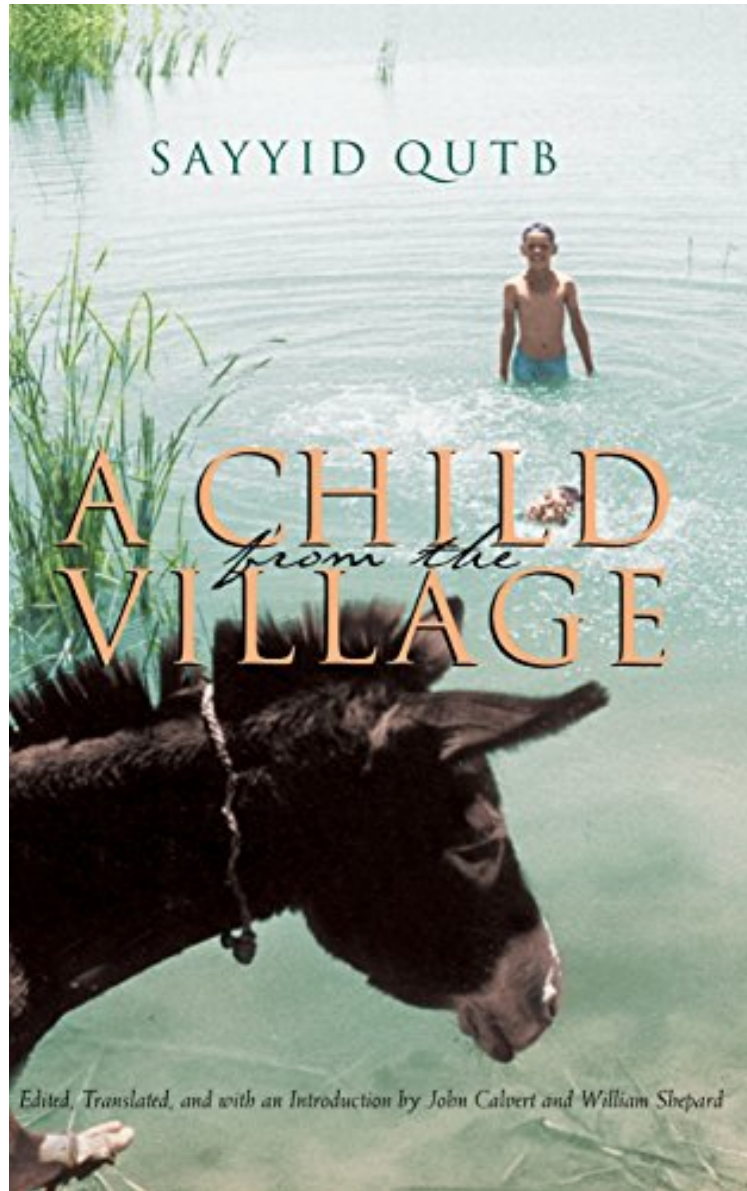


[PDF] A Child From the Village (Middle East Literature In Translation)

A Child From the Village (Middle East Literature In Translation)

Sayyid Qutb

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#1309079 in Books Sayyid Qutb John Calvert William E Shepard 2004-11-01 Original language: Arabic PDF # 1 9.28 x .75 x 6.30l, .98 #File Name: 0815608055184 pages A Child from the Village | File size: 73.Mb

Sayyid Qutb : A Child From the Village (Middle East Literature In Translation) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Child From the Village (Middle East Literature In Translation):

8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. memoir of childhood early 20th Century Egypt By J. Kemp Sayyid

Qutb is best known as an Islamist radical, a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and an inspiration to Al Qaeda. But this book describing his childhood was written before he began his serious radical activities; and it shows no hint of his future negative influences. It is a wonderful first-hand description of his childhood in a small Egyptian village. The village customs and personalities are described with affection. He describes the superstitions surrounding the mentally ill [they are holy and highly respected]; belief in afreet spirits; going to school during the annual flood of the Nile; and many more details about life in a rural Egyptian village. He also describes how his family, more educated than most, did not believe all of the superstitions; and how his schoolteacher proved that the afreet in the shape of rabbits were, in fact, rabbits escaped from their cages. Although the memoir primarily recounts what it was like to be a boy in that time and place, it also shows the value his family placed on education and some degree of modernization. I would not have predicted, from this memoir, that he would grow up to be a seminal thinker in Islamist extremist ideology.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Poignant humanistic account of traditional poor village life, by a surprising author. By Dalcassian. The cachet of this book is its author's later career (after 1948) when he transformed into the "Karl Marx" of modern Islamism. But in this earlier work from the 1930s, he is a modernity-loving observer/memoirist who writes with both talent and compassion about the wretched of Egypt's earth. These are the people of his village in Upper Egypt, along with even poorer migrant farm laborers who pass through and help from time to time. The story is told through the eyes of an unnamed young boy, referred to in the text as "our boy" or "our friend" and who is a thinly veiled version of Qutb himself, relating his own real-life memories in the third-person about life and living conditions in the middle to late 1910s. The book is not only poignant and educational, it is funny. The tale where the village kids are given 30 minutes or so by the public health doctor to produce stool and urine samples -- something strange they had no experience of, and to do so for a doctor they only knew from his previous visits to perform autopsies -- is laugh-out-loud funny as the kids' instantly develop a barter and hunt system for "samples" to be produced for those of the kids who could not "produce" in time. The story and book are narrated with a constant dry wit embedded. But something even better is done here and elsewhere: Qutb uses this and other stories as occasions to seamlessly introduce details of the less colorful and more academic parts of village life such as the town's sewage systems, social relations, farming practices and so forth. It is as if Mark Twain had become an Egyptian anthropologist. And without the real Twain's condescension towards such people. (A Twain analogy for Qutb here in terms of wit, style, and content-- or perhaps better still to Yiddishist Sholom Aleichem -- is only slightly an exaggeration, if at all. Qutb is quite the cutup.) Again, author Qutb's later descent into darkness is worthy of deep curiosity and puzzlement. His expressed sensitivity in this volume to the secondary and lonely place of women in traditional society is strong, and yet... later in life Qutb will reverse himself and fall back onto advocating a dark variation of this kind of tradition, and do so in a form that has become increasingly armed and extremely dangerous. But here, he is a voice crying for fairness to the lowly, to women and men, and singing the praises of modern thought and education, while cursing the harshness of tradition, superstition, and the cruelties of government tyranny. And he does so with a literary aim that effectively eviscerates the troubling traditions and the poverty, but does not eviscerate the people who live under them. An amazing, informative, enjoyable -- and eminently readable -- work by a paradoxical figure.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Worth reading. By Caroline Janssen. Really interesting book about every-day realities and social dynamics in an Egyptian village at the beginning of the 20th century. Very different aspects of village life are brought to life in an account that is hilarious and moving at times. The author creates empathy with the poorest, explains village politics, and exposes how the government fails to connect to the people with disastrous consequences. It does so in a very insightful way and anyone trying to understand third-world realities could take an interest in this book. The book can be read as a response to Taha Husayn's "Days" to which it explicitly refers (I used it in classroom to let students explore these authors, initially without uncovering Sayyid Qutb's identity and background). A Child from the Village contains more details about the countryside, and is more empathic towards the villagers. The fact that Sayyid Qutb became an icon of Islamism afterwards adds a special flavor to reading this book. This book shows us an author with a great social concern (nothing is hidden) and love for those who are poor and ill-treated.

Well known throughout the Islamic world as the foundational thinker for a significant portion of the contemporary Muslim intelligentsia, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and was jailed by Gamal Abdul Nassers government in 1954. He became one of the most uncompromising voices of the movement we now call Islamism and is perhaps best known for his book, *Ma`lam fi al-tariq*. *A Child from the Village* was written just prior to Qutb's conversion to the Islamist cause and reflects his concerns for social justice. Interest in Qutb's writing has increased in the West since Islamism has emerged as a power on the world scene. In this memoir, Qutb recalls his childhood in the village of Musha in Upper Egypt. He chronicles the period between 1912 and 1918, a time immensely influential in the creation of modern Egypt. Written with much tenderness toward childhood memories, it has become a classic in modern Arabic autobiography. Qutb offers a clear picture of Egyptian village life in the early twentieth century, its customs and lore, educational system, religious festivals, relations with the central government, and the struggle to modernize and retain its identity. Translators John Calvert and William Shepard capture the beauty and

intensity of Qutb's prose.

The child's eye, feelings, emotions, as well as the comments of a grown-up writer present valuable information for students who are interested in the modern history of Egypt as well as those who are interested in the history of Egyptian culture. In addition, the book provides scholars of Qutb's ideology with the texture of life that produced, and still produces, such an ideology, in which the cry for social and political justice is mixed with a utopian adherence to a divine law. (Nasr Abu-Zayd author of *Rethinking the Quran: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*)

About the Author: John Calvert is professor of history at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He is the author of numerous books, including *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*. William Shepard was professor emeritus of religious studies at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. He is the author of *The Faith of a Modern Muslim Intellectual: The Religious Aspects and Implications of the Writings of Ahmad Amin and Sayyid Qutb* and *Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of "Social Justice in Islam."*