

# The History of Egypt

Ancient Egypt was the birthplace of one of the world's first great civilizations. For 3,000 years, the pharaohs of Egypt ruled. This period ended when the Roman Empire took over Egypt in 30 B.C. In A.D. 639, Egypt was a province of the East Roman Empire. Most of the people belonged to the Coptic Christian religion. Life changed when Muslims from Syria invaded Egypt. They captured Alexandria and set up a military camp at Cairo. The Egyptian people eventually adopted the Arabic language and the Islamic religion. Their new Arab Muslim rulers were called *caliphs*.



In 969, the Fatimids, members of an Islamic minority group known as Shiites, conquered Egypt. They made Cairo their capital city and built the famous Al-Azhar mosque. Their empire was weakened by internal fighting and by the Christian Crusades. In 1171, Saladin, a powerful army officer, drove out the Crusaders and returned the orthodox form of Islam to Egypt. He became the sultan of Egypt and was considered a kind and just leader. Saladin and his descendants ruled Egypt until 1250.

The next group to seize control of Egypt were the Mamelukes. They were the bodyguards of the sultan. The Mamelukes had special military training and held high government positions. Art, architecture, and literature advanced under the control of the Mamelukes. The Ottoman Turks overthrew the Mamelukes in 1517. The two groups competed for power until the 1700s.

On July 1, 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte led French forces into Egypt. He wanted to establish a French colony in Egypt. Napoleon organized a modern government and planned the route for the Suez Canal. French scholars studied Egyptian culture and scientists improved agriculture. British troops, helped by the Ottomans and Mamelukes, drove the French out of Egypt in 1801.

Muhammad Ali, an officer of the Turkish army, established himself as Egypt's ruler in the aftermath of the takeover. He had the rival Mamelukes killed and

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