

POPULATION AND SOCIETY IN THE ARAB EAST

Gabriel Baer

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Translated by
HANNA SZOKE

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by

GABRIEL BAER

Translated from the Hebrew by
HANNA SZOKE



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PREFACE

THIS book originated in lectures given during the last few years at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and other institutions in Israel. The lectures were conceived as an introduction to the study of modern Middle Eastern history, economy, or politics; their aim was to present the main facts of population structure and the problems and trends of development of Middle Eastern Arab society. The book was written in 1958 and published in Hebrew early in 1960. For the English translation figures have been brought up to date where possible, research conducted during the last three years has been included, and books, articles, or other material published during this period have been taken into account. This edition is, therefore, a somewhat enlarged version of the original book.

Arabic names and terms have been transliterated as accurately as possible, but diacritical marks had to be omitted for the sake of simplicity. In some cases a conventional English spelling has been adopted. As one of the aims of this book is to make the student familiar with the literature on its subject, sources have been mentioned in detail in footnotes.

I wish to express my gratitude to my colleagues, my students, and the reviewers of the Hebrew edition for their critical remarks, for drawing my attention to additional material, and for encouragement. In particular, I wish to thank Professor S. D. Goitein, Dr Hayim Blanc, Dr Yonina Talmon, Mr Daniel Dishon, Mr Eliezer Be'eri, and Mr Hayim Shaked. I am greatly indebted to my parents Dr Albert and Mrs Kaete Baer for help in several ways with the preparation of this edition; and I am grateful to the translator Mrs Hanna Szőke for her patient and efficient work.

A few sections of the book have appeared in English in *New Outlook* (Tel-Aviv) and *Middle Eastern Affairs* (New York); the permission of these journals to reproduce the articles (with small changes and additions) is hereby acknowledged.

G. B.

October 1962

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INTRODUCTION

'POPULATION and Society in the Arab East' is a subject whose scope must be defined both in terms of the geographical territory covered and in terms of the matters under discussion in this book.

If we survey the literature of recent years, we scarcely find any two books on the 'Middle East' which in fact deal with exactly the same countries. Usually the Maghrib, the countries of North Africa, are not included, but where exactly is the boundary between the Maghrib and the Middle East? From a geographical or historical viewpoint, the line should be drawn between Cyrenaica, which has always been associated with Egypt, and Tripolitania (Tarabulus al-Gharb). As the two regions, however, are now united in one state, they have both been included in the present discussion.

Other boundaries have been set using the criterion that the Arabic language is spoken by the majority of the population under review. Israel, Turkey, and Persia have thus been excluded. On the other hand, non-Arabic-speaking minorities in the Arab countries are briefly described. The 'Arab East' is thus the best name for this area, since the 'Arab countries' would include the Maghrib, and the 'Middle East' includes Israel, Turkey, and Persia. In short, then, this book is concerned with the population of Egypt, with roughly 26 million inhabitants, Sudan (10 million), the Arabian Peninsula (13-14 million), Iraq (6½ million), Syria and Lebanon (6 million), Jordan (1½ million), and Libya (1 million); in all, some 65 million people.

Most works on the Arabs written during the last generation are concerned with problems of a political and economic nature. In the author's view a fundamental knowledge of the population, demographic problems, and social development of the Arabs is essential for the understanding of events in other spheres.

The contents of *Population and Society in the Arab East* are arranged according to the following scheme. In Chapter I the

Introduction

demographic structure and demographic trends are surveyed. In each of the following sections the discussion centres around one of the criteria by which population may be classified: sex, kinship, religion and language, way of life (ecology), and socio-economic stratification. Hence the chapters are concerned with woman and the family; religious and linguistic communities; beduins, fellahs, and townsmen; and finally, the various social and economic classes and strata. It was hoped by these means to underline the particular character of each of these groups and the differences between them and their counterparts in other societies (in so far as comparison is possible). Stress is laid on the problems specific to each group and the changes which have occurred within the last generation, up to the very latest developments.

Thus there are no special sections devoted to geography, economics, culture, trends of thought, and the historical and political developments of the Arab Eastern countries. However, these spheres of interest have not been disregarded; on the contrary, there is scarcely a page which does not touch on one or another of them, not indeed as the central theme, but as a factor influencing the character or development of this or that population group or of some demographic problem.

The difficulty in preparing this book has been not only scarcity of source material but also its unevenness: some countries and some subjects are much better covered than others. Statistical data of basic importance are lacking for most of the countries; there are few monographs, and on some subjects no data whatsoever are to be found. Hence it was impossible to maintain the desirable balance between the chapters, and a few subjects have been treated somewhat summarily because of lack of sources. Theories that are not well established have been avoided completely, in the hope that, in the not far distant future, new investigations will complement this incomplete picture of the population and society of the Arabs of the Middle East.

I

DEMOGRAPHY

A. SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

1. *SIZE*

Population is counted by the *census*. It is also advisable to rely on a census for certain aspects of population classification, e.g., distribution of nomads, division between village and town, distribution by occupation, etc. The main difficulty encountered in any research on the population of the Middle East is the total absence of any such census in some countries, and its confused results in others. There are three reasons why some countries of the Middle East have never carried out a census:

- (a) the structure of the population;
- (b) lack of modern administrative method;
- (c) political factors.

The lack of modern administrative methods is nowadays being tackled by means of foreign technical assistance. For example, the Sudanese and Jordanian governments have been aided by United Nations experts in carrying out their censuses. It was found that the administrative problem is, in fact, not of primary importance. The structure of the population, however, is and will continue to be a serious problem wherever nomadism is prevalent (as, for example, in some parts of the Arabian Peninsula). The political factor actually exists only in the Lebanon, where communal distribution has assumed political significance.

The following factors are responsible for inexact results of population counts:

Demography

(a) The unsettled nature of part of the population; the number of beduins has thus been estimated only roughly.

(b) Illiteracy: much of the population does not understand the questions posed by the census-takers, and this may, of course, falsify the results. In particular, among large sectors of the population of these countries there is no conception of accurate numbers. Age is often stated in 'round' figures. There is no sense of objective truth, and replies are designed to satisfy the census-takers.

(c) Traditional mistrust on the part of the population, particularly the fellahs, when confronted by representatives of the Government; they always suspect that any correct information elicited will be used to their disadvantage.

(d) Hence also transitory factors, such as reduction of numbers to avoid conscription or taxes. This is what happened in Syria and Lebanon in the 1920s, and apparently also in Iraq in 1947. On the other hand, numbers are augmented in times of rationing. This seems to have occurred in Egypt in 1947, and in refugee population counts.

(e) Social causes: opposition on the part of beduins, who resent interference in their affairs; inflation of numbers for the sake of family prestige; silence on the subject of new-born sons as a precautionary measure against the evil eye, on the subject of girls because no importance is attached to them, or on the subject of wives which is considered to be a private matter (the census-takers are unable to check the veracity of such statements, as they cannot enter the women's apartments). Sometimes sons are declared as daughters, again for fear of the evil eye. The existence of an unmarried daughter over the age of 15 is considered shameful.

Taking these factors into account, we may now set about determining what was, in fact, the population of the Arab Middle East, on the basis of data relating to the years between 1950 and 1960.

The country with the longest tradition of census-taking and the best-developed administrative machinery to deal with it is Egypt. Here, censuses have been taken at ten-year intervals from 1897 onwards. In 1957 the census was omitted for political reasons. The preliminary results of a census of September 1960

Size and Distribution of Population

show that the number of inhabitants of Egypt reached 26,080,000.

The first census ever to be undertaken in the Sudan was taken in 1955-6. Results of this count give 10,262,536 for the Sudanese population. The Sudan is, then, the country having the second largest population of all those under discussion.

Population counts of the Arabian Peninsula exist only for Aden (colony) as of 1955 (but not for the Aden Protectorate), Bahrain (1959), and Kuwait (1961). For the other countries of the Peninsula there are only estimates. It is generally agreed that Saudi Arabia has the largest population, but the actual figure is a subject of controversy. The Government of that country claimed 6 million inhabitants in 1947, but other estimates increase or reduce this figure by as much as a million. No data whatsoever have been published on the basis of which the situation could be reviewed and a reliable estimate chosen.

Second place in the Arabian Peninsula is undoubtedly taken by Yemen. An article purporting to give numbers representing the population in the early 1940s was published in 1947.¹ According to its author, these numbers were based on official Yemenite statistics (no census exists), and the figure quoted was 4,069,087. More recent evaluations have generally used this number as a standard, and the present estimate is in the region of 5 millions.

The population of the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula between 1955 and 1960 is generally assessed as follows:

Aden (colony)	138,230	(1955 census)
Aden (protectorate)	750,000	
Muscat and Oman	500,000	
Trucial Oman	80,000	
Qatar	25,000	
Kuwait	321,621	(1961 census)
Bahrain	142,213	(1959 census)
In all, about	2,000,000	

The total population of the Arabian Peninsula is, then, of the order of 13-14 millions.

In Iraq the first population census was taken in 1947. Its

¹ N. Lambardi, 'Divisione amministrativa del Yemen con notizie economiche e demografiche', *Oriente Moderno* (OM in later references), 1947, No. 7-9.

Demography

results were too low; the small percentage of males enumerated suggests that many men evaded the count for fear of conscription. Apparently more dependable are the results of the 1957 census, according to which there were 6,538,109 Iraqis.

In Syria no population count took place between 1922 and 1960, when, according to a combined census of the U.A.R., the inhabitants of Syria numbered 4,561,000 persons.¹

The most recent census in Lebanon was that of 1932. An estimate published by the Lebanese Government in 1959 gave the figure for its population at that date as 1,550,000.

The first Jordanian census was taken in October 1961; the number of inhabitants of the kingdom counted was 1,752,095 (distributed as follows: Transjordan, 826,618; Arab Palestine, 805,940; Jordanians residing abroad, 62,000; unsettled beduins, 56,000; and foreigners, 2,000. The last three figures are estimates.)²

The population of the Gaza Strip is about 300,000, at least two-thirds of which is made up of refugees.

A Libyan count of 1954 yielded a figure of 1,091,830 as the country's population. Tripolitania contributed 746,064 inhabitants, Cyrenaica 291,328, and Fezzan 54,438.

The addition of these numbers gives 65 millions as a very rough estimate of the number of inhabitants of the Arab Middle East in the middle of the twentieth century.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

One important point emerges from this survey of the range of population of the Middle East: more than half the Arabs are found in Africa. If the Arab population of North Africa is added the weight of this sector of the Arab world becomes even greater. (The non-Arab population of both subcontinents is here ignored; it includes the Kurds of Iraq, the Negro tribes of Southern Sudan, the Berbers of North Africa, the Europeans of Egypt and North Africa, etc., the inclusion of all of whom would not change the general picture.)

¹ *al-Ahram*, 24 October 1960. According to the Syrian newspaper *al-Wahda* of 20 May 1961, the population of Syria amounted to 4,780,322 at the end of 1960.

² Figures according to the Director of the Jordanian Statistical Office, as published in *al-Manar* (Jordan) of 27 February 1962. See also *OM*, March 1962, pp. 202-3.

Size and Distribution of Population

A second point of note is that the North is more densely populated than the South—Egypt more than the Sudan, the Fertile Crescent countries more than the Arabian Peninsula, although the Peninsula is much larger than the Fertile Crescent. The reasons for this are clear: (a) rivers; and (b) proximity to the Mediterranean, well-developed trade with Europe, a passage for trade between Europe and the East, etc. As against this, the South has desert stretches and the Sudan, in particular, swamps and forests. Among the Northern countries themselves there are further significant variations of population density.

What is the correct measure of density? Certainly it is not the number of persons per square kilometre of total land, since a considerable proportion of the total area of these countries is arid desert. A calculation on this basis is, then, misleading; it would suggest that Egypt is one of the most sparsely populated nations, with 19 inhabitants per square kilometre. It would also be a mistake to count the number of inhabitants per square kilometre of populated or currently cultivated land, since the countries of the Middle East are among those termed under-developed, and much of the land suitable for cultivation and settlement has not yet been exploited. The method here used will be to count heads per square kilometre of land currently or potentially under cultivation, or in short, per sq. km. of arable land. On this basis, the Northern Arab countries may be divided into three groups:¹

(a) Egypt, whose population density was 593 persons per sq. km. of arable land in 1947—a density easily exceeding that of highly populated industrial countries. The reasons for this are geographical (the Nile Valley and Delta, bordered by desert) and demographical (rapid natural population increase, of which more will be said later).

(b) Lebanon, whose population is far less dense than that of Egypt, and approaches that of the industrial nations of Europe (260 per sq. km. of arable land, in 1951). Here the reasons for a high density are twofold: (1) historical—the concentration of non-Muslim communities, which found a shelter in the

¹ Figures of arable land according to A. Bonne, 'Land and Population in the Middle East', *Middle East Journal* (*MEJ* in later references), Winter 1951, pp. 54-5. No estimates of cultivable land in the southern countries (the Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula) are available.

Demography

Lebanese mountains and enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy and protection from various depopulating factors; development of Lebanon as a centre of trade with Europe, and so on; (2) geographical—the area of arable land is limited because of the mountainous nature of the country.

(c) Syria, Iraq, and Libya (not all on a par).

Syria (1951)	82.5 per sq. km. of arable land
Iraq (1947)	53 per sq. km. of arable land
Libya (1950) ¹	50 per sq. km. of arable land

These three may be considered as sparsely populated countries with potentialities of further development. This is due to a number of causes, among them lack of development during the period of the Ottoman Empire; weakness on the part of the central government which left them open to attack by desert beduins and to wars which thinned out the population. Transjordan also belonged to this group of countries, but since the annexation of part of Palestine and the influx of most of the Palestinian refugees new Jordan is closer to the second group (Lebanon). In 1952 there were in Transjordan alone 100 persons per sq. km. of arable land.

Within each of the Middle Eastern countries there are considerable variations of population density. From population maps of Syria and Iraq the following general trends may be observed:

(a) Large territorial concentrations of population along the river banks, forming fertile strips in desert surroundings. This description is true of the Euphrates in Syria and Iraq, the Tigris north of Baghdad, Shatt al-‘Arab, and to a certain extent the Orontes (al-‘Asi) in Syria.

(b) High concentrations in the environs of the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, and Baghdad. These cities, which grew up as trade centres for the fertile rural regions, attracted more people, who saw in them a haven of protection from beduin attack and a convenient market for their produce. Similarly, dense settlements have grown up around the coastal cities of Beirut and Latakia.

¹ On cultivable land in Libya see J. Lindberg, *A General Economic Appraisal of Libya*, United Nations, New York, 1952, p. 9.

Size and Distribution of Population

Different causes are responsible for the distribution of population among the provinces of Egypt, although here, too, the provinces around Cairo are the most densely populated (Giza 809 persons per sq. km., Minufiya and Qalyubiya 733). The first point to be noted is the denser population of Upper Egypt (an average of 600 per sq. km.) than of the Delta (337 per sq. km.). There are some crowded provinces in which the area under cultivation has not been extended appreciably over the past 150 years, and the scope for further development is also restricted, such as Girga (837), Asyut (678), and Qena (617). There are also the relatively less well-populated provinces, which are the main development regions, such as Fayyum (383) and Aswan (342) in Upper Egypt, and Buhaira (276), Gharbiya (333), and Sharqiya (269) in the Delta. The Northern Delta, the coastal region of Egypt, is not settled densely (as are the coastal areas of other Arab countries) because of the number of lakes and the nature of the soil.

In the Sudan most of the populace north of Khartoum is to be found on the shores of the Nile, and a little between the Nile and the Red Sea; south of the capital, the inhabited region is more diffuse. The most highly populated zone is Khartoum and its south-easterly environs (province of the Blue Nile).

With the exception of such populated areas as Aden and Bahrain, the Arabian Peninsula is very sparsely settled. The most densely populated area is the south-westernmost corner. Yemen, for example, constitutes only 6% of the area of the Peninsula, while its population is over a third of the whole. 'Asir, again, is considered to be the most highly populated region of Saudi Arabia (with the exception of certain oil regions of the Persian Gulf). The extensive south-easterly region of Najd is, with some justice, known as 'ar-Rub' al-Khali' (the empty quarter).

Most of the inhabitants of Libya are concentrated in a strip along the coast, and the density is greater in Tripolitania than in Cyrenaica. In the southern desertland (of which Fezzan is a part) the population is especially low.

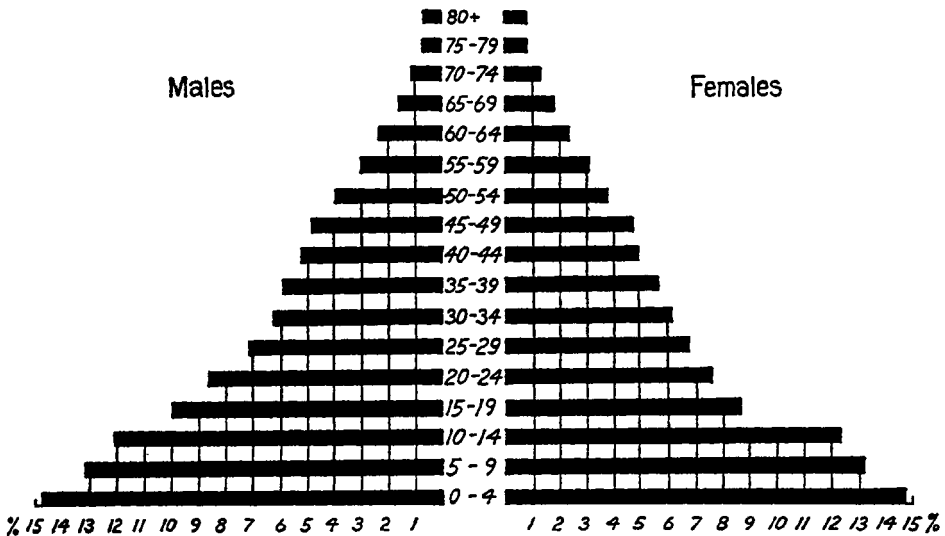
A notable feature of Jordan is that Arab Palestine, constituting less than 6% of the total area of the country, contains almost one-half of its inhabitants. Much of Transjordan, however, is desertland.

3. AGE GROUPINGS

Apart from the general factors which tend to falsify the results of a census, there are a number of others which cause trouble when attempting to present an exact statistical analysis of population age groupings in the Arab Middle East. These include unwillingness to admit the correct age because of conscription, the tendency of adults to exaggerate their age, the practice of 'rounding off' numbers in all questions of age, and the common lack of an appreciation of exact numbers.

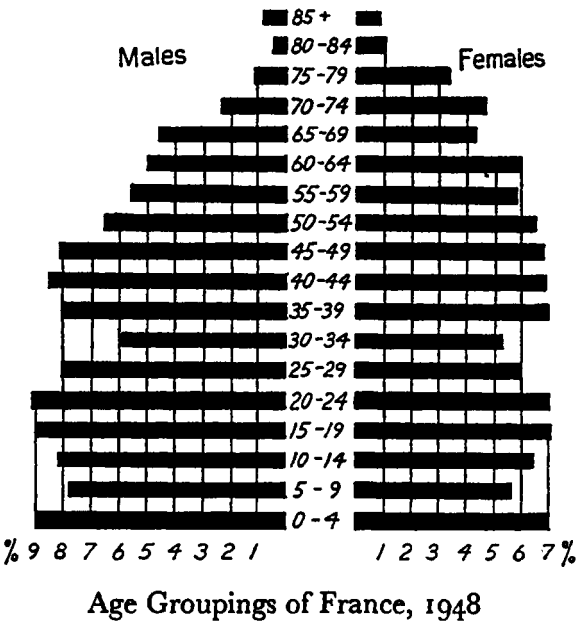
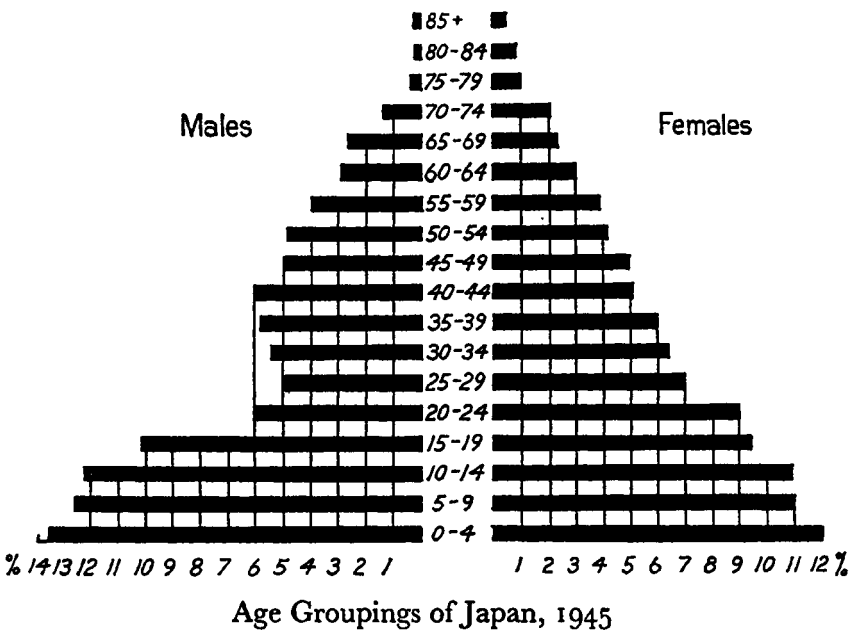
A complete statistical analysis of age groupings exists only for Egypt; it is summarised in the following chart. For comparison, age-distribution pyramids for France and Japan are also given; these exhibit the most distinctive trait of the Egyptian age distribution (and one that is typical of the other Arab countries too, as well as of many Asian countries, to a greater or lesser degree): the broad base of the pyramid—i.e., the unusually large proportion of young people. This is due to the high birth and mortality rates, discussed more fully in Section B.

However, examination of the age distribution of the population of Egypt over the past few decades shows a well-defined tendency towards a drop in the percentage of young people.



Age Groupings of Egypt, 1947

Size and Distribution of Population



Demography

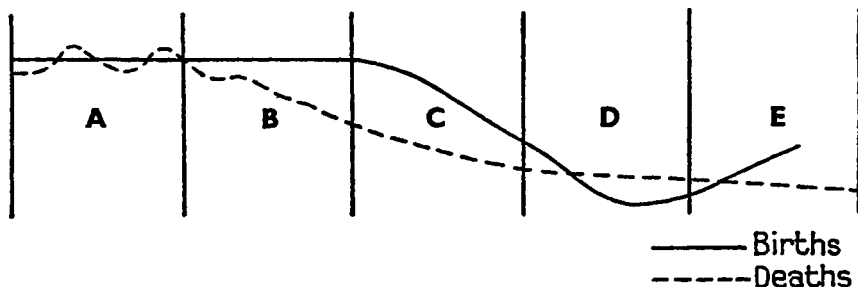
Thus, for example, in 1907 the 0-9 age group made up 30.1% of the total Egyptian population, while in 1947 it was only 26.4%. The percentage of those in their 40s rose over the same period from 18.7 to 23.1%. Undoubtedly, the change is mainly due to a decrease in mortality.

Data for other Arab countries are almost non-existent. According to the 1947 population census of Iraq, the proportion of young people is higher than in Egypt, even with the reservation that those of army age may not have been counted fully.

B. POPULATION TRENDS

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

The development of the population of Europe which has been traced over the past 300 years has been analysed by demographers into five main stages (see following diagram):



Population Trends, General Background

In stage (a) the birth rate is high and unlimited by artificial measures. The mortality, however, is also high and fluctuates irregularly, because of epidemics, starvation, etc. The population thus remains almost static, or increases at a slow rate. In stage (b) there is a decrease in the death rate in consequence of measures taken to overcome epidemics and other afflictions. The birth rate, on the other hand, remains high, and consequently a rise in the natural population increase is observed (nineteenth century in Europe). In stage (c) the mortality

Population Trends

continues to fall, but the birth rate now also starts to go down because of control, and some degree of equilibrium is achieved. In stage (*d*) there is a further fall in both rates, but the birth-rate curve meets, or in some countries even crosses, the death-rate curve. In stage (*e*) a renewed rise in the birth rate, and thus in the natural increase, makes its appearance, the mortality remaining fixed or falling still further.

What are the reasons for this series of occurrences? The continuous fall in mortality, beginning at stage (*b*), is due to: (1) development of the medical sciences and hygiene; (2) development of preventive and curative health services; (3) improvements in personal hygiene; (4) cultural development—in some countries the death rate fell when compulsory schooling was introduced; and (5) general development—directly, by the transport system (helping to prevent starvation and disease), and indirectly, by a rise in the standard of living of the population. Furthermore, countries in good economic state are in a position to establish progressive and expensive health services.

The changes in the birth rate began to appear in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, as a result of the use of contraceptives and artificial abortion. The reasons for limitation of the birth rate are four:

(1) As mortality fell, the number of living persons grew and economic pressure was felt.

(2) The expenses incurred per child rose with the rise in the cultural level and standard of living. Expenses included education, health, etc.

(3) With the change from agriculture to industry and the establishment of laws limiting child labour, children ceased to be a source of income when young, and instead became unproductive up to an advanced age.

(4) A weakening of religious fervour; a change-over from a fatalistic approach to life to a rational attitude; the change in the status of women in society and in the family—all these factors contribute to the reduction of childbirth. Obviously, it was the upper classes which started limiting the birth rate, the lower classes learning from them.

Demography

According to these stages, the countries of the world may be divided as follows:

- (a) the countries of Central Africa, still in stage (a);
- (b) the countries of Southern and Eastern Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, in stage (b);
- (c) the Soviet Union and Latin America, in stage (c);
- (d) Europe and the United States of America, in stages (d) and (e), i.e., on the way to a deficit (a death rate greater than the birth rate) or to a renewed fertility at a low rate of natural increase.¹

Since more than 50% of the world's population is in Africa and Asia, the rapid natural increase has become a serious demographic problem. How does the situation present itself in the Middle East?

2. BIRTH RATE

A full answer cannot be given to the question, as some essential data are missing. It has been noted that more or less exact population censuses have, in the past, been taken in Egypt alone. In other countries there are no early figures to compare with the results of recent censuses, or no figures whatsoever exist. Moreover, registration of the newborn and the dead is neither complete nor exact. The problem is undoubtedly more serious in Egypt than in any other Middle Eastern country; all the following data are, then, concerned chiefly with Egypt, although some of the points may be equally valid for other Middle Eastern countries.

The most striking phenomenon in Egypt is the high birth rate, which as yet shows no signs of lessening (stage (b)). Before the Second World War the incidence of births reached an average of 42 per thousand; in the early 'forties it fell, possibly because of epidemics, while in the late 40s it returned to the figure of 42 per thousand. In 1950 it rose to 44 per thousand, in 1951 to 45 per thousand. This birth rate is actually one of

¹ This is a division on general and rough lines, and obviously there are exceptions. It is also not to be concluded from this division that all countries of the world will of necessity pass through the same stages of development as did Europe.

Population Trends

the highest in all Africa. Only in some countries of Central America is the incidence higher, while few Asiatic countries have a comparable rate.

The reasons for such a high Egyptian birth rate, or more precisely, the reasons why a fall has not set in, are fourfold:¹

(1) The poverty and ignorance of Egyptian fellahs (who make up the majority of the population) and their fatalism; they are indifferent to limiting the birth rate and lack the knowledge to do so. Even when no more children are desired, witchcraft is evoked.²

(2) The child is an essential part of the family working force of the Egyptian fellah, even from his fourth or fifth year. This is particularly true in the cotton-growing areas. An expert on cotton-growing has said: 'Cotton requires not only a dense population but one with a birth rate above the average.'³

Many of the tasks connected with the cultivation of cotton, such as insect warfare and cotton-picking, are particularly well suited to child labour. Moreover, this is a cheap form of labour. But not only in the cotton-growing regions do children have essential roles in the family livelihood, as H. Ammar demonstrated in his research on the village of Silwa in Aswan province, published in 1954. He has calculated that a 13-year-old boy is capable of performing two-thirds of the tasks involved in the cultivation of crops in this region. The author shows that at a very young age the child produces more than he consumes. Compulsory education is still not enforced sufficiently to change the picture.⁴ In this connection it is interesting to note that Professor Fawzi, on the Sudan, concluded that '52.3% of boys of 5 to under puberty are economically active'.⁵

(3) The larger the family, the more respected its place in society; in some regions, particularly those distant from the central authorities and bordering on the desert, a large family

¹ See also R. Patai (ed.), *Jordan*, New Haven, 1957, p. 287. It is doubtful whether all the factors mentioned there do in fact influence the formation of large families.

² For details see W. S. Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, London, 1927, pp. 106-8.

³ Quoted by Charles Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century*, London, 1954, p. 56.

⁴ Hamed Ammar, *Growing Up in an Egyptian Village*, London, 1954, pp. 26-33.

⁵ Saad ed-Din Fawzi, 'Manpower Distribution in the Sudan', *Middle East Economic Papers* (MEEP in later references), Beirut, 1958, p. 27.

even has certain defensive advantages.¹ Women are anxious to have many children as a protection from divorce.

(4) Marriage at an early age, and the high percentage of married as compared with single persons. Marriage at an early age is a tradition founded on early sexual maturity, lack of contraceptive measures, requirements of chastity, and the fact that the position of an unmarried woman is very debased.

It is of interest to compare the percentage of married women over the age of 15 in Egypt with the corresponding percentage for other countries. In Egypt the figure was 65.1% in 1937 and 62.9% in 1947, as in other Asiatic countries. The percentage of married women in European countries in the 'thirties and 'forties was less than 60%, and in many cases less even than 55%. (Only in Bulgaria did the figure reach 70.6% in 1934.) In South America less than 55% is found. It is perhaps more instructive to compare figures for young married women between the ages of 15 and 19. In Egypt the percentage was 23.6% in 1937 (32.8% for the 16-19 age-group) and 24.2% in 1947. Such a high rate is found in some Asiatic countries (Turkey—25.8% in 1945) and an exceedingly high number in India (83.9% in 1951). In Europe the highest figure is that for Bulgaria (16.6% in 1954), while in Western Europe it is below 6%; in South America the country having the highest percentage of young married women is Brazil, with 14.8% in 1950 (except for British Guiana, where special conditions prevail). The corresponding figure for the United States was 16.7% in 1950.

An Egyptian law of 1923 (No. 56) stipulating that the registration of marriage is permissible only for women of 16 and over, and also changes of custom and urbanisation, are responsible for a fall in this percentage (over the years 1907, 1917, and 1927, it fell from 48.4% to 39.3% and to 34.8%). However, the fellahs take various steps to elude the law, as Winkler points out in his book on the village of Kiman in the province of

¹ In conversations with scores of fellahs, which the author held at the end of 1956, the majority expressed a desire for many children. Their main reasons were: (a) the need for a working-force to ensure their livelihood; (b) the need for protection of the family, in the event of a quarrel with other families. Cf. also A. H. Fuller, *Buairij, Portrait of a Lebanese Village*, Cambridge, Mass., 1961, p. 35.