

## Scandal of Village "Abū Şinēṭa"

—A case study on the background of the village notables' authority in the mid-nineteenth century Egypt—

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Briefly speaking, the socio-economic history of modern Egypt from the mid-nineteenth century is characterized by the usually implicit, but occasionally explicit conflict between the following two categories of landlords both of which emerged from the collapse of the so-called "landholding system of state ownership" in the reign of Muḥammad 'Alī (ruled 1805—1848); the first is the ruling class of Turkish origin, and the second is the village notables.

The aim of this article is to analyze the background of the latter's authority, based on an unpublished document classified in the Egyptian National Archives (Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīya) as "*Maḥāfiẓ Ma'īya Sanīya Turki*, carton no. 5, document no. 300". This document is an investigation report from the Ministry of Treasury to the Legislative Committee (Majlis al-Aḥkām), in respect to the three lawsuits against the chief ('umda) of Village "Abū Şinēṭa" in Menūfiya Province on his illegal confiscation of the villagers' properties.

Its description is so detailed that it is possible from it to reconstruct the social structure and human relations in the society of the above village, and to discuss the social, economic and political background of its 'umda's authority, a typical village notable in the mid-nineteenth century Egypt, whose influence extended over the local and the central administration as well as the village administration.