

ABSTRACTS

The following abstracts are short synopses of articles appearing in the Arabic part of the Review. They are summarized here for the benefit of those who cannot read Arabic. In a like manner, each major English or French article is presented as a short résumé in the Arabic section.

A SOCIO – ECONOMIC SURVEY OF AGEDABIA

*Abdul Jalil Al-Tahir**

In April, 1966, the 4th year students and the staff members of the University of Libya's Department of Philosophy and Sociology conducted a socio-economic survey in Agedabia city. The survey was aimed at collecting information about the impact of the oil industry on social changes. All necessary steps were taken to overcome methodological problems, and the research was carefully designed to inquire into different aspects of social life such as tribal and family structure, income and occupational distribution, housing conditions, and family expenditures. Special attention was also given to the social and psychological attachments between the dwellers of Agedabia city and the tribal communities in the remote oases. It is interesting to note that there are two strikingly different historical periods in the life of Agedabia city. The first was characterized by a social and economic stagnation during which Agedabia was an integral part of the oasis communities. The second involved numerous social and economic changes after petroleum activities were started in nearby Marsa el Brega. All collected facts proved that the oil industry was the only decisive factor in introducing social changes.

* M.A., Ph.D., University of Chicago. Professor of Sociology, Department of Philosophy and Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Libya.

Main Findings

1. Agedabia city is no longer an integral part of the tribal oasis communities. In particular, its economic system has nothing to do with the pastoral bedouin communities where rainfall is the primary variable which determines economic welfare.
2. The people of Agedabia have been able to liberate themselves from old tribal disputes and tribal obligations.
3. Higher wages and better life opportunities have made Agedabia a center of attraction to workers from all parts of Libya.

Housing Conditions

1. Seventy-four percent of all houses were individually owned, whereas 6% were government owned and 20% were rented.
2. Between 1960 and 1966 — the period of prosperity — the ownership of 294 houses (72% of the total) was registered. 106 houses were registered over a long period (50 years).
3. The lowest percentage of government ownership is only indicative of a new trend in social services. Huge housing projects are being carried out by the government.
4. Rents were relatively low, with an average of £L 5.800 per month. About 79% of all rents were between £L 2 and £L 7.
5. Nearly half of Agedabia's population consisted of new immigrants who came after the discovery of petroleum.
6. Thirty-six percent of the houses had a bathroom, 83% a toilet, and 60% electricity. 91% had access to a well and only 5% had running water. 15% of the houses had interior gardens and only 24% were keeping animals.
7. One-quarter of the houses consisted only of two rooms. The total number of rooms was 1963 in 553 houses (i.e. an average size of 3.6 rooms per house).

8. The average number of persons per dwelling unit was 6.4 and the average per room was 1.3. These housing conditions prove the continuity of the traditional large-sized family.
9. Fifty-two percent of all houses were built of clay, 84% had wooden ceilings, and 52% were paved with cement.
10. Forty-nine percent of all houses owned a radio, 18% bicycles, 13% sewing machines, 12% ice-boxes, and 12% electric irons. Forty-nine percent of the houses used kerosene, 43% wood, and 6% gas. Only 2% used electricity in cooking.
11. Formerly, 53% of all individual families lived in tents, 41% in ordinary houses and 6% in primitive huts.

Income, Expenditure, and Occupational Division

1. Most of the heads of households (206 out of 553) were labourers, skilled and semi-skilled workers. The occupational distribution illustrated similarities to a primitive division of labour. The number of government civil servants, including teachers and soldiers, amounted to 26% of the heads of households.
2. The average annual income per housing unit and per capita was £L 470 and £L 72, respectively.
3. The average individual house payment for water was £L 4.500 per month and £L .950 per month for electricity.
4. The average monthly expenditure per family was £L 21.
5. The average annual saving per family was £L 216.

Social Aspects

1. Males represented 52.24% of the population and females, 47.76%.
1. Monogamy is the dominant practice (91% of the families).
3. In 89% of the households, fathers were solely responsible for the family expenditure.

4. All members of the individual family get their meals in one big dish.
5. Sixty-one percent of all households keep a special room to receive relatives and guests.
6. Ninety-nine percent of all women wear the Libyan dress.
7. Ninety-seven percent of all families maintain only one budget.
8. Divorce among the whole population is very rare — only 29 women were reported.
9. Smokers among men were numerous (265 men or 48% of the total).
10. Two hundred fifty-nine houses decorated guest and sleeping rooms with various pictures.

Conclusions

1. The study clearly illustrated that Agedabia city is passing through a rapid transitional period — from the bedouin oasis community, pastoral economy, primitive division of labour, and tribal organization to the cash economy, higher standards of living, and to modernity.
2. All the changes which were illustrated by the study were motivated by the oil industry which provided better life conditions and more economic opportunities.
3. Marsa el Brega has attracted many people. It is quite possible that Agedabia has reached its climax, and the new local community which is developing at el Brega may be to the detriment of Agedabia.