



On Tuesday, May 28, 2024 at 11am at CEDEJ, **Reem Saad** will present her research: "War Stories of Peasant Soldiers: From Village Ethnography to War Archives".

This talk presents oral history interviews with Egyptian peasant men who fought as soldiers in wars between 1956 and 1973. I recorded the interviews in 1988-1989 in a Fayoum Governorate village, as part of ethnographic fieldwork for my D.Phil thesis: "Peasant's Perceptions of Recent Egyptian History". First, the talk looks at how these interviews were used within their original ethnographic context. I argue not only that peasants knew about historical and political developments outside their village, but also that they were historical actors taking part in these events. The interviews show the correspondence between autobiographical and historical accounts, whereby reminiscing about these events was simultaneously reminiscing about one's own life history. Furthermore, these accounts revealed how men's role outside the village connects village and nation while simultaneously playing a role in the construction and display of male social identity. Second, I discuss my intention to make these interviews publicly accessible. This project was triggered by the recent public and scholarly interest in writing fuller and more meaningful stories of recent wars, especially the 1967 and 1973 wars, and the challenges that researchers face given the lack of documentation and the immense difficulties of accessing official archives. There are obvious merits to making available an additional resource, especially one that provides the often missing voice of individual soldiers. But the question remains of how these stories would fare within the domain of war archives, and what it would entail to disconnect them from their original ethnographic context.

Reem Saad is a social anthropologist based in Cairo. Her academic research and publications focus on agriculture and rural transformation. Her public engagement activities include advocating against the death penalty and initiatives to promote social science learning beyond institutional borders. She has previously held a number of positions at the American University in Cairo where she was an Associate Professor of Social Anthropology, the Director of the Middle East Studies Center, and a Research Associate Professor at the Social Research Center.
