

The New Arab Social Order: A Study of the Social Impact of Oil Wealth. *Saad Eddin Ibrahim*. Boulder: Westview Press. 1982. xiv + 208 Pp. \$18.00 (cloth).

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From his vantage near the apex of Egyptian sociology as the head of Arab Affairs at the Al-Ahram Center in Cairo, Saad Eddin Ibrahim presents his view of a "New Arab Social Order." The New Order emerges from a synthesis of post-1973, oil-related economic growth and previous Arab social orders. Its dominant characteristics include (1) sizable international labor migration, (2) realignment of inter-Arab social stratification, (3) new social classes and status groups, and (4) strengthening of economic interdependency across state boundaries. Ideologically, Ibrahim also detects (5) the crystallization of new values and normative systems, especially the heightening of pan-Arab social identity. At one point, he equates the socioeconomic unity of the New Arab Social Order with the zenith of the Arab-Islamic Empire of the 8th century A.D. Such ebullience is tempered by noting that the New Order is not necessarily orderly, harmonious, or congruent.

The argument opens with a portrayal of six abridged life histories structured to epitomize the surface manifestations of the New Order. The subjects selected suggest inherent social conflicts: a mechanized Bedouin, an Egyptian peasant immigrant in Saudi Arabia, a veiled Egyptian medical student, an angry Muslim militant, and two Saudi Arabian "lumpen capitalists." The lives of the subjects in oil- and non-oil-producing Arab states are shown to be linked by accelerated spending and associated labor mobility.

In the four years following the success of the OPEC cartel, labor migrations from non-oil- to oil-producing Arab countries more than doubled. Capital-rich oil-producing countries contracted masses of expatriate labor to build, maintain, and, in many cases, operate the improved state infrastructure. By the late 1970s anywhere from one-third to 85 of the economically active population in the Arab OPEC countries were migrants, almost half of whom were from other Arab countries. Reviewing labor migration studies from the World Bank, the International Labor Organization, Arab governmental sources, and Birks and Sinclair's migration study, Ibrahim describes Arab migra-

tion as selective: heavily male, temporary, with people moving from capital-poor to capital-rich states, and remittances returning in the opposite direction. Migration theorists should welcome Ibrahim's summary, which demonstrates that Arab migration fits the general principles of migration formulated by Ravenstein, Lee, and others.

Next, Ibrahim successfully surveys the socioeconomic impact of the flow of 6.5 million of the 136 million Arabs and the counterflows of remittances by focusing on the opposite ends of the migrant streams, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Egypt, faced with apparent overpopulation, unemployment, high military costs, and insufficient capital to meet its development objectives, has encouraged its citizens to exercise their "right" to immigrate. Saudi Arabia's low labor participation ratio, high demands for military manpower, strong cultural reservations on women entering the labor market, ambitious development plans, capital surplus, and sizable welfare subsidies have created a labor shortage. Their active encouragement for temporary workers, about 14 of whom are Egyptian, reflects a "relatively" open door policy, albeit with considerable controls on the worker's political behavior and personal conduct. In both states, the author finds that the disruptive consequences of the subsequent migration outweigh their intended positive benefits. Saudi Arabia has been plagued by inflation, mounting pressures on services, overurbanization, and social discontent. Egypt has suffered from sectoral labor shortages, conspicuous consumption, a decline in work ethics, and feminization of the Egyptian family.

Ibrahim's noteworthy methodological and logical innovations appear in his analysis of inter-Arab social stratification. He reinterprets dialectical analysis so that a force (the economic activities resulting from oil revenues) interacts with many different forces (the preexisting socioeconomic orders of 20 Arab states) and produces a common result (the New Arab Social Order). Given the heterogeneity of the internal social orders of the 20 states, it would have been helpful if Ibrahim had demonstrated the emerging homogeneity, at least in the more detailed preceding chapters on Egypt and Saudi Arabia. But the evidence from these chapters neither supports nor refutes the claim unless it is assumed that interdependence between states decreases intrastate social diversity.

This talent for simplifying complex theoretical issues resurfaces in his total rejection of

Marxian class analyses as suitable for analyzing Arab social stratification. Ibrahim feels Arab society lacks the historical orderliness necessary for such research. If Marxist scholars find his synopsis of their approach disconcerting, they will not be alone. In an equally truncated argument, he also rejects "Western sociologists' elaborate techniques for the operationalization and measurement of SES," as inappropriate for the analysis of Arab society. This time, we are assured that such techniques are inapplicable because performance and rationality do not determine the allocation of material and non-material rewards in Arab society.

Rejecting the dominant methods for investigating social stratification, Ibrahim wanders off on his own, developing a concept he calls a "state-class" system. A state-class consists of a group of states with similar levels of per capita gross national product. Using per-capita GNP as a dependent variable, the 20 Arab states are classed into four strata (rich, well-to-do, struggling middle, and poor). To validate state-classes, he selects five indicators of socio-economic status: labor participation, literacy rate, death rate, life expectancy, and military power (measured by the absolute size of a state's armed forces). Unlike most sociologists, Ibrahim does not burden the readers with statistical measures of what appear to him to be obvious correlations. This decision is unfortunate. My recalculations of his Table 6.2 shows Spearman ρ of only .137 and .251, levels that do not justify his claims of a significant correlations of the state-classes with literacy and death rates. Such small details will probably not bother his overall argument, since the absence of a statistically significant relationship is interpreted as evidence of "status incongruity." I labor this point only because Ibrahim subsequently uses state-class analysis to layout the conditions for the rise of future potential regional powers in the Arab world.

Few will disagree with Ibrahim's claim that the temporary upsurge of capital investment in this corner of the world has been accompanied by notable movements of peoples; increased economic and possibly social interdependence; and growing Arab dependence in the world capitalist system. Some critics may argue that Ibrahim's New Arab Social Order is not Arab at all but only an important part of larger changes in the world economic system being discussed by Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, David Barkin, and many others. Nevertheless, Ibrahim's description of changes in Egypt,

Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent, the rest of the Arab world is a useful confirmation of these larger trends.

Ibrahim's final chapter, however, proves the most challenging. Herein, the standard social science practice that policy analyses and conclusions should be related to the sociological evidence presented in the preceding chapters is almost entirely abandoned. In the final 13 pages of the book, he squeezes in quick conclusions and comments on Soviet and U.S. aid, dependency and vulnerability, mass apathy, and cynicism and questions the legitimacy of the ruling elite throughout the Arab world. For example, Ibrahim claims that "there is no solid *raison d'etre* for continued legitimacy of most Arab ruling elite." Historians, political scientists, and sociologists working in the 18 Arab countries not explicitly analyzed in this book may marvel at his facile ability to conclude that concerning the Arab goals of unification, liberation of Palestine and consolidating national independence, "the average Arab feels that whatever progress had been achieved regarding these objectives in earlier decades has been eroded during the last ten years at the hands of present ruling elites." By this time, a storm of sweeping generalizations and hyperbolic whirlwinds bury a promising work. Consequently, *The New Arab Social Order* might best serve as a lesson for the applied social sciences, Arab and otherwise. Social scientists venturing into the unexplored domains of contemporary social issues are advised to trust the more reliable sociological concepts and methods used by their less adventurous colleagues who circumbulate exotica.

Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa. Philip Mayer, ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980. xi + 355 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

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The book is a major contribution to the study of migrant labor in southern Africa. Each of the seven chapters is based on recently completed original field research. Some chapters contain previously unpublished research. Philip Mayer edited the volume, wrote a very brief introduction, contributed the lead chapter, and supervised the work of four of the contributors who were his students. The research was part of the