration to agriculture or to agricultural industries may create a similar situation in Syria also and may have drastic effects on Syria's external trade. Livestock constitutes a fairly high proportion of Syria's exportation (6.9 per cent., 6.5 per cent., and 6.1 per cent. of the total exportation in the years 1951, 1952 and 1953 respectively. This does not include exports of wool, leather or animal skin.)

- b) All the projects take into consideration the fact that it is impossible to achieve sedentarisation without granting the people the right to own the lands which they cultivate. The ownership of the land will certainly create a new sense of security which the people lack under the present conditions. It will also create strong ties between man and the land, thus inciting the people to give due care to their fields and cultivation. The question of conceding ownership of land to the inhabitants of the desert is still under consideration.
- c) Reaction to the proposed sedentarisation projects varies widely from mere indifference to hostile resentment, according to whether the inhabitants will get any benefits for themselves or will suffer certain losses as a result of the execution of these projects. Most of the ordinary people, however, react favourably and do welcome any sedentarisation scheme which will entitle them to own the land and to provide the fields with the necessary water. This favourable attitude is more clear among the semi-sedentary groups who live nearer to the cities and towns and the larger trade centres and who, thus, realise the privileges of sedentary life. The same attitude is adopted by the groups who have been accustomed to wage

labour and who have enjoyed all the facilities which money can afford to provide. On the other hand, the more nomadic clans, and more particularly the tribal chiefs and the headmen of the nomadic tribal sections, openly express deep resentment and indignation towards most of the projects, and display doubts about the possibility of executing them to the desired ends, and the benefits which will be obtained from them. This is more obvious among the nomads who live near the Egyptian-Libyan borders and who, thus, having grazing interests in both Egypt and Cyrenaica. It is also clear among the nomadic clans who inhabit the southern parts (e.g. the Rowalla clans) and the eastern parts (e.g. the Shammar and the Jeboor clans) of the Syrian desert and who have grazing interests in Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the case of the Rowalla, and in Iraq in the case of the Shammar and the Jeboor. For all these frontiers'clans, sedentarisation means the abdication of these interests which they have outside their home-country.

- d) Sedentarisation projects in Syria contemplate the possibility of transposing certain clans who are living under less favourable conditions, such as the Rowalla, to the Gezira region. But it seems that such a measure, if taken, will be met with much resistance from both the Rowalla who are not ready to abandon their dwelling area, and the local clans, i.e. the Shammar and the Jeboor clans who are not willing to allow *their* land to fall into the hands of intruders. They regard the land as if it were their own property to the exclusion of all the other clans. All the chiefs of the Rowalla and the Shammar clans with whom I discussed that point invariably admitted that any attempt to enforce such movements will lead to ardent social strife, and perhaps to open war between the concerned tribes.
- e) Apart from the social obstacles, sedentarisation schemes are liable to be encountered by some impeding physical obstacles especially the scarcity of the water which is much needed for the irrigation of the reclaimed lands. As it has already been noted, the problem of water is a very crucial one. Rain is quite unreliable and erratic especially in the Western Desert and in the southern and eastern

parts of the Syrian Desert. The subterranean water is equally unreliable, for the flow may drop suddenly owing to the exhaustion of the local resources of water which feed the wells. Another serious difficulty which should be tackled with is the non-existence of modern means of transport in both the Western and the Syrian Deserts. It is terribly difficult to travel in the Western Desert to the south of the narrow coastal zone. It is almost impossible to find adequate means of transport in the remoter parts and hamlets which lie far from the very few roads in the Syrian Desert. The development of agricultural or industrial or trade centres will be difficult to achieve unless the problem of transportation is solved at first in both deserts.

The Social Effects of Sedentarisation Schemes

The execution of these projects will not pass without leaving their deep traces which will affect not only the Bedouin communities, but also the whole society at large. The creation of new industrial and trade centres, the drift to industry and to agriculture and to paid jobs in general, the consequent increase in cash money in the hands of the dwellers of both deserts as a result of this drift, the redistribution of land and the consequent emergence of individual or private ownership, the increasing contacts with larger cities and towns and the propagation of education will certainly entail drastic changes in the traditional structure of the Bedouin community. In other words, the projects which are planned originally to reach certain changes in the economic life of the Bedouin community will lead, in one way or another, to deep changes in other spheres of the social life, and more specifically in the kinship and the political systems. Such changes have already taken place in certain parts in the Western Desert of Egypt, such as El-'Amriya and Mersa Matrouh, where the people have become more settled and are leading a more or less sedentary life. The growing sense of individuality and of economic independence among the younger generation is the main factor responsible for these changes in the social structure, as well as in the traditional patterns of social relationships. Being economically independent from his kin-group, the young man who is engaged in a paid job will have the chance to relieve himself of the interference of his elders, which may lead in the end to the breaking down of the total structure.

The traditional kinship system, round which revolves all the social life in the desert, will be affected more deeply than the rest of the social institutions, if we leave apart the economic life. The core of this system is the cooperation of a large number of agnatic kin who constitute one corporate economic unit in which the personality as well as the rights of the individual are completely submerged by group interests. The economic independence of the individuals and the consequent separatory trends will lead to the weakness in kinship and lineage ties and to the shrinkage of the kin-group which acts as a unit and to the reduction of its size. The larger lineage-segments will thus disappear and will give way to the emergence of the ordinary elementary family which prevails in the larger cities and in the urban communities in general. In fact, this type of family is beginning to dominate the scene in the larger villages of the two deserts such as Mersa Matrouh in the Western Desert and Raqqa and Deir- el-Zor in the Syrian Desert. All these villages offer opportunities of getting engaged in trade or paid jobs.

The traditional political system will also suffer badly as a result of the execution of the sedentarisation projects and the growing of the sense of individuality and personal independence. It seems that the fear of the headman and tribal chiefs are fully justified in this respect. Apart from being imposed under the direct rule of the local administrative authorities after sedentarisation, the prestige and power of the chiefs will be drastically depreciated by the antipathy of the people themselves to their intervention in their affairs. This antipathy can actually be noted among the more sedentary groups who live in the rural centres in both deserts. The general tendency among these groups is to overlook, sometimes to ignore, the authority of the traditional chiefs. Thus, it should be expected that the coercive and almost absolute powers enjoyed by the tribal chiefs of the more nomadic tribes and clans, especially those inhabiting the Syrian desert, will be greatly demeaned by sedentarisation. Yet the curb imposed upon the authority of the chiefs and their status as eminent political figures and the gradual acceptance of the administrative authority will provide, on the other hand, and as it has already been said, an effective means for social control in the two deserts. Under the present tribal organisation, chiefs are liable to misuse their authority and to be a real source of unrest and threatening menace to peace. The abolishing of nomadism will put an end to the illegal activities of the tribal chiefs.

The social achievements of the projects will, by no means, be less important than the economic results, although they are seldom envisaged beforehand by the concerned authorities when contemplating the original schemes. The emergence of the new life which depends mainly on intensive agriculture and on certain agricultural industries will encourage migration to the new agricultural and industrial centres which will be established in the desert. Perhaps this will be more obvious in the Western Desert of Egypt where some of the proposed projects do take into consideration the possibility of moving a certain number of the more trained peasants from the Delta to rehabilitate the desert, especially the coastal zone, and to cultivate the reclaimed lands. As it has already been said, all the skilled labour needed for the new industries will be recruited from the Nile Valley, and more particularly from Alexandria. Thus, it is expected that the creation of these new industrial and commercial centres in the Western Desert will lead to the absorption, in the desert, of a certain proportion of the inhabitants of the Delta and will thus contribute towards solving the problem of the increasing population of Egypt. Although Syria, on the other hand, is generally regarded as underpopulated, a large proportion of its population is concentrated in a few towns and cities leaving the rest of the country, and especially the vast and rich areas in the east and the north, such as the Gezira region, with only a very thin population. It is also hoped here that the agricultural and economic development which will be realised in these areas through the different irrigation and land reform schemes will draw a certain percentage of the population from the over-populated regions. At present, seasonal migratory movements take place at harvest time. More skilled peasants from Aleppo go to the Gezira area every year to help in the cultivation and the picking of cotton as well as in harvesting grain. The execution of the sedentarisation projects in the Syrian Desert will thus lead to a more even distribution of the population.

Perhaps the most important achievement of the sedentarisation projects will be the diminishing of the cultural differences which now exist between the Bedouins of deserts on the one hand and the inhabitants of the rural and urban communities on the other. Common values and patterns of thought will prevail all over the whole society with all its different sectors as a result of applying the rural and urban modes of livelihood to the desert areas.

VII. CUSTOMARY LAW

General Remarks

Judicial procedures and legal systems among the Bedouins of both Egypt and Syria follow, on the whole, certain rules and principles imposed by custom and defined by tradition. Law in the sense of imposed and written texts is not known to them except when the administrative authorities interfere into their affairs. Traditional or customary rules regulating their life and social relationships are kept alive in the memories of their elders and chiefs who look into their disputes and settle them according to these rules, and the judgments given by these elders and chiefs have to be accepted by the disputants. This is especially obvious among the true nomadic groups in both deserts. Juridical authority, in this sense, is distributed within the tribe along the same lines of bifurcation by which the tribe itself is segmented. This means that each kinship unit, however small, has its own chief or chiefs to look into the disputes of its members. Thus, the disputes which occur between two members of the same lineage are referred to the elders of that lineage while those which rise between members of the different lineages of the same clan are settled by chiefs of that clan, and so on. The disputes which arise between different tribes can lead to open war, but they sometimes are put to arbitration. Prolonged raids, or even wars, in the anthropological sense of the word, between the conflicting tribes are more apparent in the Syrian Desert where armed clashes often break out not only on the pasture-lands but also on minor disputes.

Intra-tribal disputes are generally settled quickly so as to maintain internal solidarity and homogeneity of the tribe. This depends, however, on the density of the social interrelations between the disputants, i.e. the stronger the relations and interactions between the conflicting segments the more quickly settlement is sought and reached, and the weaker the interactions in day-to-day life the slower the process for settling the dispute. But in any case, an accepted solution by all the concerned parties should be reached as quickly as possible. The general tendency in both deserts is to treat the disputes which occur within the tribe, and more particularly within its smaller segments, as domestic affairs which should be dealt with privately and without the intervention of a third party or an outsider. An arbitrator needs not be a political tribal chief. An old wise man who is well informed of

the customs and traditions of the tribe, or a religious functionary, is usually preferred as mediator to the political chief. There are a few such men in each clan whose opinion and judgment are always given high consideration and are generally accepted by the conflicting parties. They do not interfere unless they are invited, but once they are approached to do so they cannot decline the invitation to mediation. In fact, political chiefs of the sedentary clans also do not intervene of their own accord except in the case of grave disputes which may threaten the solidarity of the kin-group or when it is feared that the disputants may resort to force or to collective violence which may involve a number of tribal segments. Whatever might be the case, violence is not likely to be used in disputes between segments of the same clan however serious may be the disputes and however grave are the offences which cause them; whereas minor offences or disagreement between strangers who belong to different clans (in the case of Egypt) or to different tribes (in the case of Syria) may flare up into violent hostilities in which physical force is used.

Chiefs on the whole, and more especially those of the sedentary clans, like to play the role of the pacifying mediator, although the chiefs of the nomadic groups of Syria can easily resort to coercion if the need arises. As it has already been said, the tribal chiefs in Syria still enjoy high authority and are regarded with respect and awe. In nomadic clans there is no higher "native" authority to appeal to; their word is law and their decisions are final judgments. They usually seek the advice and opinion of the lineage-chiefs and the religious functionaries and old men who are generally called by the Syrians *'Awaraf*, i. e. "those who know well", before giving their decisions. The system of the *'Awaraf* is a well-established institution among the northern clans of Syria and more particularly among the frontier clans who live near the Iraqi-Syrian borders such as the Shammar and the Jeboor. The system is not known, or at least does not take the form of institution, among the clans which inhabit the Damascus area or those who live near Hama and Balqa-a. There, the chief is regarded as the sole and supreme judge. The Shammar clans say that their continual movements and the too many and too complicated responsibilities and preoccupations of their tribal chiefs have obliged those chiefs to abdicate the judicial function to the *'Awaraf*. A man is likely to become

an 'Arefa because his father was occupying that office and thus he had chance to see him looking into disputes, which action is likely to give him insight and to develop his sense of good judgment.

Responsibility

The general tendency to seek compromise shows that there is more inclination to consider disputes and offences as private affairs rather than social or public crimes. Unless the culprit is a habitual malefactor, the offence is more likely to be examined and settled within the narrowest possible circle. In other words, an offence is usually regarded as directed against the individual or an agnatic kin-group and it is only the two parties concerned who preoccupy themselves with settling it. This does not mean the absence of all social reaction; the society rather expresses its opinion in an unorganised way by boycotting the wrongdoer and avoiding his immediate agnates. This means that responsibility is considered to fall on the agnatic group rather than on the individual wrongdoer. All his agnatic kin and more particularly his near kin are, partially at least, responsible for his bad behaviour. They are rebuked because of their failure to control his actions; they are avoided by the people and they are regarded as equally responsible for the payment of any indemnification. They are also exposed to retaliation in cases of homicide. On the other hand, injuries inflicted on a clansman by a man who belongs to another clan are usually resented by all the victim's kinsmen, and to a less degree by his clansmen, who seek indemnification or inflict retribution. This principle of collective responsibility is the cause of the actual institution of clan-vengeance or blood feud.

Sometimes, responsibility may extend beyond the circle of the culprit's clansmen. Any person who, directly or indirectly, takes part or contributes to the actual execution of the offence is considered responsible for the injury inflicted upon this victim, and is, consequently, reprimanded. Sometimes he has to contribute towards the payment of compensation which may be claimed by the victim's kinsmen. To give an example: A violent discussion between two persons sitting in a café at Mersa Matrouh led to a sudden quarrel between them. A number of the customers as well as other persons who came on the spot to support one or the other of the two parties were soon involved in the quarrel, in which the two parties used clubs and chairs. A man was hit on the head by a chair and fell dead. The owner of the café was considered co-responsible for this, since it was his chair which was used as a tool

in committing the crime. Thus, he had to contribute a certain share in the compensation paid to the family of the dead man. Offences committed by a man against one of his own clansmen do not, as a rule, involve any other person besides the wrongdoer, and in most cases no action is taken against him. This rule is followed to keep the solidarity of the clan.

Retaliation and Compensation

The principle of collective responsibility, generally accepted by the more nomadic groups, usually leads to the retaliation not from the offender himself but from some other member or members of his clan. Retaliation for capital crimes are actually regarded, at least by the nomadic clans, not only as a punishment exacted on the wrongdoer and his kin-group for the offence, but also as an effective measure by which the clan of the wronged person can restore its esteem and reinstate its social position. The existence of systematic legal procedure and of legal authorities in the two deserts does not prevent from applying the principle of retaliation. But it should be noted that the sedentary groups and the semi-nomads are less inclined to resort to retaliation than the nomadic groups. The payment of compensation is, however, gaining land all the time, even among the nomadic groups, at the expense of retaliation.

The whole principle of compensation and the rules regulating the amount to be paid in each case are strictly defined by tradition and are generally accepted by all the Bedouins who prefer to settle their disputes with peaceful means and without the interference of the administrative authorities. Certain factors are taken into consideration when estimating compensation. In the first place, the amount depends on the social status of the clan to which the wronged person or persons belong. Thus, the compensation paid to a man who belongs to the Morabitcen clans in the Western Desert for example is usually the half of that paid for a similar crime or offence inflicted on a person who belongs to the Saadi clans. The only exception from this rule is the Sereihat, the Mamerat and the Smallus of the Morabitcen who, because of the aid they gave to the Awlad Ali during their long wars, are entitled to full compensation. The question of criminal intent is another important factor in determining the amount of compensation, at least among the Bedouins of the Western Desert. Thus, bloodwealth paid for intent homicide is £E.400; while that for the casual murder of a person without

any previous intent is only £E.300. Bloodwealth in the Syrian Desert, on the other hand, seems to be subject to lengthy haggling between the two parties. The amount of bloodwealth also differs according to sex. Bloodwealth paid for the murder of a woman is usually the half of that paid for the murder of a man. The only exception to this is the system followed among the Shammar clans who consider it a shame to kill a woman. Therefore, the bloodwealth paid for the murder of a woman there is four to eight times that paid for the murder of a man. Lastly, the amount of compensation depends on the nature of the offence or the crime and the damage or loss suffered by the wronged party. A certain expert known as the *naddaar* (lit, the man who sees) examines the damage caused by the culprit and the amount of compensation is estimated accordingly. The two concerned parties should agree at first on the person of the *naddaar* before he could investigate the damages. To illustrate by a few examples from the Western Desert :

- a) Compensation for surface wounds varies between 2½ and 200 piastres
- b) Compensation for deep cuts which go through the flesh but without breaking the bones varies between P.T. 350 and 750.
- c) The loss of an eye is compensated for by the payment of half of the usual bloodwealth, i.e. £ E. 200 or £ E. 160 according to whether the injured party belongs to the Awlad Ali or to the Morabiteen clans respectively. The same amount is paid as compensation for the loss of an ear, or an arm, or a foot;
- d) Stolen animals and objects are restituted or compensated for. An extra fine called *kabbara* should be paid to the wronged party ;
- e) Compensation for adultery with a virgin is £.E. 20, unless the man agrees to marry the girl. In this case the man pays the customary bridewealth which is usually paid for the virgin at their marriage. Compensation for adultery with a married woman is also £E. 20 which should be paid to the husband and not to the woman's father. In this case the husband can keep his wife. But if the husband prefers to divorce the wife because of her sin, then the adulterer is obliged to pay him the bridewealth he gave her on their marriage. In this latter case, the adulterer is entitled, if he so wishes, to marry the woman without any further payments on his part to her family. A husband catching an adulterer in *flagrante delicto* has the right to kill him without being exposed to retaliation or to paying the bloodwealth.

Evidence and Oath

Customary legal procedures in both deserts do not depend much on evidence, for revealing the truth. In fact, the people abstain from evidence, for it is likely to involve the witness and the party against whom he gives evidence and their respective families into endless troubles. The same attitude still prevails even among the more sedentary groups who carry their disputes to ordinary courts of law in the larger towns; for the witness is regarded as responsible for any harm that may befall the accused person as a result of the evidence he gives. This may lead to inflicting certain sanctions upon the witness and imposing heavy obligations on him towards the accused person himself and his family. The accused person, however, is expected to take the oath to his innocence especially when there is not enough evidence. A man who refuses to take the oath is automatically considered guilty and loses his case. In major offences, such as homicide and the seduction of young girls, the oath taken by the accused person to his innocence is not accepted by the plaintiffs unless it is sponsored and supported by a number of the defendant's clansmen. These men, who are usually chosen for that purpose by the wronged party and who are generally known by their piety and honesty, take also the oath with the accused person to clear him out of the crime. The abstention from taking the oath by one single man from the chosen party is taken as enough evidence to the guilt of the accused person. The number of these men varies from case to case according to the seriousness of the offence. Thus :

- a) In cases of homicide, the oath should be taken by 55 men. This is the common practice in both the Western Desert and the Syrian Desert. This is called "the oath of the murdered soul", and if one person fails to take it, the bloodwealth should be paid.
- b) In cases of injuries and offences which are usually compensated for by the payment of half the amount of bloodwealth (such as in the case of losing an eye.) the oath should be taken by 27 persons.
- c) In cases of destroying wells, fields, homesteads and other vital property, and in cases of disputes about the ownership of these things, the oath should be taken by 25 persons.
- d) Three or four persons should take the oath in cases of disputes about debts under 10 pounds.

Customary Law and Modern Law

The recent introduction of modern law to the desert areas has led, especially in the more sedentary communities of the Western Desert, to an obvious duality in the judicial organisation and procedures there. For the customary law and the traditional tribal arbitrators are still functioning side by side with the modern courts of law. The two systems, however, are regarded to be complementary, in the sense that when one system fails to reach a conclusive result the other may be tried, but this does not entail that a dispute should always go through a rigid and gradual order of procedures, thus passing from one procedure which is considered lower and inferior to another which is higher and superior. Litigants can actually put their cases before the judicial body which they think more suitable to reach a conclusion. While litigants who have no faith in the impartiality of the tribal chiefs put their disputes before the modern law court, other litigants may withdraw their cases from the civil court and put them before the native arbitrators if the court fails to reach a quick settlement.

There are three types of law courts to which disputes may be referred, according to the nature of the dispute or the offence itself. All domestic situations which rise from divorce or which may lead to divorce are put before the *Shari'ah* court. This court does not play an effective role in maintaining the social order in the community, for it deals with one type of dispute and only a few cases are brought to it every year. Disputes over the right of exploiting the land, the rights in inheritance or the payment of debts, etc. i.e. the cases which come under civil law, are referred to a civil court, while quarrels in which violence and physical force are used, cases of theft or rape and other offences which come under the penal law are brought before a military court. *Shari'ah* courts have been very recently abolished from Egypt and all the disputes which were originally brought to them are now referred to ordinary civil courts.

The people consider the way in which the military court handles offences and its verdicts, which vary between heavy fines and imprisonment for a number of years, as exceptionally harsh. The impartial examination of the cases of offence and transgression, and the verdicts which are brought on the sole basis of the findings without giving weight to any other consideration, such as the personal or social relations between the defendant and the plaintiff and their respective families

and lineages usually leave deep traces of bitterness and may breed further hostilities between them. The military court issues its verdicts with the sole purpose of inflicting punishment on the wrongdoer. It does not seek to retrieve the loss or the restitution of the injury. Its verdicts are repressive. On the other hand, most of the cases which are brought before the civil court remain for a long time without being settled. The judges who usually come from urban communities find themselves at a loss to understand the complicated systems of ownership and usufruct and the relation between residence and rights of exploitation etc. In many cases the litigants realise the loss and damage they suffer from such long delays and so they settle their disputes by the ordinary native methods of arbitration and withdraw their cases from the court.

To reach a compromise between both systems of legal procedure especially in dealing with major crimes such as homicide, the concerned authorities in both deserts do their best now to leave the duty of settle these disputes to the tribal chiefs and the traditional arbitrators, under the auspices and the supervision of the local administration. The administration is therefore represented on the native courts, and all settlements or verdicts reached in this way are ratified by the authorities. It is generally thought, however, that one of the most effective measures that should be taken to achieve the sedentarisation of nomads is the abolishing of the native courts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been suggested to me during private interviews with officials concerned with the problems of sedentarisation in both the Western Desert and the Syrian Desert. These recommendations are regarded by those officials as effective measures which are likely to hasten the process of settling down the nomadic and the semi-nomadic groups. They put much stress on the economic side, or rather on the question of changing the modes of livelihood which prevail in the desert and consider such changes the corner-stone in any programme designated for permanent settlement of these groups. Changes in the economic system will lead to fundamental changes in the total social structure, as it has already been indicated. On the other hand, it is generally felt that any changes which may

affect the life of the people should be introduced only with the consent and, if possible, the participation of the people themselves. It should be noted, however, that some of these recommendations are now under actual execution while the others are still under consideration.

I. State lands should be distributed among the Bedouins, and small holdings should be encouraged while strict measures should be taken against holding large estates. A legislation to this effect was issued in Syria in September 1958, and a similar legislation is still under consideration by which the lands of the Western Desert will be distributed among the inhabitants of certain areas.

II. Due attention should be paid to the execution of irrigation schemes in Syria and to the boring of artesian wells and the construction of cisterns in the Western Desert.

III. Consideration should also be given to the question of improving the technical and agricultural standards of the people and to the mechanisation of agriculture, especially in Syria where the vast stretches of arable land allow for the using of modern machines in cultivating the fields. New agricultural industries should be established in different centres in both deserts. The people should get enough informal agricultural education through the cinema and the radio. Also systematic and formal education should be extended to them. To achieve these results agricultural schools should be established in the larger and more crowded areas.

IV. Native chiefs, especially those of the nomadic clans in Syria, should be brought under the close control of the administrative authorities. Severe checks should be imposed on their power. It is generally held in official circles that the customary law and the tribal courts should be abolished, and that the Bedouin tribes should be brought under civil legislation.

V. Social services should be extended to the desert and semi-desert areas especially with regard to public health and the housing situation.

VI. Until the contemplated projects of sedentarisation are actually realised the movements of the nomadic clans, especially those

dwelling near the frontiers, should be put under close observation. All clansmen should carry identity cards to specify their nationality. Crimes and criminals can thus be easily controlled.

VII. Since the culture of any specific people form an organic unit in the sense that a change in one aspect will have repercussions on other aspects, it is thought as essential that any development project should be preceded by a thorough study of that particular culture. Sociological problems of the deserts' inhabitants should thus be studied side by side with the problems of water or land or pasture. Such studies are badly needed with regard to the Syrian Desert and its tribes. The departments of Sociology and Anthropology in the Egyptian Universities, as well as the Desert Institute of Cairo have done well towards accomplishing such studies in the Western Desert. Conferences and seminars should also be invited every year, or every other year, to discuss the problems of the arid zone in general and the problems of sedentarisation of nomads in particular.