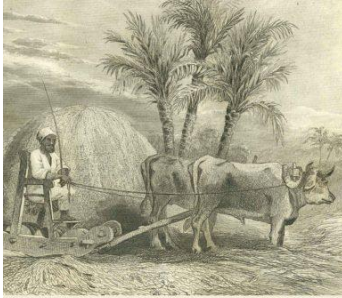


## *State, Peasants and Land in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt* (American University in Cairo Press, 2023)

*Maha Ghalwash*



State, Peasants,  
and Land in  
Mid-Nineteenth-  
Century Egypt

Maha A. Ghalwash

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This book examines the rural history of Egypt during the mid-nineteenth century years (1848-1863), a period that is often glossed over, or altogether forgotten. It focuses on the relationship between the absolutist state and the majority of its subject population, the peasant smallholders during this juncture. Drawing on a wide array of archival sources, some only rarely utilized by other scholars, like the *athurat* registers, it sheds new light on this relationship. This involves specifying state views and perspectives as documented by these sources as well as highlighting peasants' voices, views, experiences and agential power.

Traditional interpretations of the rural developments of nineteenth century Egypt generally specify an avaricious state, so indifferent toward peasant well-being that it consistently developed harsh policies that led to unremitting, extensive peasant impoverishment. On the other hand, this study shows that these ideas do not hold for the mid-century period. It argues that state policy targeting the peasant land tenure regime was informed by the dual economic principles of the Ottoman (or traditional) philosophy of statecraft, and that the workings of the relevant rules and regulations did not produce extensive peasant land loss and impoverishment. This involves challenging conventional assumptions on crucial issues as land legislation, tax impositions, the system of tax collection, the modes of land acquisition, large-scale peasant abandonment of land, the formation of large, privileged estates, distribution of village land, women's right to inherit land, and the nature of peasant political activity.

An empirically-driven study, it presents an alternative interpretation of state – peasant relations during the mid-nineteenth century.

### *More information*

<https://aucpress.com/product/state-peasants-and-land-in-mid-nineteenth-century-egypt/>

### *About the author*

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where she is Associate Professor of Middle East History & Politics. Her research on nineteenth century Egypt focuses on the impact of state policies on peasant society.