

[CFP - Working in Egypt in the 19th Century, AUC, Cairo, March 30-31 2018](#)

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We are pleased to share with you the Call for Papers for the upcoming Annual History Seminar organized by the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations, American University in Cairo.

American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

Annual History Seminar

Working in Egypt in the 19th Century

30-31 March 2018

Oriental Hall, Tahrir Square Campus

Egypt underwent major transformations in the 19th century, some of which had important impacts on work. The functions of government expanded; in the administration, in education, in the military, and its role in the economy increased. Throughout the century, the state initiated major economic projects, some of which required a high level of technology and large numbers of workers. Similarly, in rural areas changes in the patterns of land ownership and tenure transformed the landscape, including the way that work is carried out. Moreover, the incursions of European capitalism and ultimately the British occupation had a major impact on numerous aspects that affected workers, craftsmen, guilds and working methods.

These transformations of the 19th century were felt by various social groups, albeit in different ways; by the wealthy as well as the poor, by rural as well as by urban dwellers, by men as well as by women and children, and by foreigners living in Egypt as well as by the indigenous members of the population.

For its 2018 session the Annual History Seminar will focus on working in Egypt in the 19th century to question issues related to workers, their recruitment, training, organization and management, both rural and urban work, crafts, handicraft and industrial work, and other forms of labor. This focus aims to bring into the presentations and discussions a number of vital questions which have a bearing on our understanding of the century as a whole and the subsequent history of Egypt.

From craft to labor: A number of major state projects were undertaken during the 19th century, one example being the Suez Canal. The establishment of these projects meant that large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled labor were needed. Were new forms of labour introduced to answer the

growing demand? Where was this labour recruited (Outside Egypt? From rural areas? Etc). What new work hierarchies were introduced to accommodate these large working places and workforces? How did this affect working culture? What was the origin of factory workers (rural, craftsmen, slaves, Europeans?) and what skills did they bring with them?

At the same time, many artisans and craftsmen, in textiles for instance, faced new difficulties in having to compete with cheap imports. The transformations, important as they were, did not automatically displace earlier forms of work. Artisans and craftsmen continued to be active; in fact, new crafts were introduced. Some guilds continued to function even to the end of the century. They nevertheless had to bring some changes to their work in order to adapt to the new conditions. One consequence of this situation was the emergence of hybrid forms of work, which combined more than one mode. For example, in the factories initiated by Muhammad Ali, workers brought in their craft skills and guilds were used to help recruit workers. How did various forms of work develop and co-exist?

Recruitment of forced labour, corvée and slavery: Even though there was a considerable increase of population during the 19th century, it appears that the need for labor was also on the increase and was at least partially met by forced labour and the use of corvée and of slaves. To what extent were such recruitment practices used, where and why? And how and when were they stopped? Were conditions in the Suez Canal and other large-scale projects conducive to this kind of labour?

Industrialization and de-industrialization: Who did it affect, (urban, rural, male, female)? Did these conditions bring about new forms of poverty? Did they provide new opportunities for social advancement?

Domestic labor: Household structures also underwent significant change during the 19th century. How did the rise of new labor forms, industrial and large-scale workforces, influence other small-scale labor including domestic labor? How did the abolition of slavery affect domestic labor, both male and female? How did migrant labor, such as European governesses hired in elite homes, affect domestic labor and household structures?

Education and professional labor: New techniques and new machines and work organization required training. How did new types of educational institutions react to these demands? What new professions were created as a result? What were their effects on the labor market and on social mobility? How did the new schools and their graduates affect the older professions?

Law and Labor: How did the changes in the legal system in the 19th century affect work and workers? What new limitations and rights developed as a result of the changing legal system? How did laws affect job opportunities and attract or incentivise foreign labor and labor migration?

Presentations, in English or Arabic, of around 20 minutes on any of the above themes and topics are requested. Multi-disciplinary approaches to the history of the region are especially welcome. Graduate students and young scholars are encouraged to apply.

Unfortunately, due to limited resources, the AHS is unable to fund travel or accommodation. The seminar sessions will be held on 30 and 31 March 2018 at the Oriental Hall, American University in Cairo - Tahrir Square Campus.

If interested, please send an abstract of no longer than 300 words, in English or Arabic, by **Wednesday 15 November, 2017**. Participants will be informed by mid December 2017.

For more information and to send an abstract, please email Professor Nelly Hanna, ARIC, AUC: nhanna@aucegypt.edu and Marwa Sabri msabri@aucegypt.edu.

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