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The Ruralization of the Muslim Brotherhood

How Urbanism Retreated in Favor of Ruralism

Hossam Tammam
Egyptian Islamic Movements Researcher

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Introduction

The reason why I never got along with the Muslim Brothers of the city, is that among them are people like yourself, who relish the limelight and prominent positions. The Muslim Brothers of the villages and the rural areas are genuinely good people, who are true to their faith in God…Anyway, say what you will. I have just one question for you: Are you now able to sleep at night?

From a comment by a reader from the Muslim Brotherhood, on an interview by *Al-Masry Al-Youm* Newspaper with Mr. Abd El-Sattar El-Meligy, a former Muslim Brother who has now joined the opposition.

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This study presents what can be referred to as the dilemma of institutional and value modernization inside the Islamic movements. During the past few years, a significant change has occurred in the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: a transformation in behavior and values that foreshadows a process of "ruralization". This process is a break-off from the original nature of the Muslim Brotherhood as an urban group with regard to membership, recruitment, regulations and guidelines. Parallel to that, arose a trend towards expansion in the rural areas, which had previously been seen as unreceptive to religious renewal movements.

Islamic movements are always subject to stereotypical classifications; such as radical, moderate, implementing gradual reform, employing violence, targeting change in government, or targeting change in society. This paper, instead, aims to demonstrate that it is the transformation in the inner structure of the Muslim Brotherhood that is the driving force behind the recent standpoints and developments of the MB, rather than its literature and by-laws. Ruralization is amongst the most significant social phenomena, to that the MB has been exposed.

A significant aspect of the Muslim Brotherhood is its wide social and geographical outreach. Launched in the 1920s in Ismailia, amongst Hassan El-Banna's *Effendis* (educated middle class gentlemen), the MB ideology eventually expanded throughout Egypt. This expansion, when reaching the rural areas, was accompanied by a change in the MB value system. Hence, a question is raised regarding the relation between the rural expansion of the MB institutions on the one hand, and the changes occurring in its organizational structure and value system on the other. This relation can help us understand the occurrence of various political repercussions.

Between Tradition and Modernity

Theoretically, tradition and modernity exist side by side, and we can, for example, see a modern structure with a clear traditional content. But we do not intend here to tackle the dilemma of modernity and tradition, for any debate on this issue brings about more confusion than solutions. It is the very same dilemma that was refuted by Olivier Roy's analytical study of the Afghan war.

For example, the key question in the issue of modernity has always been: would the different modernization processes (such as industrialization, education, technology, democracy, and culture) result in major transformations in the cultural and behavioral patterns; or would they lead to a reaction against, and rejection of, modern values and behaviors, in turn leading to a retreat to "tradition"? This question reflects the challenges of the MB movement from the countryside to the city and the two folds of the relationship between the countryside (where the traditional rural values prevail) and the city (where the civil culture should naturally prevail). this is called the "urbanization of the countryside", where the civil culture takes over, and the "ruralization of the city", where the city reproduces the rural traditional value system.

But one should be very cautious when studying the idea of reproducing tradition (with all its negative connotations). Should it always be regarded

as a reaction to change (and in the worst cases a rejection of modernism) as is always the case in the literature on modernity? Most of the literature of change, against power or politics, focuses on the social class, be it that of the peasants or the city inhabitants (including the Islamic movements). However, it is easy to observe that these classes are very distant from any form of political power or control and thus seek to find it in the traditional value system that preceded the modernization process so that they can revive traditions and preserve societal identities.

To put it simply, one can say that tradition and modernity go hand in hand, mutually dependent on the local as well as the imported criteria and behavior. The political parties, associations and social movements are all modern organizations that interact with and are influenced by the society. The process of modernization requires a transitional phase, during which the new system can adapt itself to the local values, otherwise societies would revert to their old social order (which is known as retraditionnalisation) in order to face the rapid modernization process.

The same can be said of smaller scale organizations, including the Islamic movements, which face an internal conflict of who should have the exclusive representation of the Islamic discourse. When tackling the issue of reform, and in seeking to evaluate the results of modernization, the main actors (the conservative trend in the Islamic movement) rush to propose the element of identity (the rural value system).

The Islamic Movement between the Problematic of Modernity and the Return to Tradition

Social studies of the recruitment and promotion system inside the Islamic movement have asserted the importance of the change factor. These studies have shown that members who are originally from the urban middle class—formed by large waves of immigration from the village to the city—constitute the social backbone of the Islamic movement. In addition, this class shows a trend of

vertical and horizontal mobility, and a divergence from the official religious institution as well as the political authority.

The study of Islamic movements derived greatly from the studies on social movements. It is focused on the analysis of the origin of the Islamic movement in cities and urban areas as a social frame of resistance reviving the identity of the social structure that was undergoing a great deal of modernization (including the increase of inhabitants of cities, rise in literacy rates and use of modern communication tools).

However, the very process of modernization, and the wide spread of Islamic culture, away from religious institutions and scholars, led to the dispute over the Islamic discourse, and the question of who among the different secular or Islamic parties has the exclusive right of representation.

At a later stage, and in the context of the 'conservatism versus reform' dilemma that shapes any social movement, the Islamic discourse would itself become the source of conflict between the Islamic movements, and Islam would change from a factor that defines the movement's identity to a main source of disagreement. It is clear that the Islamic movements comprise contradictions and generational differences that are epitomized in the disagreements between the conservatives, who want to preserve the purity and identity of the movement, and the reformists, who wish to get the movement more involved in the political sphere, with all its implications that would put this purity at stake. As such, the conservatives are usually regarded as traditionalists, who want to preserve the original model of the movement, while the reformists represent the trend towards modernity.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the City: The Origin of the Geographical Positioning

Sheikh Hassan El-Banna, who was a teacher, launched the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. However, the 1930s witnessed a decisive stage in the development of the Movement, especially after it moved from Ismailia to Cairo. During this period, El-Banna laid the basis of the MB ideology—which he had previously started to apply—in a hierarchical Egyptian society where most of the modernizing and liberal political movements were triggered by the aristocratic elite of both the rural and urban societies. Therefore, the MB ideology, to a certain extent, represented the educated middle classes; while it was obviously decreasing among lower class peasants and workers.

This indicates that El-Banna aimed to create a structure capable of resolving the conflict between tradition and modernization. The MB recruited members of urban middle classes including employees, teachers and *Effendis* (to use the popular term), in addition to the Muslim scholars (such as Shiekh Mohamed Ghazaly, and Sheikh Sayed Sabek) who attempted to override the common religious traditions of Al-Azhar at that time. To some extent, these represented the social groups seeking harmony between the prevailing traditional values and the new ones that required adaptation. The Muslim Brotherhood formed a patronage society based on hierarchy, which offered services to its members, and sought to recruit new ones. El-Banna was also eager to give simplified religious lessons to the poor marginalized class, who were not able to access *Feqh* (jurisprudence) literature.

Modern field studies have proven that the Egyptian Islamic movement, like other social movements, has always been linked to its urban origins; and this theory has been clearly verified in the context of the vast modernization movement, which Egypt has witnessed from the late 1960s and during the 1970s. Olivier Roy also mentions that the main fundamentals of modernization based on the rise of urbanization and the spread of free public education eventually produced the so-called intelligentsia or Islamist

cadres. These cadres demanded their rights in the state's resources, and were eager for social upgrade.

During the period between 1970 and 1984, the rate of student admission to secondary schools rose by 41%, and student admission to Egyptian universities reached 50% by the year 1984. In the academic year 1984/1985, the 13 Egyptian universities consumed 38% of the budget allocated to education. During the modernization era (at the end of President Nasser's and President Sadat's rule), this increase was due to the common belief that all fresh graduates would be recruited by the public sector, as at that time, 90% of all new job opportunities were either offered by the government or through emmigration outside Egypt.

In this context, the Muslim Brotherhood actively pursued an expansion strategy by recruiting members from the educated and professional class, as well as university professors. The 1970s in particular witnessed a clear increase in the power of the MB in the educational sector, where they had recruited most university students. In the second half of the 1980s the MB along with the Islamic Group had full control of most of the students unions in Cairo, Alexandria and Zagazig universities, and later in Mansoura and Al-Azhar universities. The MB flourished in the universities most particularly after offering educational services to students. In the late 1980s, the MB took up a new electoral strategy based on competition for leadership positions in the technical and educational syndicates, which were a typical stronghold of the middle class intellectuals with a distinctive urban lifestyle.

The consecutive dominance of the MB in syndicates during the 1980s, mostly represented by the university graduates of the 1970s, was well-organized and far-reaching. The MB dominated the engineers syndicate in 1987, doctors in 1988, pharmacists in 1989, Egypt's Trade Union in 1989, Cairo University Branch Club in 1990, and lawyers in 1992. Under MB leadership, the syndicates were actively propagating the movement by offering employment to young doctors, teachers and other professionals and as such, appeared to

provide the same services and serve the same functions of the state, which meant that the MB started to started to develop a new well-organized recruitment strategies.

Structurally, the MB was influenced by Marx's intellectual legacy, and as a result they formed a new regulatory bureaucratic body similar to the mass Communist movements (movements with a distinctive urban nature, given their dynamic ideology and social legacy), organized across Egyptian governorates and civil centers. This body is headed by the MB Supreme Guide, and comprises MB affiliated members in specialized sections and municipal branches. In 1930, the MB established five branches across the country, which increased to fifteen branches in 1932 and reached three hundred branches in 1938. At first, the *Usra* (family) or smaller units of the Muslim Brotherhood's hierarchy consisted of five to ten affiliated members bound together by personal ties. The elected president represents the whole *Usra* in the branch meetings. Mitchell estimated that in that early phase of the MB history, the three hundred branches comprised fifty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand affiliated members, which reflects the vast mobilization and recruitment capacities of the MB. However, after the assassination of Prime Minister Mahmoud Fahmi Nuqrashi, the MB was considered a threat to the State, and therefore maintained a tight lid of secrecy, under which it was not possible to estimate the number of its affiliated members.

Phases of Correlation with the Countryside

The countryside was one of the most important factors that influenced this urban Islamic movement, as the movement was closely associated with its rural origin. Economic factors contributed to the failure of the countryside in fulfilling the basic needs of its population and eventually led to waves of migration to the cities. The political authority that dominated the economic resources of the state, the global economy, and most particularly landownership, large enterprises in the field of agriculture that recruited

a majority of Egyptian laborers during the reign of Nasser, the open-door policy in the 1970s and launching the structural adjustment program are all factors that led to the deterioration of development programs and sufferance of the lower classes from social backwardness and insecurity, even in the cities to which they had recently migrated.

Thus, the MB became at the center of attraction to Egyptian cities, especially after the return of the MB to the arena once again during Sadat reign in the 1970s and until the late 1980s. Perhaps the most important factor, apart from the MB ability to organize and to recruit new members, was the comprehensive social services that it provided to new immigrants to Egyptian cities. Following the 1952 Revolution, Egypt as a whole underwent the largest wave of ruralization and witnessed frequent waves of migration from the countryside to major cities, such as Cairo and Alexandria. The MB flourished during the 1980s and was capable of mobilizing newly affiliated members. It mostly recruited government employees, teachers, and *Effendis*, even in the countryside. Although education and urbanization normally bring about a secular outlook, most immigrants to the Egyptian cities worked in the education sector, particularly in secondary education. Therefore, there is a clear relation between the social status reflected by the choice of work in education and the social structure of rural areas, indicating a natural inclination to horizontal and vertical mobilization at the same time.

The village, hence, played a prominent role in providing MB with a social legacy of clear organizational and ideological indications. Most members belong to rural conservative classes, but had also received a religious education, in the sense that their rural origin and traditions have a great tributary religious value. When MB members went to the cities to complete their education, they sought religious refuge in a mosque, religious society, or kottab (these are old-fashioned educational circles focused on memorizing the Qur'an as well as primary writing and reading skills). But they remained at odds with the urban habits and traditions, resulting from a

rapid modernization process, which led to a breakdown of the moral system of the cities.

While some rural MB members sought a horizontal mobilization and emigrated to major governorates and cosmopolitan cities, Cairo and Alexandria in particular, others sought a vertical mobilization, through their choice of education, as a means of social elevation and this was reflected in their choice of education. The MB had been actively recruiting teachers and professors, but most of the new recruits were rural in their culture and understanding of public life. Despite their scholarly pedigree, many of these academics were parochial in their understanding of the world. The MB had nearly 3,000 university professors in its ranks, and few or any of those were endowed with the habit of critical thinking. They may be academics, but they were no visionaries, and this reflected the predominant trend of education in Egypt at the time.

In the early 1990s, several factors led to the weakening of the MB and the deterioration of its mobilization capacity in the cities. This prompted the movement to re-examine its mobilization strategies.

For some time the MB structure appealed mainly to rural elements. Due to the long-running (though peaceful) confrontation with the regime, and the fear of belonging to the movement, MB found it harder to recruit urban supporters as it raised a fear of belonging to the movement. Moreover, its inability to develop its discourse had turned off many city dwellers, especially that in the last two decades the MB focused excessively on organization and militarization, at the expense of the open *Da'wah* (sermons and preaching) which was more appealing.

Moreover, with the advent of the open Islamic media, the religious websites and satellite channels young people started to become followers of new preachers and sheikhs, rather than the MB. Those alternatives were considered less regulatory, less military and far less prone to the blows of the

regime that had been targeting the MB in the last fifteen year, and that had created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear.

Instead of joining the MB Puritanism, urban youth seeking spiritual salvation embraced the *Salafi* trend or became followers of the country's new breed of well-spoken televangelist preachers. Moreover, the MB had mostly abandoned religious Puritanism in favor of the political arena—becoming more of politicians than preachers.

Therefore, a quick reading of the evolution of the MB over the past two decades shows that its attraction of countryside people coincided with the disintegration of the extended family and the weakening of communal ties, as it offered them an alternative family and a cloning of the village. This shelter appealed most to new arrivals from the countryside, people who missed the stability and comfort of a traditional community and sought a moral and social refuge in the MB, which protected them from being alienated in the cities.

MB Recruitment and Promotion: Features of Ruralization

Observers of the MB's geographical and cultural relation with countryside in the last few years, will note that recruitment and promotion in the group focused on immigrants from the countryside rather than indigenous urban people. In universities, the MB attracted newcomers to the city rather than original city dwellers, and was more successful in recruiting students from Al-Azhar University than other universities, from rural governorates than from Cairo and Alexandria, students from university towns than from urban areas. This had not been the case in the first years of the MB establishment.

In 1938, El-Banna noted that members of the local branches were more like conservative aristocracy, who had become more influential over time, and that there were many organizational positions that had no clear purpose. Consequently, he applied structural amendments that had clear implications, most significantly: membership to the administrative offices in

municipal branches became by appointment by the Guidance Bureau, and not by election. In 1941, El-Banna abolished the MB General Council and replaced it with a smaller body, the Current *Shura* (consultants) Council. The recruitment process in the structural levels became selective and was put under constant surveillance in order to eliminate any possibility of exploitation of position. Indeed, the municipal branches remained independent, which allowed them to carry on with their work even in the event of arrest of one of the members. Therefore, Article VII, which was amended in the acting MB by-law (adopted in 1990 and amended in May 2009), stresses that a member shall not combine two memberships; the Guidance Bureau and the governorates administrative offices, except in Cairo. Due to police prosecution and the increasing pressure from the regime, the MB also later added an article that increased the powers of the Guidance Bureau as "the administrative body and the Supreme Executive Leadership, which supervises the MB *Da'wah*, directs its policy and management, and is responsible for all its affairs and the organization of its divisions and formations" (Article V). Moreover, the Guidance Bureau may act as the *Shura* Council in case the latter was unable to convene.

In the last few years, on the initiative of the Guidance Bureau, the MB saw an expanded influence of the rural governorates; which played a major role in the ruralization of Egyptian cities. Rural governorates; such as Assiut, Minya, Dakahlia and Sharkiya, had an increasing dominance over many MB positions, especially the middle-ranking ones. The MB increasingly recruited members from these rural governorates, to the extent that they came to occupy leading positions in the Group's second line of management. This coincided with the gradual exclusion, from leadership positions, of icons of the 1970s generation, a generation which had led the MB out of its secrecy and into the public work arena, and parliamentary and syndicate elections.

The MB *Shura* Council elections in May 2008 re-distributed the comparative weight of Egyptian governorates, so that rural governorates

(Dakahlia in particular) were granted more weight in the formation of the *Shura* Council at the expense of the urban governorates, such as Alexandria and Cairo. This was due to the MB ruralization process, or to intentionally accelerate this transformation, which may be considered in the best interest of the leadership and to get the rank-and-file offer unquestioning loyalty to top officials.

It is significant that one third of the *Shura* Council's seventy-five members, originate from three rural governorates in the Delta; ten from Dakahlia, eight from Sharkiya and five from Gharbiyah. Rural governorates, such as Assiut, Minya, Dakahlia and Sharkiya, are in control of much of the MB middle-ranking posts. On the other hand, the number of *Shura* Council members from Cairo and Alexandria, the core of Egypt's metropolitan cultural and political life, did not exceed 11 members.

The consequence of this was evident after the Guidance Bureau election in December 2009, which was scheduled four months earlier than its set date, to appoint a Supreme Guide. After the elections a leading reformist of the group demanded the review of the governorate quota system of the *Shura* Council, which had been amended to be on the basis of active membership, a system which he described as flawed. He also pointed out that the quota seats of Cairo, Egypt's metropolitan center, were less than other governorates, such as Dakahlia. Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh, a former Guidance Bureau member, said that the amendments made to the MB by-law allowed the Guidance Bureau to appoint up to 20% of the *Shura* provincial councils members, and that these amendments were based on an article within the Guidance Bureau by-law. This article grants the Bureau the right to act as the MB *Shura* Council in case the latter was not able to convene. Moreover, he called for reviewing the MB internal by-law as well as restricting the appointment of the *Shura* Council members and its provincial councils through the Guidance Bureau.

It became clear in later years that the MB was unable to urbanize the countryside. The rural governorates of Upper Egypt (Sohag, Assiout and Minya) and the Delta (Gharbiya, Sharkiya and Dakahlia), which had traditional social structures, and which had hitherto been disinclined to join the MB are now more accepting of the MB, and the MB members can easily compete or even win parliamentary elections in these rural areas.

In the 2008 MB internal elections, five members of the *Shura* Council won seats in the Guidance Bureau. Four were from rural areas or were people with a distinct rural lifestyle, namely: Saadeddin El-Husseini from Gharbiya, Mohi Hamed from Sharkiya, Mohamed Abdel Rahman from Dakahlia, and Saadeddin El-Katatni from Minya. Only one was from a metropolitan center; Osama Nasr from Alexandria. Over the past decade or so, most of the newcomers to the Guidance Bureau were from the countryside. They had sweeping victory in a number of periodical Guidance Bureau promotions that took place, without elections from the *Shura* Council, in order to fill vacancies resulting from the death or detention of Guide Bureau members. Top most of these were Mahmoud Hussein from Assiut, Sabri Arafa El-Komi from Dakahlia, and Mohamed Moursy from Sharkia.

A quick analysis of the results of recent Guidance Bureau elections emphasizes the wide expansion of the countryside at the top of MB hierarchy, which followed their expansion in the *Shura* Council.

The members elected were Mohamed Ghazlan, Rashad Bayoumi (from Cairo, but originally from Souhag), Essam El-Eryan (originally from the rural parts of Giza), and Mahmoud Ezzat (from Cairo, but originally from Dakahlia). Two members were from Alexandria; namely, Ossama Nasr El-Din and Gomaa Ameen Abdel-Aziz. However, the rest of the Guidance Bureau was dominated by the rural newcomers, including Saad El-Housseni (from Gharbia), Abd El-Rahman El-Barr (from Dakahlia), Mohamed Badie (from El-Mahalla El-Kubra, but representative of Beni Suef), Saad El-Katatny (from Souhag but resident of Menia), Mohamed Abdel-Rahman Moursi (from

rural Dakahlia), Mahmoud Hussein (from Assyout), Mohi Hamed (from Sharkia), and Moustafa Al-Ghonemi (from Gharbia).

Besides increasing the rural seats in the *Shura* Council, the MB attempted to expand rural membership in the latest Guidance Bureau elections. This was done by moving the residency of some rural leaders to Cairo, so that their membership in the Guidance Bureau could be counted as Cairene, even though they used to run the elections as rural-affiliated members, and they actually still belong to their rural origins. This is what happened in the case of Mohamed Moursy who was promoted without being elected to Guidance Bureau during his last MB membership cycle; he was only listed as one of Cairo's members after moving to Cairo.

Cultural Patterns of the Muslim Brotherhood: Signs of Ruralization

During the early years of the MB movement, El-Banna culturally and ideologically combined his religious renewal project with the social reform process. This was a period of fluctuation in social interaction between old members and newcomers. In his diaries, he mentioned how a culture of indifference to Islam prevailed and characterized social life at that time; especially as Al-Azhar that was extremely immersed in religious traditions and was far away from the daily life of ordinary Egyptians, not to mention the complexity of its religious discourse, all of which led to its weakness. This was followed by a total loss of principles in an open capitalist regime that exposed Egypt to foreign influences, along with a stream of principles acquired after a century of Egypt's interaction with the West.

In the 1970s, Egypt witnessed an accelerating pace of modernization and urbanization. This shifted the movement's focus from the economic domain, which had been represented in the confrontation with imperialist powers and British colonialism during the 1940s and 1950s, to the cultural and ethical domains in the 1960s and 1970s, which was a period that reflected increased social deterioration, especially in the cities. For a young rural newcomer, who had recently moved to a big governorate or city, getting a good wife

was just as important as completing his higher education or gaining a well-ranked position. The value system based on Islam and Sharia (Islamic jurisdiction) in addition to the MB social, educational and professional services, attracted and recruited a growing number of supporters. Those new comers from the countryside came from conservative origins and close-knit families. They created a link between the Egyptian village and the new families that they formed in cities. Their new families even offered a refuge for young newcomers. After the MB expansion, they united with other social categories to form a social aggregate, consisting of young landowners and merchants as well as religious studies students. However, this minor-bourgeoisie suffered exclusion from the open economy and the inherited dominance of the rural aristocracy that had also expanded in the cities. There is no wonder that the MB structure depends on the *Usra* as its smallest organizational unit, representing the traditional role of the family, especially in the village. Indeed, the organizational units built in urban centers and governorates seemed as a cloning of the solidarity units of the traditional rural life.

Over the past two decades, the MB attraction to village people coincided with the disintegration of the extended families and the inability of university institutions, with their stringent housing terms, to host newcomers. Moreover, the westernization of city life may have pushed many people with a rural background into seeking a moral and social refuge in the Muslim Brotherhood. Meanwhile, the disintegration of the traditional rural community paved the way for the expansion of the MB in the village. However, the rural culture and inter-relational pattern influenced the MB more than vice-versa.

During past years, the MB witnessed a dominance of rural culture, different from the culture, on which it had been built. The rural culture is a patriarchal, culture where members show absolute obedience and deference to their leaders. A culture of reward, punishment and intimidation also prevailed even in organizational relations, as well as a culture of fear of

anything different or unfamiliar. Accordingly, there was a tendency towards similarity and symmetry between members, and the MB became more and more stereotypical every day.

This was reflected in the spread of new and strange terms among the members; such as, "uncle *hajj*", "the big *hajj*", "our blessing", "the blessing of the Brotherhood", "our sheikh and the crown on our heads", etc., in addition to new behaviors, such as kissing the hands and heads of the top leaders (such as when a Brotherhood parliamentarian kissed the hand of the Supreme Guide in public). This reflected the emergence of a rural culture totally new to the MB, which operated mostly in an urban context. This culture invaded the MB and overwhelmed Egyptian cities during that last few decades. The MB became like one big village, similar to other Egyptian villages, where no secret can be hidden. Brotherhood "gossip" communities prevailed, following members' personal and familial affairs and mixed private issues with organizational ones. One example of this is the case of Mr. Al-Sayed Abdel-Sattar El-Meligy, member of the *Shura* Council, where the main discussion shifted from laws and regulations to personal behavior. The justification for such invasion of privacy is that it is for the good of the MB. The MB is often seen as a social community, whose main aim is the sustenance of the Group, even at the expense of the true origin of its very existence, and even if this entails a disregard of its own regulations.

In the field of education, where the MB first prevailed, the movement overwhelmingly adopted, in recent years, a form of teaching that tended to discourage critical thinking and to favor rigid preaching and unquestioning obedience. This trend is met with frequent complaint, even in the MB's own schools, which had produced a generation of traditional stereotypes.

The Political Implications: Consequences of Ruralization

These cultural features refer to what we may call the MB "ruralization". The expansion of the rural element does not only signify the dominance of a certain geographical area, but also reflects the values and behavior of the MB as a group that is considered the leading political power in the country.

We mean by "ruralization" the spread of a new culture and a new pre-institutional pattern of relations, rooted in primary loyalties. This was totally different from the culture of the MB when it first emerged as an urban society. A major feature of ruralization, was that it was no longer important to have *Shura* elections, or to follow any internal election regulations. The most important matter discussed came to be the necessity of respect for leadership, and absolute faith in it.

The implications of this "Ruralization" are reflected in the lack of respect for rules and regulations that govern relations within MB. This was obvious during recent elections (especially the 2008 and 2009 elections) where media coverage was at its worst, and where there was a lack of correct information, and a disregard of governing regulations.

The growth of non-institutional relations within MB led to the expansion of "nepotism" in the form of secondary loyalties. Accordingly entire regions, indeed entire governorates, were viewed as fiefdoms pertaining to certain organizational leaders. A certain governorate or area was referred to as being the territory of certain individuals, and leadership promotions were fundamentally dependent on the degree of closeness to top officials.

In its relation with authority, this rural duplicity is shown in the form of fear, hatred, secrecy and false submission, and in adopting two discourses, one for the community and the other for the authority—be it the authority of the ruling regime or MB legislative authority. Therefore, there is a theoretical submission to authority, an acceptance of the MB laws and regulations, and no direct objection to what the leadership says, but practically speaking , it is the traditional rules that are applied.

This explains why many ideas and proposals (such as seen in the recent political situations) were of no concern inside the movement.

Generally, we may say that the era of Hassan El-Banna's *Effendis* is over. The *Effendis* in charge at the time, such as Hassan El-Hudaiby, Omar El-Telmissany, Hassan Ashmawy, Mounir Dallah, Abdul-Qader Helmy and Farid Abdul-Khaleq, or even the elite rural members; such as, Mohamed Hamed Abul-Nassr, Saleh Abu Raqiq and Abbas El-Sisi, have been replaced by rural newcomers, who are now at the top leadership positions, even in Cairo.

To a large extent, this also applies to the post of the Supreme Guide. For example during the course of his leadership, the former Supreme Guide Mohamed Mahdi Akef's discourse and pattern of management reflected the village culture.

In his capacity as a Supreme Guide, from 2004 till 2009, Mahdy Akef acted in a spontaneous rural manner, which dragged the MB into fierce battles with the media over critical and sensitive matters, such as, his stance towards Bin Laden, relations with Israel, MB localization and even towards the Egyptian president himself. He crossed the traditional boundaries with his explosive statements, in an area which was normally assigned to the MB media team. This was not the case in the reign of the 6th Supreme Guide Maamoun El-Hudhiby, a judge who came from a firm legal and institutional culture, or the 5th Supreme Guide Mostafa Mashhour, who ruled the organization with an iron fist.

It becomes clear, in the end, that the MB structure and new organizational culture could not withstand the village value system, despite its compatibility with the original conservative nature of the MB. This hypothesis of the ruralization of the MB is proven by the reproduction of rural cultural values inside the MB, where resistance to reform will tend to recall MB former rules prior to the phase of public work, and openness to the media and its methods of modernization.

Therefore, the MB expansion in the Egyptian village, which occurred most particularly after intensive repression by the ruling regime in mid-1990s,

is closely related to the fact that rural areas are at a distance from strict governmental authority. However, theoretically, we may notice that this expansion coincided with the rise of the MB reform movement, which proves that this ruralization is related to internal affairs and not linked to the relations with regime. In such a case, we can indeed say that the increase of rural influence inside the urban group is related to its tendency to become more conservative, and to resist the attempts of reform coming from inside MB itself. This vision is adopted by the MB leadership, assuming that the MB is being penetrated and has to undergo a process of reform.

It is well-known that any reform attempt faces fundamentalist resistance (by the society or the MB), which seems accordant with traditions (or the cultural characteristics of the society or MB) not accepting of the reform agenda. If reform efforts and resistance are governed by issues of identity (which in this case is related to rural culture). It is no wonder that the efforts of mobilization and framing that proceed more and more towards the new model of revived traditions beyond the dilemma of conservation and reform are being reconsidered. Therefore, the MB value system is an important source for mobilization and polarization, and as a result conflict between the reform discourse and the right of different parties' right to express their identity aggravates.

Obviously, there is a correlation between the tendency to conservatism, the dominance of the rural element, and the dominance of the conservative *Salafi* element in the general trend of the MB ideology. The question now is, can the common values between the *Salafi* movement and the rural areas constitute an ideological dimension, which can transcend the generational and social contradictions that led to the MB crises during recent years? Or will there be a tradition of obedience, deference and stereotyping, favoring the organizational principal at the expense of diversity, and leading to the retreat of the MB ideology which is the only guarantee for its unity?