



The New Kingdom in Egypt (16th-11th centuries BCE)

Scott Pearson
Professor Emeritus
Stanford University

This essay explores how the pharaohs (kings) in ancient Egypt built a political edifice that translated agricultural surpluses from the Nile River Valley and Delta into incredible power and wealth. The Dynastic Era in ancient Egypt began about 2900 BCE with the creation of the Old Kingdom and closed in 332 BCE when Alexander the Great defeated Persia and imposed Macedonian rule on Egypt.

The essay is divided into three parts. The first part considers how the leaders in ancient Egypt constructed their empire, the second examines how the rulers during the New Kingdom (16th-11th centuries BCE) became the richest people in the world and why their system unraveled, and the third investigates the aftermath of the Dynastic Era (4th century BCE-present), when Egypt suffered through 22 centuries of foreign exploitation before re-gaining independence in 1952. A time line, an annotated bibliography, and a description of sites visited in Egypt are appended at the end of the essay.

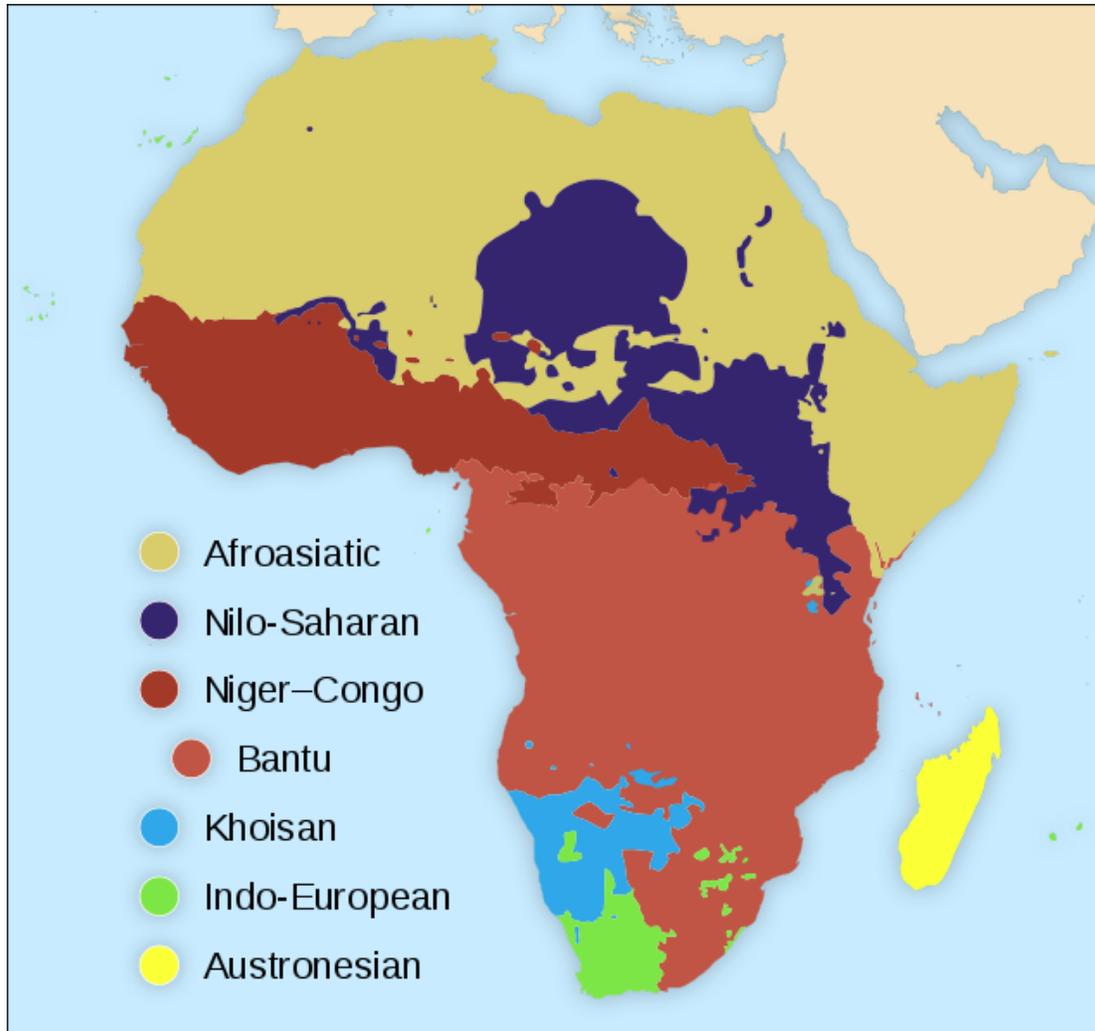
Agriculture prospered in the Nile River Valley and Delta, because nature provided ample water and fertilizer (silt) and Egyptian leaders created a hierarchical social structure to organize labor efficiently before and after the annual inundations of the Nile. Through foreign conquest in Nubia and the Levant, New Kingdom rulers turned Egypt into a rich entrepôt, an international trading center linking Africa with Asia. But in the 8th-4th centuries BCE Egypt suffered a series of foreign dynastic takeovers and invasions – Libyan, Nubian, Assyrian, Persian, and Macedonian.

During the aftermath of Dynastic Egypt, the Nile region served for centuries as a rich plum for exploitation by foreign powers. In the first millennium after the fall, Egypt was ruled by Macedonian Hellenes (332-30 BCE) and by Roman (30 BCE-395 CE) and Byzantine (395-641) emperors. During the following twelve centuries, Egypt was exploited by Muslim foreigners – Arabs, Berbers, and Kurds under Islamic Caliphates (641-1250), independent Mamluks (1250-1517), and Turks and Kurds under the Ottoman Empire (1517-1882). Great Britain colonized Egypt

between 1882 and 1952. The independent Arab Republic of Egypt (1952-present) has had a checkered history of political suppression and weak economic performance. A postscript on the Suez Canal is appended to reflect its importance in 19th century imperialism and 20th century politics.

Egypt before the New Kingdom (30th-16th centuries BCE)

The Ancient Egyptian People. The origins of the ancient Egyptian people are not known with clarity. Linguists include the language of the ancient Egyptians, also called Egyptian, in the Afro-Asiatic (formerly Hamito-Semitic) language group. The grammar and vocabulary of the Egyptian language were nearly unique and thus were not closely linked to those of other Afro-Asiatic languages, such as Berber (north Africa), Cushitic (northeastern Africa), and Semitic (including Hebrew and Arabic in southwestern Asia and Amharic in northeastern Africa).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_African_language_families.svg>

Peoples of Africa Today – Afroasian, Nilo-Saharan, Black African (Niger-Congo), Khoisan, Indo-European, and Austronesian

Egyptian was spoken continuously for four millennia, from about 3000 BCE to 1000 CE, the longest uninterrupted span recorded anywhere. The Egyptian language evolved through five phases – old (Old Kingdom), middle (Middle Kingdom), new

(New Kingdom), demotic (Late Period), and Coptic (Christian Era). Today, the Coptic language is spoken only in the liturgy of the Coptic (Orthodox Christian) Church in Egypt.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rope_stretching.jpg>

*Ancient Egyptians Recording the Harvest –
Wall Painting in the Tomb of Menna, Thebes, 18th Dynasty*

Before agriculture spread to Egypt in about 5000 BCE, perhaps only 20,000 people lived in the Nile Valley and Delta. The agricultural productivity of the region might have supported 3 million people during the middle of the Old Kingdom (2500 BCE). Estimates of ancient Egypt's population vary widely, but the figure probably peaked at 5 million in the Roman Period (second century CE).

The ancient Egyptians began to write about 3000 BCE.

Writing probably spread to Egypt from Sumeria (in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley), where it was first invented about 3100 BCE.

The ancient Egyptians used two scripts – a hieroglyphic script to combine language and art in religious monuments, and a cursive script for every-day administration.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minnakht_01.JPG>

Hieroglyphic Text on Stela in the Louvre, Paris – c. 1320 BCE

The most common medium for writing was papyrus. The inner fibers of a marsh plant (*Cyperus papyrus*) were intertwined to form 20-inch erasable writing surfaces, and those scripts were glued together to form papyrus scrolls. Some important documents were inscribed in leather.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egyptian_harvest.jpg>

Harvesting Papyrus in Ancient Egypt – Wall Painting, Tomb of Sennutem, Deir el-Medina, Egypt, 13th-11th centuries BCE

Geography and Natural Resources of Ancient Egypt.

Ancient Egypt was not a treasure house of diverse natural resources. But nature endowed Egypt with two resources – the annual Nile inundation and deposits of gold – that together served as the physical basis of the ancient Egyptian economy.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Egypt.png>

The Nile Valley and Delta – The Heart of Ancient Egypt

Before the introduction of agriculture into Egypt (c. 5000 BCE), the region supported only a small population of hunters and gatherers. The desertic climate – high temperatures, especially in summer, and virtually no rainfall – limited the availability of edible game and plants to the river valley and to desert oases. Most of Egypt is a desert that the ancient Egyptians called *Deshret* (“the red land”). Human habitation depended on the rich, silty soil of the Nile Valley and Delta that bisected Egypt, called *Kemet* (“the black land”) by the ancient Egyptians. As Egyptians learned new techniques of controlling the floodwaters of the Nile River, they expanded the area under cultivation – from 6000 square miles in 4000 BCE, to 8500 square miles in 2000 BCE, and to a peak of 10,000 square miles in 100 CE.

In addition to its riverine agricultural resources, ancient Egypt was endowed with valuable minerals. Gold from mines in the eastern desert (between the Nile River and the Red Sea) was essential in the early formation of confederacies in Egypt and the

area's unification into a single polity. Ancient Egypt used gold mined in the Nubian Desert as the basis of its regional expansion.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CairoEgMuseumTaaMaskMostlyPhotographed.jpg>>

*Tutankhamun's Golden Mask –
Egyptian Wealth from the Conquest of Nubia*

Copper, mined in the eastern desert and in the Sinai Peninsula, was the country's second most important mineral

resource. Gemstones, such as turquoise from Sinai and amethyst from the First Cataract region (near Aswan), were available locally. The principal stones used in construction were limestone and sandstone, found in the Nile Valley, and granite, moved down the Nile (northward) from the Aswan region. The most important missing natural resource was timber appropriate for the construction of boats and, later, chariots. Egypt imported timber from Byblos (in the Levant, modern Lebanon).

The Nile River and Delta. Herodotus wrote that Egypt is a gift of the Nile River. The annual inundations of the Nile provided two essential contributions – water and silt – to the agriculture of the Nile Valley and Delta.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crop_limit,_Nile_Valley-2.jpg>

*Crop Limit of the Nile River Valley at Luxor –
Rich Silt for Natural Fertilizer*

Most of the Nile's water and silt – about five-sixths – originated in Ethiopia, the source of the Blue Nile branch of the river. The annual rise and fall of the Nile gave natural irrigation and fertilization to Egyptian farmers in the Nile Valley and Delta. The average rise of the Nile was 26 feet, but the annual flood levels varied greatly. The ancient Egyptians recognized three seasons: *akhet*, the flood season, occurred between July and October; *peret*, the time of planting and growing, followed during November

through February; and *shemu*, the harvest season, took place between March and June.

Along the river banks of the Nile, the Egyptians constructed basins surrounded by earth dikes with water intakes and outlets. The basins were filled in July and August, when the annual Nile flood elevated the river level. They were drained in October and November, when the flood receded. After the flood recession, seeds were broadcast into the rich, silty soil, and no further fertilization was required before harvest in April and May.

The yearly Nile flood was a boon for agriculture in Egypt, but the hydraulic system required careful organization of labor and was highly risky. To make effective use of water and silt, farmers had to build and maintain dikes, create basins, move water in canals, and operate drainage systems. In ancient Egypt, all of those tasks were done manually, using picks, hoes, baskets, and water-jars. This labor-intensive system was time-specific since critical tasks had to be accomplished just before the Nile waters

rose or shortly after they receded. The hydraulic system thus required specialists to organize and supervise the work.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El-Kab_Necheb_1_P1120570.jpg>

Nile River and Limestone Cliffs, El-Kab, Upper Egypt

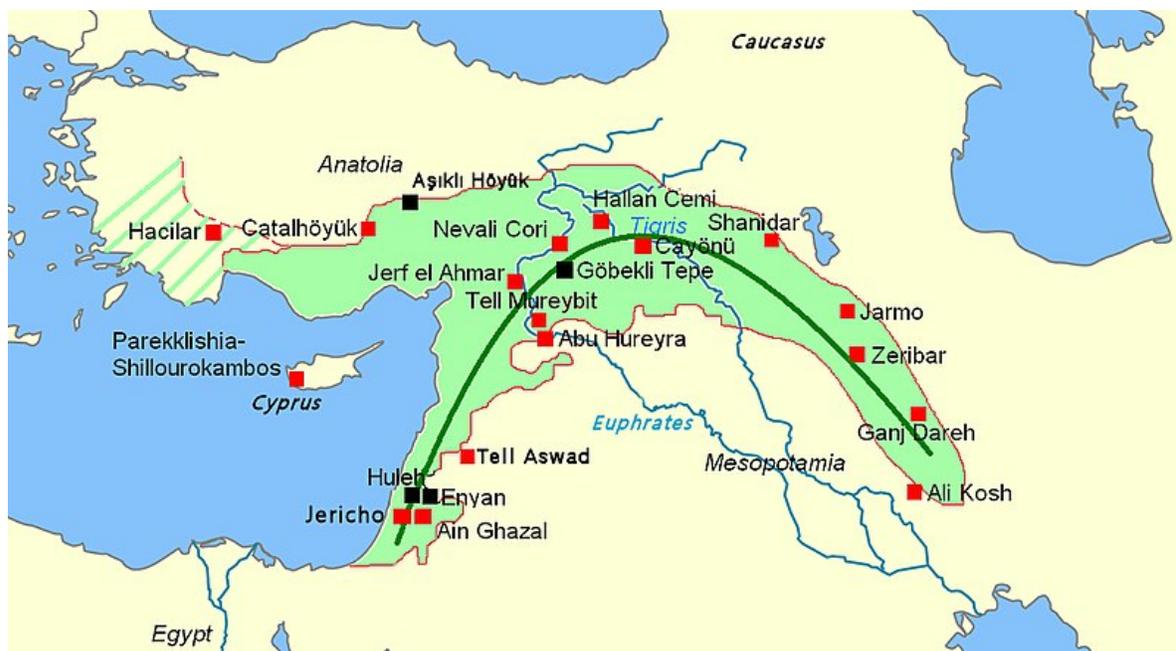
Egyptologists speculate that authoritarian political organization evolved from the necessities of water control. The risks were great. Too much water damaged dikes and flooded fields and villages, whereas too little water meant a loss of valuable planted area. In Egyptian cosmology, the annual inundation of the Nile was interpreted as a reenactment of the

creation of the world by the creator sun-god, Atum. Transportation on the Nile River unified the valley, where there was only one route, but divided the delta, where there were many branches.

Agriculture. The power and wealth of the ancient Egyptian dynasties was based principally on the taxation of agriculture. The inundations of the Nile River contributed to very high agricultural productivity and hence large surpluses that could be taxed away. In average years most Egyptian farmers produced about three times the amount needed by their families for subsistence, so the potential for taxation was great. Agricultural taxation was heavy (from 10-50 percent of output), paid in-kind (usually in grain, sometimes in honey), and varied with the height of the Nile inundation (measured carefully at regular intervals by government devices called nilometers).

Agriculture was first practiced in the Fertile Crescent region of southwestern Asia 10,500 years ago, and the domesticated plants and animals were transferred from there to Egypt between 6000 and 5000 BCE. Ancient Egyptian agriculture relied heavily

on the Fertile Crescent package – three cereals (emmer wheat, einkorn wheat, and barley), four pulses (lentils, peas, chickpeas, and beans), one oilseed (flax, for linseed), four animals (cows, sheep, goats, and pigs), three fruits (grapes, dates, and figs), and numerous vegetables (especially onions and garlic).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fertile_crescent_Neolithic_B_circa_7500_B_C.jpg>

Agriculture Originated in the Fertile Crescent, c. 8500 BCE

To that package, the early Egyptians added two endemic plants – chufa, a vegetable, and sycamore fig, a fruit. The cereals provided carbohydrate and some vegetable protein, the pulses

contained much more protein, and the animals offered milk, wool, plowing, and transport. That diversified agricultural package thus easily met Egypt's basic human needs – carbohydrate, protein, fat, clothing, animal traction (for plowing), and transportation.

The early Egyptians also made and drank beer (brewed from barley and flavored with dates) and wine. Ancient Egypt is likely the first place where beer was brewed, and beer was a very popular beverage. A wide variety of beers, differing by quality and alcohol content, were produced. All strata of the population drank beer regularly, whereas the few wines produced were consumed only by the rich. Grapes were first domesticated about 5000 BCE in Georgia (in the Caucasus Mountains), and wine was first produced there about a millennium later. Grapes and wine were transferred to Egypt via the Fertile Crescent early in the third millennium BCE.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_of_Nakht_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_of_Nakht_(2).jpg)>

*Agricultural Scenes in Ancient Egypt –
Tomb of Nakht, Luxor, 18th Dynasty*

Political Consolidation. How did the leaders of ancient Egypt transform the region from a string of small warring kingdoms into a unified, centralized power? An answer to this question must be based on a mixture of evidence and speculation. Archaeological finds are not complete enough to trace the process accurately. Egyptologists use the term, predynastic Egypt, to refer to the millennium, 4000-3000 BCE. Most agree that unification of the country first occurred in the early third millennium BCE, probably in the period 3000-2900 BCE, and thus the term, protodynastic Egypt, is used to describe that era. The first half of the predynastic millennium is commonly called the Naqada I period (after the town of that name located north of modern Luxor). That period witnessed numerous advances including the domestication of cattle and donkeys.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Narmer_Palette.jpg>

*The Narmer Palette (Both Sides), Hierakonpolis, c. 3000 BCE –
Commemorating the Unification of Egypt*

During the last five centuries of the predynastic period, three strong confederacies emerged along the Nile in Upper (southern) Egypt – Thinis (including the necropolis of Abydos), Nubt (surrounding Naqada and contemporary Luxor), and Nekhen (which evolved into Hierakonpolis and became the most powerful). Eventually, Hierakonpolis expanded to establish a unified predynastic kingdom. During the protodynastic period, the kingdom based on Hierakonpolis expanded north to the delta and

south to Elephantine, the boundary with Nubia, thereby beginning the process of unification of Upper and Lower (northern) Egypt.



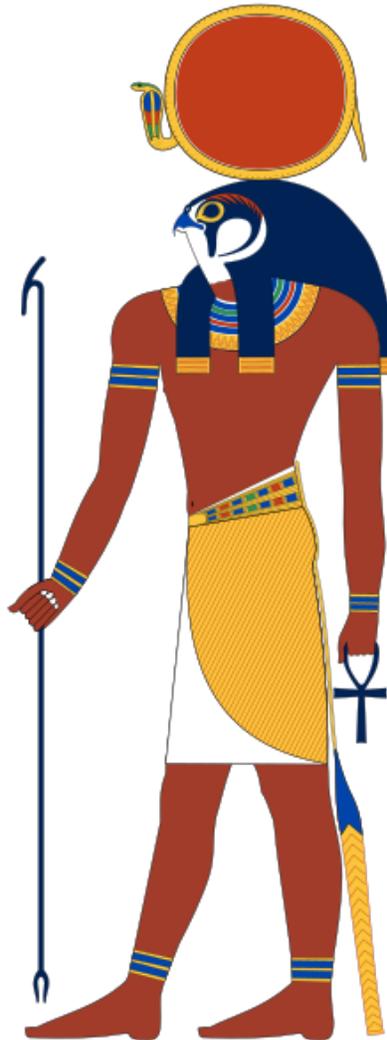
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Egypt_map-en.svg

*Ancient Egypt (Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt and Kush),
c. 3150-332 BCE*

That process of political consolidation had four central elements – extension of the management of agriculture and labor, establishment of wider regional trading networks, military intervention to buttress this extension of economic power, and the spread of cults of worship to promote the concept of divine kingship and thus underpin political legitimacy.

Religion and Politics. The pharaonic culture of ancient Egypt was built on four pillars – the king (pharaoh), religion, art, and writing. The omnipotent king stood at the center of that culture. Religion, art, and writing served to buttress pharaonic power. The most critical link was that between religion and politics. How did Egyptian religion provide a rationale for the king's usurpation of political power? Although the pantheistic religion of ancient Egypt evolved considerably during the 26 centuries of dynastic rule, at its core was the concept of divine kingship. In the pantheon of gods, the sun-god (Ra) was typically seen as the elder god while the living king (a representation of Horus) was accepted as a younger god. Each reigning pharaoh was

believed to combine dimensions of divinity (*nesu*) and mortality (*bit*). The king was a living god and the only divine human being.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Re-Horakhty.svg>>

Sun-god Ra-Horakhty, Falcon-headed – The Elder God

Through a cosmic pact, only the king could serve as mediator between heaven and earth – offering the mundane fruits of earth to

the gods in heaven and channeling their blessings from heaven to the people on earth. The king's principal role was to preserve order (*maat*) on earth and to protect his people from enemies who would disrupt *maat* and create chaos. Only the omnipotent king could fulfill that role.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Horus_as_falcon.svg>

*God Horus, Portrayed as a Falcon –
Pharaohs Were Believed to Be Living Representations of Horus*

Hence, religion provided a rationale for a hierarchical social pyramid made up of the king and his ruling elite, a subservient educated middle class, and a powerless lower class of laborers, mostly farmers. Everyone in the hierarchy was dependent on the king because only he could intermeditate with heaven and preserve *maat*. Each king promoted his royal cult by establishing his own temples throughout the country. The king delegated religious authority to local priests who then could enter the sanctuaries and perform rites.

Pharaonic Power. Along with the pharaoh's omnipotent authority came clearly specified political responsibilities. The king had no control over some of the tasks his people expected of him – guaranteeing desirable levels of Nile inundations and the proper movement of celestial bodies. His three primary worldly responsibilities were to guarantee *maat* (by maintaining law and order, ensuring security from foreign invasion, and personally leading his army in battle), encourage agricultural success and adequate food supplies (by managing the Nile hydraulic systems,

colleting agricultural taxes, and storing surplus food in public warehouses to forestall famine), and construct religious monuments (by providing design, management, land, labor, and construction materials). In addition to a strong military force, the king needed an effective politico-economic organization to wield his unlimited power and carry out his political responsibilities.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giseh_Sonnenbarke_07.jpg>

*Funerary Boat of Khufu, Giza, 4th Dynasty, 26th century BCE –
Guided Egyptian Pharaohs To the Afterlife*

Some historians argue that state bureaucracy was first developed in ancient Egypt to deal with these complex management problems. The bureaucracy depended on educated managers, engineers, and scribes who were literate and numerate. Writing and basic accounting developed initially to serve state bureaucratic needs. A powerful vizier headed the bureaucracy, and his power usually was second only to that of the king. The court often was itinerant to facilitate bureaucratic functions (tax collection and the organization of labor on government projects) in the widespread regions along the Nile.

The king had a right to conscript seasonal labor at any time of the year. But this corvée labor system typically was used for monument construction during the Nile inundation, when no farm work was possible, and for hydraulic projects (irrigation and drainage) before or after the flood season. The workers despised the conscripted labor system, because they received only minimal rations and no salary for their labor and the tasks were physically demanding. Wealthier Egyptians hired proxies or paid bribes to

circumvent their corvée obligations. The elite had funerary figurines (*shabti*) placed in their tombs to carry out corvée and other labor tasks during the afterlife. Whether alive or dead, Egyptians nobles found ways to avoid paying harsh labor services to the pharaoh.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shabti_of_Yuya_MET_30.8.56-58_02.jpg>

Shabti, Tomb of Yuya and Tjuyu, Valley of the Kings, Thebes, c. 1390-1352 BCE – Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Pyramids in the Old Kingdom (27th-25th centuries BCE).

Pharaonic power and Egyptian artistic and engineering creativity combined early in the Old Kingdom (27th-25th centuries BCE) to produce the great pyramids, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Each of the pyramids was built to serve multiple functions – a mortuary complex for the reigning pharaoh, the central temple for the kingdom, and a symbol of enduring power and greatness. In addition to imagination and skill, a number of politico-economic conditions underpinned the construction of those impressive royal funerary monuments. The pyramids are lasting evidence of the successful centralization of political power and of political stability. In the third millennium BCE, no external rival threatened Egyptian hegemony.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Egypt_old_and_middle_kingdom-en.svg

Ancient Egypt's Old Kingdom, c. 2650-2150 BCE

The pyramids also reflect the high degree of economic prosperity that ancient Egypt must have realized. Apart from important trading relations with Nubia, the Egyptian economy was

largely self-sufficient. Egypt's monumental wealth was drawn from the taxation of its productive agriculture. Much of the immense labor required for pyramid construction was provided by conscripted farmers who could not carry out agricultural tasks during the *akhet* (flood) season. Skilled tasks were performed by specialist artisans who lived in designated villages created near the pyramid sites. Local limestone was readily available for construction material, and granite was brought in on the Nile River from Aswan, 600 miles to the south.

Netjerikhet (Djoser) built the first step pyramid at Sakkara in the Third Dynasty (27th century BCE) with impressive dimensions (its areal plan was 140 meters (459 feet) by 118 meters (387 feet) and its height was 66 meters (217 feet)). The Sakkara step pyramid was the first large stone monument in the world.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyramid_of_Djoser_2010.jpg>

Step Pyramid, Netjerikhet (Djoser) – Sakkara, 27th century BCE

The most renowned pyramids were put up in the Fourth Dynasty, beginning half a century later. Sneferu constructed the first true pyramid complex at Meidum. His son, Khufu (Cheops) erected the Great Pyramid at Giza, the largest of all true pyramids (its four sides each were 230 meters (755 feet) long and its original height was 146 meters (479 feet)). The Great Pyramid was constructed from locally quarried limestone with casing stone from

nearby Tura. Egyptologists estimate that the Great Pyramid contains 2,300,000 building blocks each averaging about 2.5 tons. Khufu's son, Khafra (Chephren), followed with the second tallest true pyramid (each side was 215 meters (705 feet) long and the height was 144 meters (472 feet)).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyramids_of_the_Giza_Necropolis.jpg>

Great Pyramids of Khafra, Khufu, and Menkaura – Giza, Egypt

Khafra built alongside it the ancient world's biggest statue, the Sphinx (72 meters (236 feet) long and 20 meters (66 feet) tall). Khafra placed his pyramid on higher ground so that it appears to be larger than his father's Great Pyramid. Khafra's son, Menkaura (Mycerinus) built his pyramid on a smaller scale but included

much more valuable granite from Aswan. Later pharaohs stopped constructing pyramids as royal mortuaries because of their huge cost and the difficulty of protecting them from tomb robbers.



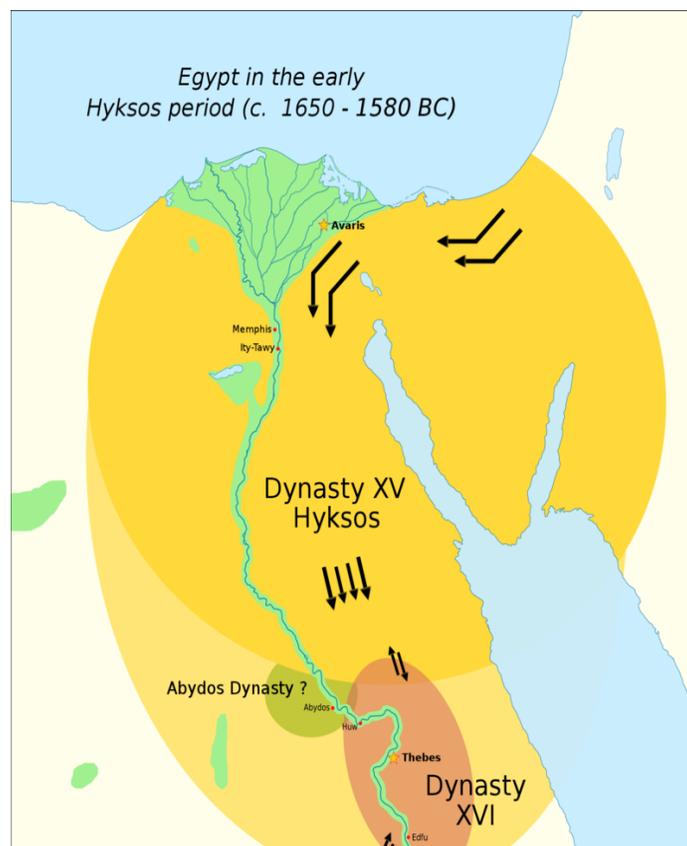
Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Sphinx_of_Giza_May_2015.JPG>

The Great Sphinx and Khafra's Pyramid – Giza, Early 25th c. BCE

Dynastic Egypt's New Kingdom (16th-4th centuries BCE)

The Hyksos Invasion (17th century BCE) and Egyptian Wealth. In the mid-17th century BCE, the Hyksos people (western Semites from Palestine whom the Egyptians called “Princes of Desert Uplands”) established a small kingdom stretching from the

southern point of the Nile Delta (near modern Cairo) to the Sinai Peninsula. From their capital city of Avaris, they ruled as the 16th Dynasty for a century and adopted the Egyptian language, titles, and ruling customs. The Hyksos introduced numerous innovations into Egypt from their eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age culture.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_Hyksos_Period.png>

Fifteenth (Hyksos) Dynasty, c. 1650-1550 BCE

They brought new crops, such as olive and pomegranate trees, and new livestock animals, including horses and *zebu* cattle.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Olivesfromjordan.jpg>>

*The Hyksos Brought Olives (*Olea europaea*) to Egypt, 17th c. BCE*

The Hyksos are best known for introducing the two-wheeled, horse-drawn chariot and improved body armor to Egypt and thereby revolutionizing Egyptian military capability. They also brought new techniques for bronze-work and pottery, the upright loom for weaving, and new musical instruments (the oboe, lute, and tambourine). These Hyksos innovations reenergized the

Egyptian economy and paved the way for Dynastic Egypt to attain its greatest wealth and power during the New Kingdom (16th-11th centuries BCE).

Two Theban pharaohs, Kamose and Ahmose, reunified Upper and Lower Egypt in the 16th century BCE and launched the New Kingdom era.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pharaoh_Ahmose_I_slaying_a_Hyksos_\(axe_of_Ahmose_I,_from_the_Treasure_of_Queen_Aahhotep_II\)_Colorized_per_source.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pharaoh_Ahmose_I_slaying_a_Hyksos_(axe_of_Ahmose_I,_from_the_Treasure_of_Queen_Aahhotep_II)_Colorized_per_source.jpg)>

Pharaoh Ahmose I (ruled 1549-1524 BCE) Slaying a Hyksos Warrior – Depicted On A Ceremonial Axe, Luxor Museum

Ancient Egypt benefited from three primary sources of wealth during the New Kingdom – agriculture, foreign trade, and foreign conquest. The heart of the economy continued to be agriculture, supplemented by mining and artisanship, sited along the Nile Valley and in the Nile Delta. New Kingdom pharaohs were much more aggressive in their foreign policies than their predecessors had been. They reaped important gains from foreign trade with countries in Africa and the Mediterranean, and they aggressively pursued programs of foreign conquest, in both Nubia and southwestern Asia, which brought the Egyptian crown sizeable amounts of booty, tribute, and taxation.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_NK_edit.svg>

*Dynastic Egypt at Its Peak – The New Kingdom, 16th-11th c. BCE,
 Linked Africa (Kush) With the Mediterranean (the Levant)*

Agricultural Productivity and Taxation. Throughout the three millennia of dynastic Egyptian history, agriculture remained the primary source of the country's – and the pharaoh's – wealth.

Yields (crop output per cultivated area) were very high, even by modern standards, because of the natural fertilization of the Nile silt and ample supplies of Nile water. But there is no evidence of much yield growth due to better technology. Agricultural output grew, however, because the cultivated area expanded. As the means of water control gradually improved, more land was irrigated or reclaimed from marshy areas. Area expansion, not yield improvements, thus widened the crop agricultural tax base. The introduction of new breeds of domesticated animals from the Levant (southwestern Asia) – wool-bearing sheep (in the Middle Kingdom), and hump-backed (*zebu*) cattle and horses (during the Hyksos Dynasty) – improved the productivity of animal agriculture.

At the outset of the dynastic era (in the Old Kingdom), the pharaoh owned most of the cultivable land. With the passage of time, kings gradually reduced the crown holdings. Much arable land was given to religious foundations for the establishment and maintenance of temples and temple cults.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vallee_fertile_du_Nil_a_Louxor.jpg>

*Nile River Flood Plain At Luxor –
Pharaohs and Temples Had Large Estates*

By the end of the New Kingdom era, temples controlled about one-third of Egypt's productive land and labor force. Pharaohs also rewarded nobles for services rendered by providing them with leases to royal land and laborers. Some agricultural workers were slaves, captured as prisoners of war in Nubia or southwestern Asia. But most Egyptian farmers were free peasants or workers.

Although large, self-sufficient estates dominated the ownership of Egypt's farmland, independent peasants or employees of temples or the state operated most farmland. An average family of eight farmed about three acres. Farming and irrigation decisions were made in local communities, not dictated by the central government. Between one-tenth and one-half of harvests were paid in taxes. The tax rates varied according to land size, crop grown, and height of the Nile inundation. All landowners, except temple foundations and state granaries, paid taxes.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cairo_Nilometer_2.jpg>

Nilometer With Measuring Shaft – At Rawda, Near Cairo

Food and Drink. Peasants in Ancient Egypt's New Kingdom ate a Mediterranean diet. They subsisted mostly on bread baked from emmer wheat and cakes sweetened with honey. Beer probably was first brewed in ancient Egypt. The poor drank large quantities of beer, brewed from malted barley and flavored with dates.



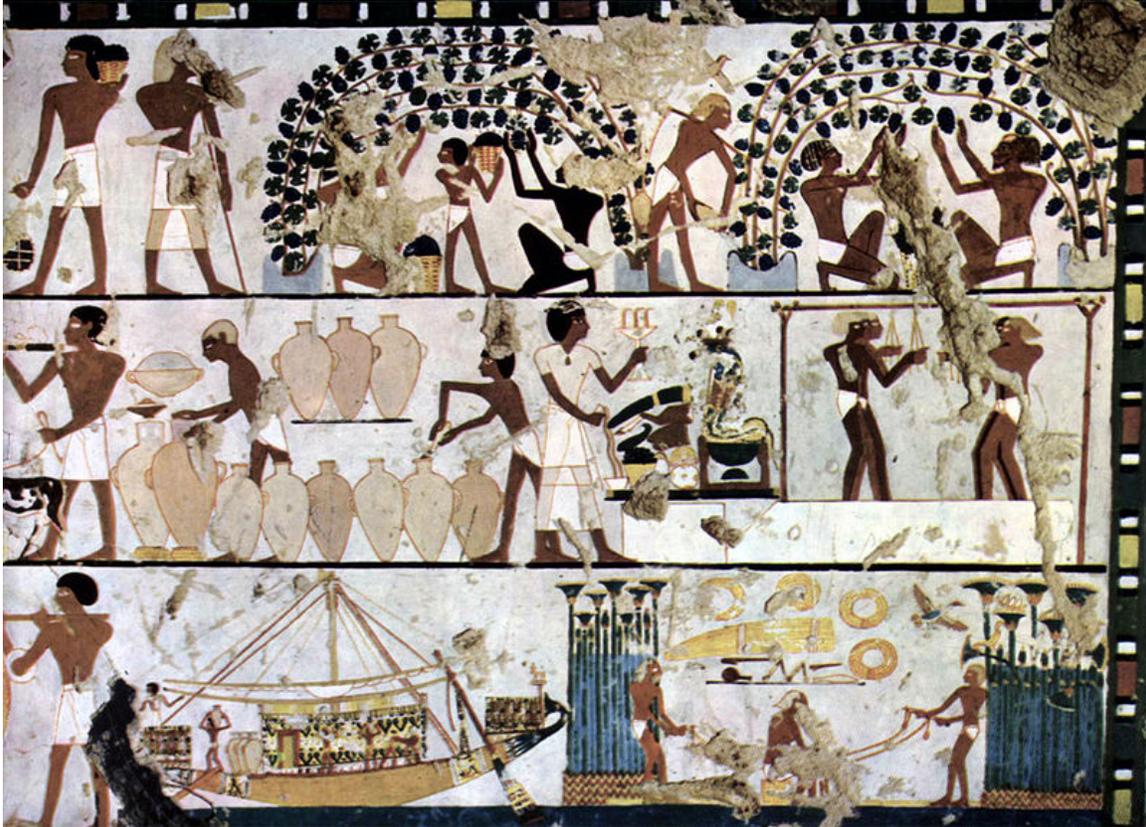
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egyptian-woman-painting_Beer.jpg>

Ancient Egyptian Woman Pouring Beer For An Annual Religious Festival, The Festival of Drunkenness

Most protein came from legumes (lentils, peas, beans, and chickpeas), consumed usually as soups. The farmers ate cheese (sheep, goat, or cow), vegetables (onions, leeks, garlic, and chufa), fruits (dates, grapes, olives, and sycamore figs), some fish and wildfowl, but little red meat. Beef was preferred, but most poor Egyptians could afford to eat it only on festival days. Peasants ignored religious food taboos and consumed onions regularly and

fish and pork on the rare occasions when they could afford those luxuries. This basic diet of carbohydrates from cereals and vegetable protein from pulses provided adequate nutrition (energy, protein, and vitamins) for the mass of ancient Egypt's people.

Ancient Egypt's elite – the royalty, priesthood, landowners, and merchants – also ate a diet derived from the Fertile Crescent Package. But their diet was far more diverse and costly. They consumed more than 40 types of emmer wheat breads and cakes, regular portions of meat (beef, lamb, goat, wild antelopes and gazelles, and wildfowl), ample quantities of cheese (sheep, goat, and cow), and the same kinds of legumes, vegetables, and fruits eaten by the poor. However, unlike most poor Egyptians, the elite regularly ate vegetables, fruits, and spices (cumin, mint, anise, and dill). They drank wine in moderation. Few could afford the best wines, such as Mareotic, Sebennytic, and Taeniotic, produced in the Nile Delta. Many of the elite observed the religion-based food taboos on pork, some fish and beans, and onions.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%84gyptischer_Maler_um_1500_v._Chr._001.jpg>

Grape Cultivation, Winemaking, and Commerce in Ancient Egypt, c. 1500 BCE

Mining and Artisanry. Mining and artisanry were valuable complements to agriculture as sources of domestic wealth in ancient Egypt. Egypt had a diverse but limited endowment of mineral resources, mostly found in the eastern desert (between the Nile River and the Red Sea). Gold was the most valuable Egyptian mineral, but its limited local deposits were depleted early in the

dynastic era. Copper was essential for early Egyptian metallurgy and tool-making. The Egyptians imported tin (which was not available locally), alloyed it with copper, and formed bronze (usually 90 percent copper and 10 percent tin), which was easier to cast because it had a lower melting point and greater hardness than copper. Egypt's most ample mineral resource was galena (lead sulfide), used to make eye paint (*kohl*).

The pharaohs in the early New Kingdom era (16th and 15th centuries BCE) conquered Nubia, mainly to gain access to its gold deposits. They employed Egyptian soldiers and slaves to mine Nubian gold, especially at Wadi el-Allaqi, and traded that gold to the Levant for timber. Ancient Egypt had a well-deserved reputation as a storehouse of gold that was displayed for opulence and used in funerary treasures. But most of that gold came from Nubia.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chair_from_tomb_of_Tutankhamun_reproduction_-_Fitchburg_Art_Museum_-_DSC08613.JPG>

Gold from Nubia – Reproduction of Tutankhamun’s Gold-covered Throne, Original Discovered in His Tomb, 1922

Artisanship provided key material goods (vehicles, clothing, and kitchen utensils) for Egyptian society, but hand crafting of goods was not an important source of Egyptian wealth. Some artisans were urban specialists (woodworkers), although most were rural women (weavers and potters).

They wove mainly linen from local flax, some woolens from new breeds of sheep (from the Hyksos), but no silk or cotton in the dynastic era. The most important tasks for woodworking

craftsmen were building boats and chariots – from imported cedar and juniper – to be used for transportation and warfare. The earliest Egyptian river-boats were made of papyrus or reed. Later wood-workers chose selected woods to withstand stresses when they adroitly joined durable boats made up of many small parts.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lepsius-Projekt_tw_1-2-108.jpg>

*Ancient Egyptian Architectural Capitals –
From Expedition by Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius, 1842-1845*

Foreign Trade – Africa. During the New Kingdom, foreign trade expanded to provide significant wealth, although most

government revenue continued to come from taxes on agriculture.

New Kingdom pharaohs focused on foreign affairs much more than their Old and Middle Kingdom predecessors had done.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EgyptTombOarboat.jpg>>

*New Kingdom Egypt Focused on Foreign Affairs –
Oar Boat, Tomb Painting, Luxor, c. 1450 BCE*

Egypt first looked south into Africa. Dynastic Egypt had two imperial objectives in Nubia (in the Nile River kingdoms of Wawat and Kush, now northern Sudan). One was to exploit the rich Nubian mineral resources directly. Nubia had ample deposits of gold, copper, semi-precious stones (amethyst), and building stones (diorite and granite). Egypt was especially interested in controlling

the Nubian goldmines at Wadi Allaqi and its diorite quarries at Toshka. The pharaohs employed Egyptian soldiers and Nubian slaves to mine Nubian minerals and quarry its building stones.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_1450_BC.svg

New Kingdom Egypt Conquered Nubia – Gold Mining, Quarry Stones, and African Trade

The second Egyptian objective was to gain control over the Nubian apex of a highly lucrative African trading network of goods from Nubia and further south in tropical Africa. The most prominent goods imported into Egypt from Africa via Nubia were gold, slaves, ebony, elephant ivory, leopard skins, live elephants and lions, and ostrich feathers. To pay for those valuable African goods, Egypt exported linen textiles, weapons, furniture, leather, and grain (wheat and barley). The pharaohs knew that Egypt would receive better terms of exchange if it controlled the Nubian commercial centers.

Egypt carried on a sporadic and far less important commerce with another African kingdom, the mysterious land of Punt (probably located on the coast of modern Eritrea). Occasionally pharaohs sent fleets down the Red Sea to Punt to trade. The Egyptians did not attempt to gain political control over that remote kingdom, but they still received favorable terms of trade. Egypt exported linen textiles, weapons, trinkets, and jewelry to Punt.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Men_from_Punt_Carrying_Gifts,_Tomb_of_Rekhmire_MET_30.4.152_EGDP013029.jpg>

*Men from Punt (Northeast Africa), Carrying Exotic Trade Goods
– Tomb of Rekhmire, 15th c. BCE*

In addition to the typical African trade goods (gold, ebony, ivory, skins, live animals, slaves, and resins), Punt was the source of two extremely valuable incense commodities – frankincense and myrrh. Very wealthy Egyptians used those expensive incenses for religious ritual, perfume, fumigants, medicines, and mummification. The walls of the mortuary temple of the New

Kingdom's only female pharaoh, Hatshepsut (15th century BCE), at Deir el-Bahri in Western Thebes contain a detailed pictorial record of the trade expedition to Punt that she organized – the journey by sea, the reception by the chief of Punt, the trade goods exchanged, and the incense trees brought back to Egypt.

Foreign Trade – Asia. During the New Kingdom, Egypt became a commercial giant linking northeast Africa with southwest Asia. Foreign trade was a significant generator of wealth as Egypt exploited its geographical location to become an entrepôt – a center for the storage and re-export of other regions' produce. The Egyptian state first gained control over the African trading networks to its south. Egypt then sought, with intermittent success, to control – or at least to have free access to – an even more important trading network in southwestern Asia. By the 16th century BCE, that network was centered in the ports of Syria-Palestine (the region known as the Levant) – principally Byblos, but including also Tyre, Beirut, Ugarit, and Sumur. That crucial trading network to the northeast connected Egypt with

Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Cyprus, and the Aegean islands – the principal trading centers of the world, outside of China and India.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_Asian_tribute_bearers_tomb_of_Sobekhotep_18th_Dynasty_Thebes.jpg>

*Southwestern Asiatic Goods for Pharaoh –
Tomb of Sobekhotep, Luxor, 1400 BCE*

Egypt's plan was to re-export African goods, notably gold, to the Levant along with its own exports of grain, linen textiles, leather, and papyrus. In return, Egypt imported from the Levant its critically needed timber and resin (from Lebanon) plus silver

(Aegean islands), copper (Cyprus), olive oil and wine (Syria), pottery (Palestine), and lapis lazuli (Afghanistan via Syria-Palestine). There is scattered archaeological evidence that Egypt might have traded with Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece, but it is doubtful that those trading links were important. The New Kingdom pharaohs' international strategy, therefore, was first to conquer and control critical parts of Nubia (Wawat and Kush) and then to control the key Levantine ports where they could re-export African goods in exchange for critical imports. Military and political pressure was applied to achieve the goal of linking the African and Asian trade networks.

Foreign Conquest. A third source of wealth in Egypt's New Kingdom was the conquest of foreign territory. Pharaonic Egypt had differing objectives in carrying out its aggressive military incursions into Africa and Asia. In Nubia, the New Kingdom pharaohs gradually expanded their area under control until Thutmose III reached the Fourth Cataract in the 15th century BCE and established a fortified trading center, Napata. The central aim

of that foreign conquest was to establish long-term rule over Nubia
– not to extract booty from actual raids, tribute from threatened
raids, or taxation by an imposed government.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_NK_edit.svg>

*New Kingdom Egypt Conquered Nubia (Gold Mining) and
Subjugated the Levant (Trade)*

Nubia offered Egypt access to mineral deposits and control of the African trade network. There was little else for the Egyptians to appropriate or tax.

In the Levant (Syria-Palestine), however, Egypt had a different objective. Its military raids were intended primarily to ensure privileged access to the Levantine trading network within southwest Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. Egyptian kings never attempted to install a permanent colonial government in the Levant. Instead, they raided for booty, forced the city-states to pay tribute to forestall retribution, and collected taxes, often by timing their raids to occur during the harvest. In the Levant, Egyptian policy was to establish protectorates, not colonies. That imperial approach was lucrative, because it transferred wood, metals (gold, silver, copper, and lead), and olive oil to Egypt.

There were two major Egyptian incursions into the Levant. Two Indo-European-speaking migrants from Central Asia, the Hurrians (in Mittani, northern Syria) and the Hittites (in Anatolia, modern Turkey) fought Egypt for hegemony in the Levant.

Thutmose III led 17 campaigns in 21 years during the 15th century BCE, pursued the Hurrians through Syria and across the Euphrates River (after dragging his ships 250 miles overland from Byblos to the Euphrates), defeated the Hurrians at the Battle of Megiddo (c. 1457 BCE), and transferred enormous wealth to Egypt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Near_East_1400_BCE.png>

*Thutmose III's Conquest of Syria-Palestine –
Egypt Defeated Mittani at Megiddo, c. 1418 BCE*

Two centuries later, Ramesses II confronted the Hittites at the Battle of Kadesh (c. 1274 BCE), made tactical errors and was fortunate to escape with his life and battle to a draw, and concluded a peace treaty that divided the Levantine trade routes between the two powers.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hitt_Egypt_Perseus.png>

*Ramesses II's Incursions in Syria-Palestine, c. 1275 –
Egypt (Green) Stalemated by Hittites (Red) at Kadesh*

The Egyptians and Hittites honored that pact, which created political stability on Egypt's northern front, for 200 years until the New Kingdom ended. In consequence, international trade flourished because Egypt had open trading access to the Levant, the Euphrates River, and the eastern Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas.

Wealth, Temples, and Tombs in the New Kingdom (16th-11th centuries BCE). Pharaonic wealth in dynastic Egypt peaked during the New Kingdom (16th-11th century BCE). The omnipotence of the kings allowed much of that wealth to be siphoned off into spectacular religious temples and funerary monuments (tombs and furnishings). A number of related factors underpinned Egypt's success in generating prodigious wealth at a time when most other contemporary states were near a subsistence level. Much of Egypt's wealth continued to come from the taxation of cereal and animal production, as it had since the beginning of the dynastic era. In the New Kingdom, agricultural surpluses supported temples and religious foundations throughout

Egypt, especially the cult of Amun at Karnak near Thebes.

Agricultural taxation also generated revenues to support the state apparatus – the pharaoh, his court, and the state bureaucracy.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karnakpanorama.jpg>>

*Hypostyle Hall, Precinct of Amun Re, Karnak, Luxor –
Temple Societies Owned One-third of Egyptian Land*

Egypt's adroit foreign policy linked the African and Asian trade networks, and Egypt served as an entrepôt for both sides. Because the king controlled all foreign trade, he benefited most from the gains from trade. Those gains were offset partly by the military expenses incurred in subjugating Nubia. Foreign conquest buttressed Egypt's control of the foreign trade network, in both Nubia and the Levant. But the booty and tribute from military

campaigns in the Levant were offset by the costs of those expeditions so that net transfers to Egypt were modest.

The creative and costly art and architecture of the New Kingdom era are exhibited in Hatshepsut's Temple at Deir el-Bahri in Western Thebes. That magnificent structure was created as a funerary temple for Hatshepsut and her father, Thutmose I, and as a sanctuary for Amun, the principal god worshipped by the Theban royalty. Hatshepsut, dynastic Egypt's only female pharaoh, was an exceptional administrator and creator of monuments. She ruled as co-regent during the reign of her stepson, Thutmosis III, until her death *c.* 1458 BCE. To construct her temple, Hatshepsut appropriated the land and materials, but she had to pay her workers in bread, beer, and grain in place of wages. Senmut, her chief architect (and some say also her lover), designed her temple to underpin her unusual rule and ensure her place in eternity. The exceptional terraced building stretches for 200 meters (655 feet) in the foothills of Western Thebes.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Il_tempio_di_Hatshepsut.JPG>

Hatshepsut's Temple, Deir el-Bahri, Thebes – 15th c. BCE

After Hatshepsut, all of the pharaohs in the New Kingdom chose to be buried near her funerary temple in the region then called “The Great Valley” and now known as the Valley of the Kings.

Causes of Pharaonic Weakness. How did the omnipotent pharaohs lose their power? During the early dynastic era of the Old Kingdom (in the great age of pyramid-building), Egypt had a

highly centralized pharaonic system. The king maintained tight control because he, his court, the social elite, the state bureaucracy, and the main religious temples and their cults were all located centrally – in the capital. Royal emissaries were sent to the regions to assert control and collect taxes. That central control began to erode as early as the 6th Dynasty (24th-22nd centuries BCE), when political and tax-collecting power gradually shifted to the provinces (*nomes*).

The erosion of the king's direct control accelerated a millennium later after the Amarna heresy (14th century BCE) in which Akhenaten temporarily overthrew the pantheistic system and worshipped only one sun-god. Thereafter, pharaohs no longer could claim the divine right of kings and they lost the omnipotent position that they had formerly had over their subjects. To maintain political legitimacy, successive pharaohs granted land and tenants to temples, principally to those dedicated to the cult of Amun in Thebes. Amun, the leading god, had taken on many of the traditional roles of kingship.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amun.svg>>

*Cult Image of Amun, Carrying the Ankh Symbol and a Scepter—
New Kingdom, c. 1300 BCE*

This political fragmentation and shift of tax revenues resulted in a decline of military power. A weaker military, in turn, led to the loss of Egypt's foreign territories and control over trade networks. Whenever Egypt had a strong central government, it controlled Nubia, the critical source of gold and African trade goods. When the Egyptian center was weak, Nubia declared independence and Egypt lost its key to foreign-based wealth. A

weak Egypt also lost its influence in the Levant and its access there to much-needed timber as well as booty, tribute, and taxes from that economically advanced but politically fractured region.

Eventually, after Egyptian wealth was reduced to Nile agriculture, the balance of power switched and foreigners made incursions into Egypt – first as settlers, then as rulers of Egyptian dynasties, and finally as conquerors.

The Three Intermediate Periods. Dynastic Egypt experienced three eras of political fragmentation, reduced wealth, and foreign losses called the Intermediate Periods (because they separated the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms and the Late Period). Twice Egypt regained its equilibrium and emerged even more powerful than before. But the decline during the Third Intermediate Period could not be arrested, and dynastic Egypt gradually eroded before being conquered by foreign powers. Through these ebbs and flows, Egyptian history traced an intriguing pattern of north-south division, loss of Nubia, and later reunification led by rulers from Thebes in Upper Egypt.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antico_regno_modello_di_nave_da_saqqara_01.JPG>

Model Ship from Ancient Egypt's Old Kingdom, 2650-2150 BCE

Just before the First Intermediate Period (2195-2066 BCE), Pepy II ruled for 94 mostly ineffectual years, precipitating a political collapse marked by reduction of central authority, a decline and fragmentation among regions of tax revenues, and the loss of Nubian control. Reunification occurred under Montjuhotep II of Thebes who ushered in the Middle Kingdom.

The Second Intermediate Period (1650-1550 BCE) was caused by the gradual infiltration of Hyksos people from Palestine

into the eastern Delta. The Hyksos were innovators who introduced new technologies, crops, and products into Egypt from the eastern Mediterranean and thereby reenergized the Egyptian economy. But Lower and Upper Egypt split again, the country once more lost control of Nubia, and for a second time Theban leaders (Kamose and Ahmose) reunited the country, initiating the New Kingdom.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Headband_with_Heads_of_Gazelles_and_a_Stag_Between_Stars_or_Flowers_ca._1648%E2%80%931540_BCE.jpg>

*Hyksos Gold Diadem, Tomb of Tell el-Dab'a, Avaris, 16th c. BCE –
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*

A number of influences led to a more debilitating fragmentation during the Third Intermediate Period (1064-664 BCE), which resulted in foreign dynasties, a temporary reunification (in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE), and ultimately foreign takeovers of Egypt. The rulers of Thebes established a local theocracy dedicated to Amun, the principal god. Libyans (Berbers from the region west of Egypt), Nubians (Africans from the south), and Sea Peoples (displaced Hittites from the north) settled in Egypt.

The viceroy of Nubia, Panehsy, revolted and declared independence in the early 11th century BCE. Egypt thereby lost the lucrative Nubian gold mines and control of the African trade routes. Small city-states gained independence in Syria-Palestine, and Egypt lost control of trade in the Levant and the eastern Mediterranean. Egypt splintered into political instability and became a loose federation of semi-autonomous kingdoms. The bifurcation between north and south recurred. Libyans set up kingdoms in Lower Egypt – the eastern Delta (Meshwesh) and the

western Delta (Libu), and Upper Egypt split into three kingdoms – Thebes, Herakleopolis, and Hermopolis. Egypt became ripe for foreign incursions, which came from Kush, Assyria, Persia, and Macedonia during the 8th through 4th centuries BCE. Three millennia of pharaonic power thus came to an inglorious end.



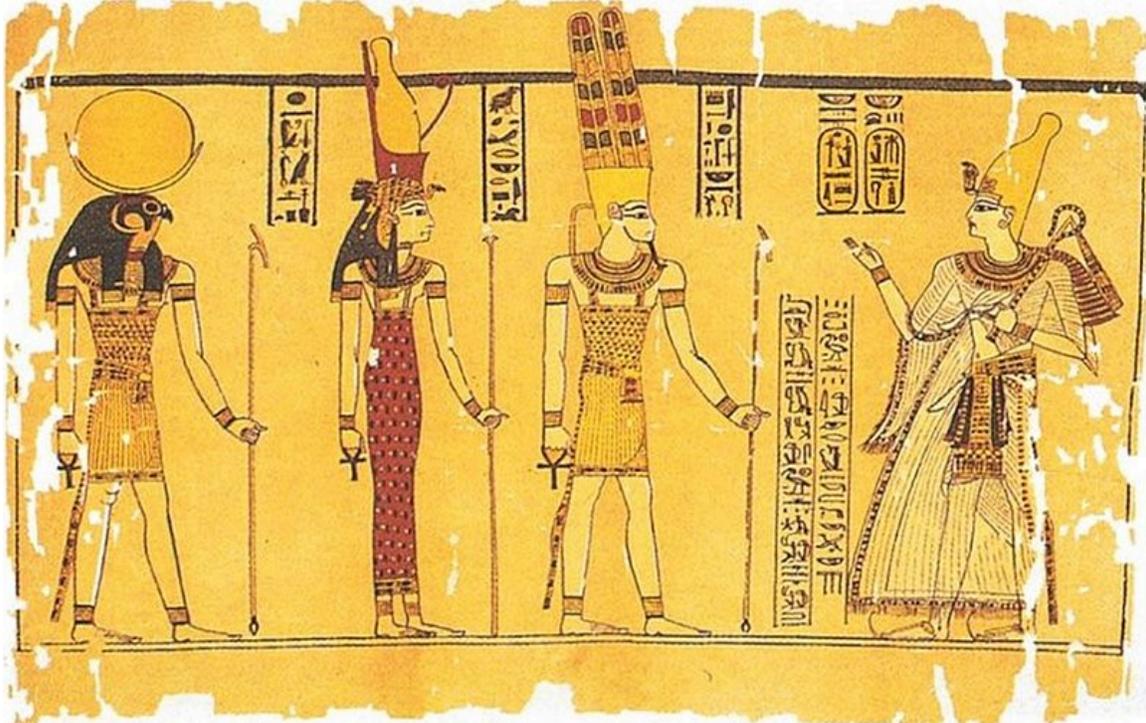
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Third_Intermediate_Period_map.svg>

Dynastic Egypt Declined in the Third Intermediate Period (1064-664 BCE) – c. 730 BCE

Shift of Agricultural Taxes. There are no reports of a declining trend of agricultural production during the Third Intermediate Period (11th-7th centuries BCE). Egypt did not suffer from major infestations of agricultural pests or diseases or from climatic shifts. Planted area grew throughout this period, but crop yields probably stagnated until the Persians introduced the animal-operated *saqiya* water wheel in the 6th century BCE. Because farm families could produce about three times their subsistence needs, the surpluses available for government to tax were substantial. The problem for dynastic Egypt, therefore, was not declining agricultural production.

Difficulties instead arose from a shift of the agricultural tax base away from the central government. A part of that shift happened gradually as the political power of the regions grew at the expense of the center. The principal shift, however, did not occur until late in the New Kingdom. The rise in the importance of new religious cults undermined the king's political as well as

religious power. Kings began to give increasing amounts of productive farmland to temple foundations.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Harris_Papyrus,_Sheet_2.jpg>

*Great Harris Papyrus, From Tomb Near Medinet Habu –
Recorded Temple Donations Given by Ramesses III, c. 1150 BCE*

By the time of Ramesses III (12th century BCE), temples owned or controlled one-third of all cultivated land. The powerful cult of the Theban god, Amun, alone owned three-fourths of all temple land. The central government thus suffered a severe loss of tax revenue and grain supplies. Economic crises occurred when

the state did not have enough grain to pay its civil servants, workers, and soldiers.

The craftsmen of the village of Deir el-Medina, who built and maintained the temple complex at Thebes, went on strike when they did not receive their grain rations. The situation became so desperate that there was an attempt to assassinate Ramesses III, led by government officials and members of the royal entourage. One of Ramesses III's wives schemed to put her son on the Egyptian throne rather than the rightful heir, but the plot failed. Political control in dynastic Egypt, formerly inviolate, was under severe threat.

Decline of Military Strength. In the late New Kingdom (12th and 11th centuries BCE), the shifting of tax revenues from the center to the temples and regions had significantly weakened the pharaonic government. But the military suffered no breakdown or loss of authority and remained loyal to the king. Egypt thus was able to maintain its tenuous control of Nubia and that region's rich mineral resources and trade routes. The 13th century BCE treaty

with the Hittite Empire, which Ramesses II had negotiated, remained in force for two centuries and protected the Levantine trade routes. The absence of any major military campaigns by Ramesses III and his 20th Dynasty successors reflected international peace rather than Egyptian military weakness.



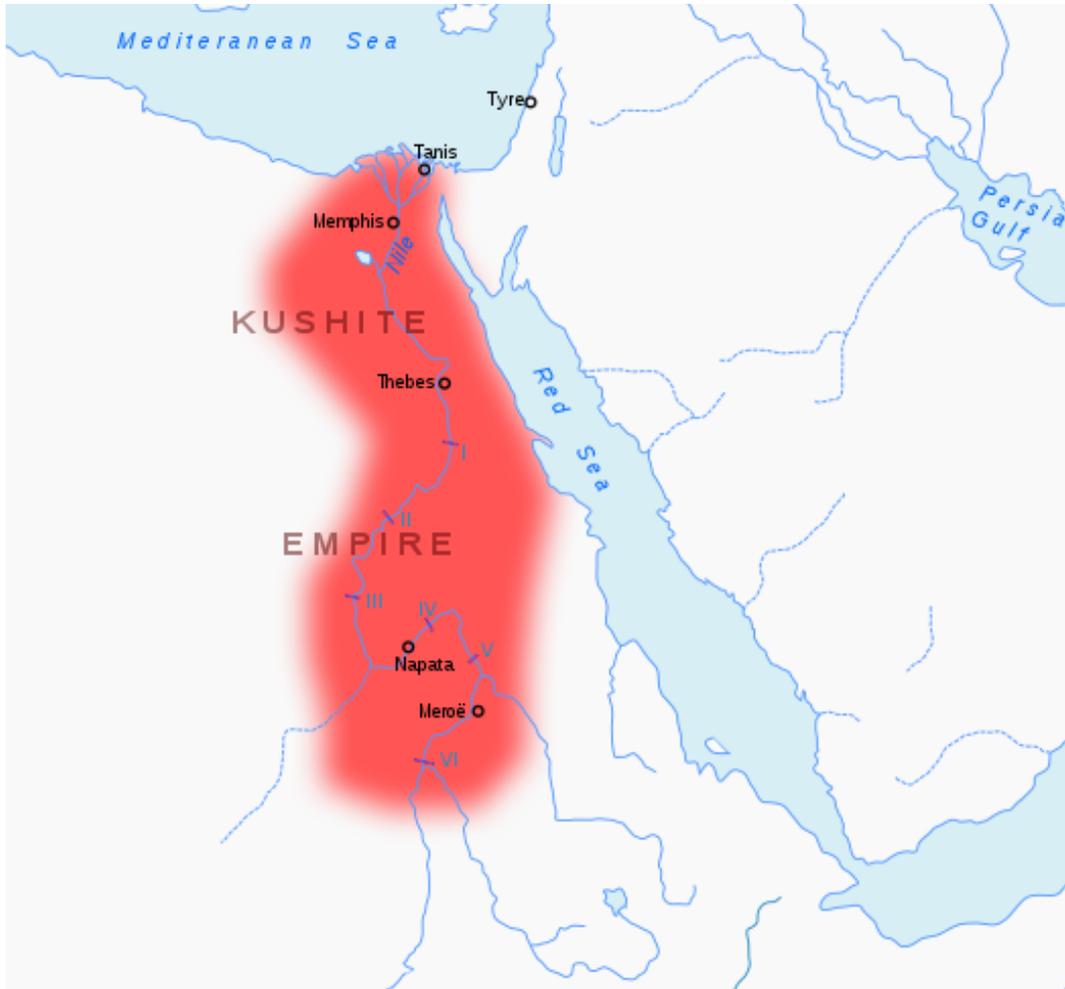
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KhonsuTemple-Karnak-RamessesIII-2.jpg>>

*Ramesses III, Temple of Khonsu, Karnak –
Peaceful Reign Because of the Absence of Foreign Powers*

Military discipline broke down, however, during the Third Intermediate Period (11th-7th centuries BCE), when Egypt suffered

intermittent civil wars and invasions. In the 11th century BCE, Panehsy removed Nubia from Egyptian control and Egypt never again was able to reassert its dominance there. The only report of Egyptian military activity in the Levant was a 10th century BCE invasion of Israel by Shoshenk I (believed by some to be the Biblical Shishak). But this incursion did not lead to Egyptian control of trade routes. Egyptian military weakness continued in the 9th century BCE, when a series of civil wars broke out between various provinces.

Nubia turned the tables on Egypt in the 8th century when its ruler, Piy, conquered Upper Egypt and held control in Thebes. The steady decline of Egyptian dynastic power continued throughout the Third Intermediate Period. In spite of its worsening military weakness, Egypt escaped invasion because of the lack of strong foreign competitors. But the permanent loss of its control of Nubia and the Levant ended Egyptian dominance of foreign trade and its link between Africa and Asia.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_kush.svg>

Kushite Empire, the 25th (Nubian) Dynasty of Egypt (744-656 BCE), c. 730 BCE

Foreign Incursions. Egypt's declining military capability undercut its foreign policy. Its neighbors asserted their independence, as they always did whenever Egyptian power waned. For Egypt, that meant a decline in the gains from foreign

trade and the loss of tax revenues. During the Third Intermediate Period (11th-7th century BCE), Nubia was the first Egyptian vassal to declare independence when Piankhy revolted in the 11th century BCE. Thereafter, Egypt lost forever its monopolistic access to Nubian gold mines and trade routes. The Levant followed suit soon thereafter, although Shoshenk I attempted to regain control of Israel in the 10th century BCE without lasting success.

Foreign incursions continued with the settlement in Egypt of foreign immigrants, sometimes peacefully and often via military invasion. Libyans, Afro-Asiatic nomads from the west, began entering the Delta in significant numbers in the 11th century BCE, and immigration continued throughout the Third Intermediate Period. The Sea Peoples – Indo-Europeans and Semites who were displaced after the sudden collapse of the Hittite Empire – tried unsuccessfully to force their way into Egypt. At that time, Nubian migrants began increasingly to settle in Upper Egypt. The foreign takeover of Egypt thus began quietly.

Eventually, both Libyans and Nubians asserted political control and established foreign dynasties ruling Egypt while adopting the Egyptian religion and pharaonic system. The 22nd Dynasty (10th-8th centuries BCE) was Libyan, initially Meshwesh people ruling from Bubastis in the eastern Delta and subsequently Libu people ruling from Sais in the western Delta.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypte_louvre_066.jpg>

Nubian Gold and Afghan Lapis Lazuli – Statues of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, Created For Osorkon II, 9th century BCE

Then in the 25th Dynasty (8th-7th centuries BCE), Kushite Nubians reversed the pattern of rule during the peak of Egyptian

power in the New Kingdom. A Kushite king, Kashta, captured Thebes in 760 BCE, and Shabaqo took all of Egypt in 716 BCE. The Kushites' culture, language at court, and religion were Egyptian, and the rulers adopted the pharaonic system of autocratic rule. They reigned over a fragmented and declining Egypt with limited foreign influence from their capital at Napata near the Fourth Cataract of the Nile River. But the Kushites had the misfortune of ruling when Egypt was invaded by Assyria.

Assyrian Invasion and Saite Revival. Assyria, an empire based in the northern Tigris-Euphrates Valley (modern Iraq), rose to power by conquering Babylon in the 8th century BCE. The Assyrians expanded westward into southeastern Anatolia (modern Turkey) and the Levant, where pharaohs of Egypt's 25th (Nubian) Dynasty were attempting to regain influence. The Nubian pharaohs meddled in Levantine local politics by supporting rulers who opposed Assyrian domination. That confrontation precipitated military conflict between Assyria and Egypt. Esarhaddon of Assyria invaded Egypt in 674 BCE, was defeated,

but then conquered all of the Levant in 671 BCE. His son, Assurbanipal, invaded Egypt in 667 BCE, and he defeated Taharka, the Nubian pharaoh, took Memphis, and sacked Thebes.

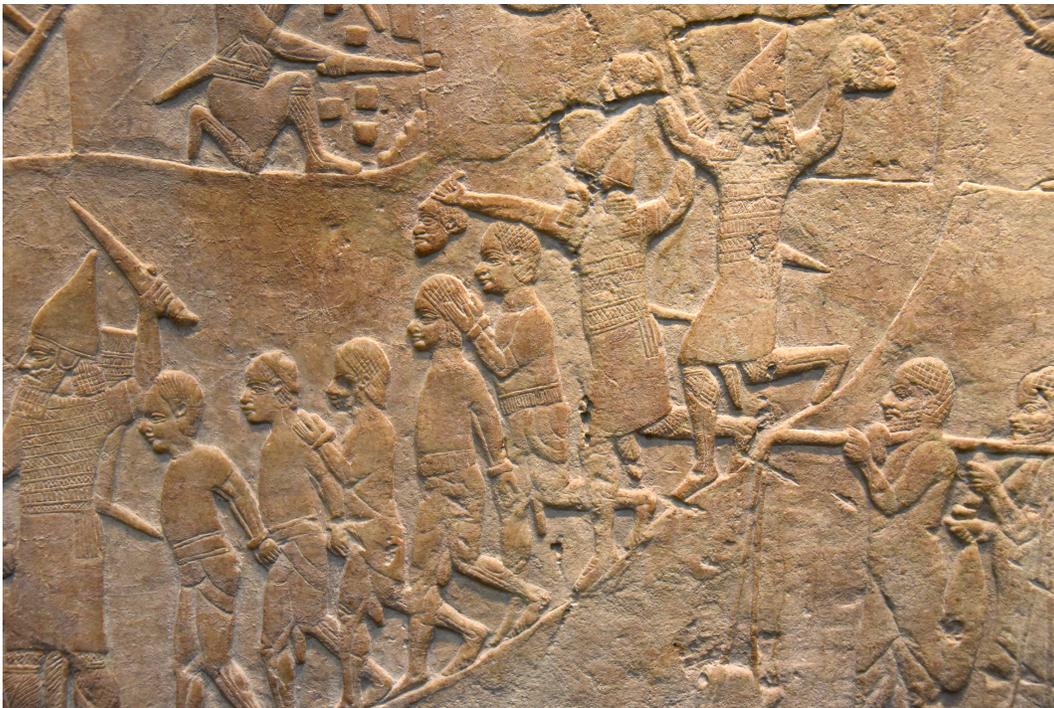


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neo-Assyrian_map_824-671_BC.png

Sargonid Assyria (911-612 BCE) – Ruled Egypt, 664-612 BCE

In 664 BCE, the Assyrians installed as pharaoh a puppet ruler, Psamtek I of Sais, and forced him to deliver a large annual tribute to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. Psamtek, an exceptional leader, ruled Egypt for more than half a century. He reunited the

country in 656 BCE, using foreign mercenaries to overcome the schism between Libyan dynasts and Theban theocrats. As Assyrian power waned, he stopped paying tribute to Nineveh and reasserted Egyptian independence. He used central tax revenues to improve Egypt's military capacity and was successful in forestalling attempts by Nubians and Babylonians (who had conquered Assyria) to take over Egypt.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashurbanipal_II%27s_army_attacking_Memphis,_Egypt,_645-635_BCE,_from_Nineveh,_Iraq_British_Museum_in_London.jpg

Gypsum Relief, Nineveh, Assyria, 657 BCE – Assyrian King Ashurbanipal II's Army Defeated Taharka, the Nubian Pharaoh

The Saite Dynasty ruled Egypt between 664 and 525 BCE. Under Psamtek and his Saite successors, Egypt tried to regain its former control of foreign territories and trade. An invasion of Nubia caused the Kushites to move their capital south to Meroe, but was unsuccessful in asserting Egyptian control. In 605 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish, ending an Egyptian attempt to dominate the Levant. Egypt thus remained vulnerable to foreign incursions.

Persian Imperialism. The Achaemenid Persian Dynasty arose in the 6th century BCE and expanded westward. When Cyrus defeated Babylon in 539 BCE, Persia gained control over the area between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, including the Levant. Saite Egypt was no match for this new regional power. A Persian emperor, Cambyses, invaded Egypt in 525 BCE and easily defeated the Egyptian army at the Battle of Pelusium.

The first Persian occupation of Egypt (525-404 BCE) is termed the 27th Dynasty because the Persian kings claimed to be pharaohs. The first two Persian rulers, Cambyses and Darius,

ruled via the Egyptian bureaucracy and used established symbols of power. Egypt, along with the Western Desert oases and Cyrenaica (the northeastern portion of modern Libya), became Persia's Sixth Satrapy (foreign province).



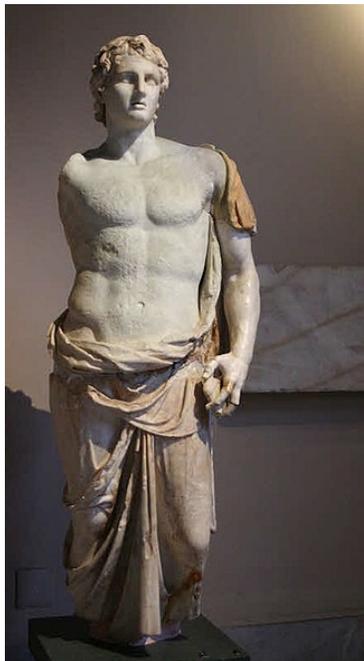
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_part_of_the_Achaemenid_Empire.jpg>

Achaemenid Persian Control of Egypt, 525-404 and 343-332 BCE

Persia exacted a high tribute from its new vassal and severely reduced the wealth and power of Egyptian temple cults. In 490 BCE, the Persians completed a project begun earlier under the Saite Dynasty – a canal linking the Pelusiac branch of the Nile River with the Red Sea. At the Battle of Marathon in that year, the Greeks defeated the Persians who had forced the Egyptian military to fight with them. Shortly thereafter, Xerxes I imposed strict military rule over Egypt, creating much local resentment. Athens aided the Egyptian opposition to Persian rule.

In 404 BCE, Egypt regained its independence and the ruling house of Sais returned to power. But in 343 BCE, the Persians returned and Artaxerxes III reasserted Persian control. The Persians destroyed Egyptian religious symbols and humiliated Egypt. The second Persian occupation (343-332 BCE) was brief because Persia succumbed to a greater power. Alexander the Great entered Egypt as the new conqueror in 332 BCE and initiated three centuries of rule by Macedonians (332-30 BCE) and a millennium of administration in the Greek language (332 BCE-

Alexander worshipped the Egyptian pantheon of gods at Memphis and Heliopolis, and the famed oracle of Siwa announced that Alexander was the son of Amun, still Egypt's primary god. He was recognized as the legitimate king of Egypt and ruled in absentia for ten years until his death in 323 BCE.

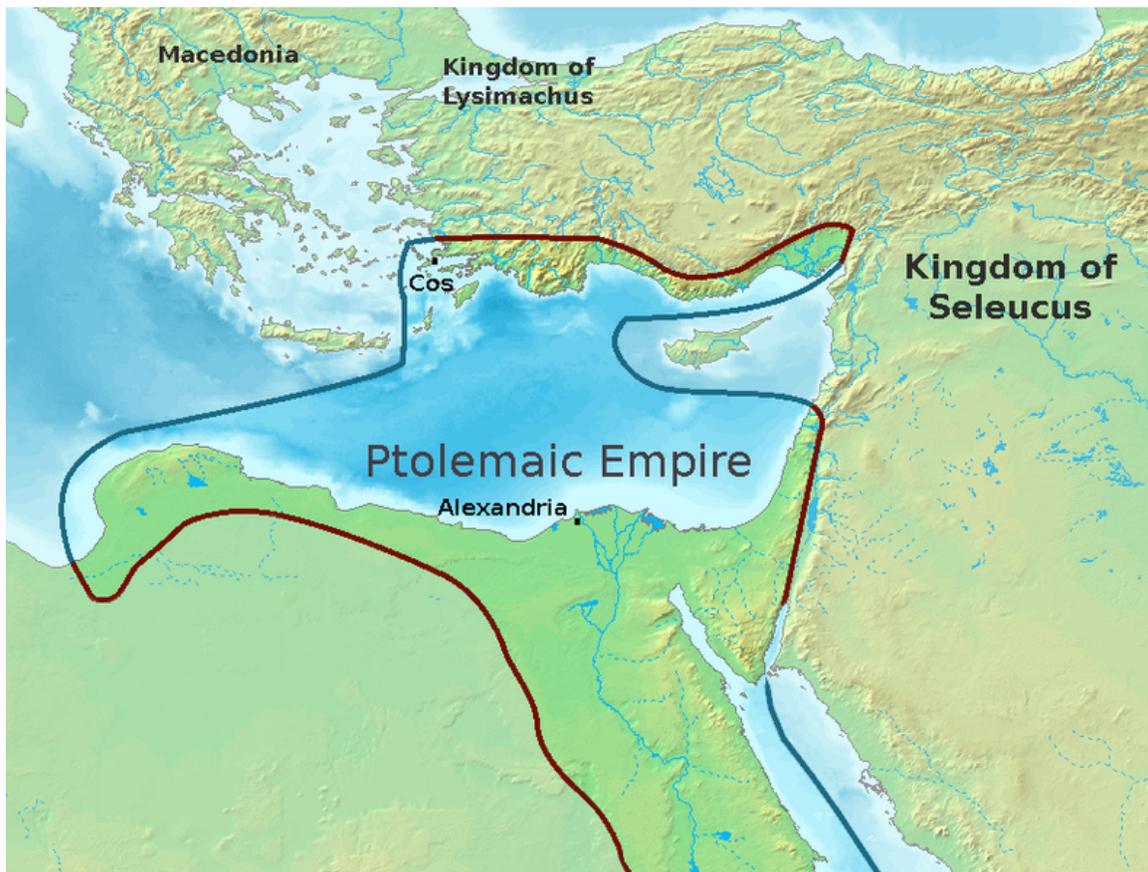


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexander1256.jpg>>

Alexander the Great, 3rd century BCE statue, Istanbul Archaeology Museum – Conquered Egypt in 332 BCE

Thereafter, Alexander's generals began a struggle for succession. Following the Wars of Succession (301-280), three separate Hellenistic kingdoms – Macedonian (centered in Greece

and Macedonia), Seleucid (Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Iran), and Ptolemaic (Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus) – emerged from Alexander’s empire.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ptolemaic-Empire-300BC.png>>

*The Ptolemaic (Macedonian) Dynasty Ruled Egypt, Cyrenaica,
and Cyprus – 332-30 BCE*

Egypt prospered under Hellenistic rule, and the Ptolemies engaged in regular and profitable trade with the strong Kushitic kingdom of Meroe (to the south in former Nubia). The Ptolemaic

economy in Egypt was tightly controlled and organized by the state to facilitate heavy taxation. The minister of finance, second only to the king in power, closely supervised and taxed all key economic activities – agriculture, mining, foreign trade, and artisanship (linen, glass, and papyrus). The Macedonians were flexible in their pantheistic religious practices. They invented a new composite god, Serapis, and successfully promoted the cult of Serapis through state subsidy of new temples.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Serapis_Pio-Clementino_Inv689_n2.jpg>

*The God Serapis, Serapaeum, Alexandria, 4th century BCE –
New Religious Cult Arose in the Ptolemaic Period*

In Upper Egypt, the Ptolemies constructed impressive temples at Edfu and Kom Ombo to convince the Egyptians that they were legitimate rulers.

In the first Ptolemaic century (305-222 BCE), the first three Ptolemies exercised effective leadership and Egypt was stable. But during the next two centuries (and under the last twelve Ptolemies), the royal family experienced periodic internecine warfare and civil strife in Egypt was widespread. Alexandria, the new Hellenistic capital, emerged as the leading intellectual center in the world. Its innovative Mouseion housed an extensive research library (with 500,000 books in its collection), laboratories, observatories, lecture halls, and a zoo. The world's leading intellectual establishment hosted mathematicians (Euclid, who developed geometry), geographers (Eratosthenes and Claudius Ptolemy, who codified geography), medical doctors (Erasistratus, who practiced vivisection, and Galen, who wrote enduring medical textbooks), physicists (Archimedes, who studied applied physics), and astronomers and other scientists. The 435-foot marble

lighthouse at Pharos, designed for Ptolemy Soter by Sostratus in 290 BCE and destroyed by an earthquake in 1362 CE, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The Macedonians effectively taxed away much of Egypt's wealth, and from their perspective they spent it well, taxing Lower and Upper Egypt to develop and promote Alexandria.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pharouknowns_Alexandria_\(Fischer_von_Erlach\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pharouknowns_Alexandria_(Fischer_von_Erlach).jpg)>

*Alexandria Became the World's Leading Port –
Pharos Lighthouse, 290 BCE-1362 CE, Johann von Erlach, 1721*

Ptolemaic Wealth. As in dynastic Egypt, agriculture was the primary source of wealth in Ptolemaic Egypt. The main export commodity remained wheat, and the Macedonians expanded the production of olives, papyrus, and sheep. The principal agricultural innovations were the promotion of double cropping (through better water control), land reclamation (especially in the Faiyum interior delta of the Nile), and the revival of the canal linking the Pelusiac branch of the Nile River with the Red Sea. Most farmland was owned by the crown or by temples or cities, but some was privately held. The most common farming arrangement was small-scale tenancy. The state tightly supervised production and imposed heavy taxes.



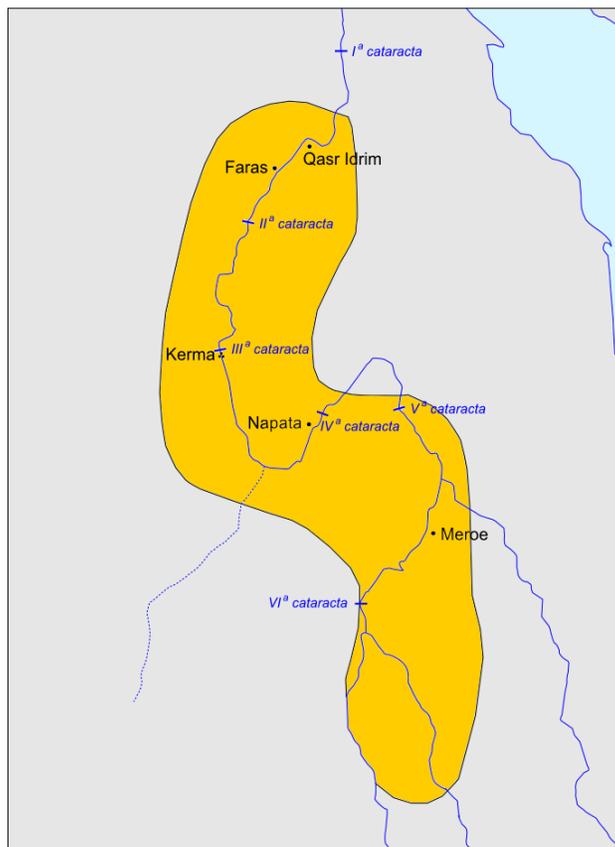
Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt.KomOmbo.Shaduf.01.jpg>>

Shadoof, Water-lifting Device for Irrigation – Kom Ombo, Egypt

Because Egypt had a large surplus of cereals, Alexandria became the world's leading export port for grain. Ptolemaic wealth from foreign trade grew to rival that from agriculture. Alexandria, a multi-ethnic melting pot of 300,000 Macedonian, Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian residents, served as a shipbuilding center and an entrepôt for the Western world by linking trade

routes from Africa, southwest Asia, Europe, and the Orient.

Strabo, the Greek historian and geographer, described Alexandria as the greatest emporium in the inhabited world. The Ptolemies negotiated trade treaties with Meroe to permit exploitation of Nubian gold and trade in African products, such as ivory, ebony, and live elephants.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reiaume_de_Kush_\(peri%C3%B2de_Napata-Meroe\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reiaume_de_Kush_(peri%C3%B2de_Napata-Meroe).png)>

*Kingdom of Meröitic Kush, 5th century BCE-4th century CE –
Located Along the Nile River South of Egypt (In Today's Sudan)*

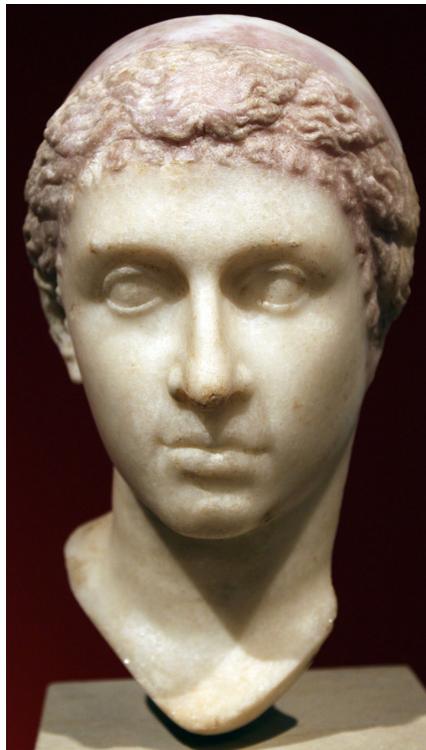
During the first century of Ptolemaic rule, Egypt controlled the Levant and its Phoenician ports that served as the termini for land-based trade with China.

Foreign conquest peaked in the first century of Ptolemaic rule. A standing army of 200,000 kept peace in the Ptolemaic empire, which included Libya, Cyrenaica, the Levant, Cyprus, parts of Asia Minor, and the Aegean islands. Later, Egypt lost the Levant and the Greek-speaking Asia Minor and Aegean to the two other Hellenic kingdoms. Alexandrian artisanship provided a fourth minor source of wealth. The city produced high quality glass, linen, papyrus, and ships.

Roman Conquest of Egypt (30 BCE). The upstart Roman Empire forged an alliance with Ptolemy II in 271 BCE. That alliance lasted for more than two centuries and proved critical to Rome when Egypt supplied grain during Rome's wars with Carthage. After subduing Carthage and gaining control of the western Mediterranean, Rome gradually moved eastward and

conquered Macedonia in 167 BCE and the remnant Seleucid Kingdom in 64-62 BCE.

Cleopatra VII (ruled 51-30 BCE) was the last Ptolemaic pharaoh of Egypt. At age 18, she married her younger brother (Ptolemy XIV) and co-ruled Egypt with him, taking the ruling name of Philopator (“she who loves her father”). Cleopatra, an astute leader, included courtesanship among her diplomatic talents.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0035_Altes_Museum_Portrait_Kleopatra_VII_anagoria.JPG>

Cleopatra VII, Last Ptolemaic Pharaoh, Ruled 51-30 BCE – Bust, Roman Artwork, 1st century BCE, Altes Museum, Berlin

E. M. Forster described Cleopatra well:

“She did not differ in character from the other able and unscrupulous queens of her race, but she had one source of power that they denied themselves – the power of the courtesan – and she exploited it professionally. Though passionate, she was not the slave of passion, still less of sentimentality. Her safety, and the safety of Egypt were her care; the clumsy and amorous Romans, who menaced both, were her natural prey. In old times, a queen might rule from her throne. Now she must descend and play the woman.”

In 48 BCE, Cleopatra introduced herself to the visiting Roman leader, Julius Caesar, wrapped in oriental rugs to avoid detection by rival family members. A four-year liaison with Caesar ensued. Cleopatra later installed their son, Caesarion, as Ptolemy XV and co-ruled with him (after poisoning her brother/husband).

Following the murder of Caesar in 44 BCE, Octavian and Mark Antony divided the rule of the Roman Empire. Antony, who controlled the east, sailed to Egypt in 41 BCE. Cleopatra invited him to her yacht for a four-day party and began an 11-year alliance. Antony and Cleopatra had three children (two were twins, Cleopatra Selene (“Moon”) and Alexander Helios (“Sun”)).

Antony offered to allocate all of the eastern Roman Empire to

Cleopatra and her four children. While Antony dallied in Alexandria, Octavian consolidated his power base in Rome. In 31 BCE, Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at the naval Battle of Actium in the Adriatic Sea near Epirus, western Greece. When Octavian invaded Egypt in 30 BCE, both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide and Egypt became a Roman province.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:011-Mark_Antony,_with_Cleopatra_VII_-_3.jpg?

Cleopatra and Mark Antony, Silver Denarius, 32 BCE – Alliance between Egypt and Rome, 41-30 BCE

Roman Rule of Egypt (30 BCE-395 CE). From the outset, Egypt was Rome's richest province because it could produce more

wealth than any other Mediterranean region. Roman leaders organized Egypt to serve principally as a granary for Rome.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_provinces_trajan.svg>

Egypt (Aegyptus) Was the Richest Province of the Roman Empire – Rome At Its Peak, c. 110 CE

Octavian (soon to become Augustus Caesar) set administrative precedents that held for the four centuries of Roman rule of Egypt. Unlike the other Roman provinces, Egypt was the private appanage of the emperor who took first claim to its enormous wealth. The emperor personally appointed a prefect to govern Egypt, and that ruler reported directly to the emperor on

matters of Egyptian taxation and politics. In other Greek-speaking parts of the empire, the Romans ruled indirectly and permitted elections of assemblies and appointment of local magistrates. But the Romans ruled directly in Egypt because they were aware of the prior Egyptian resistance to Hellenistic rule.

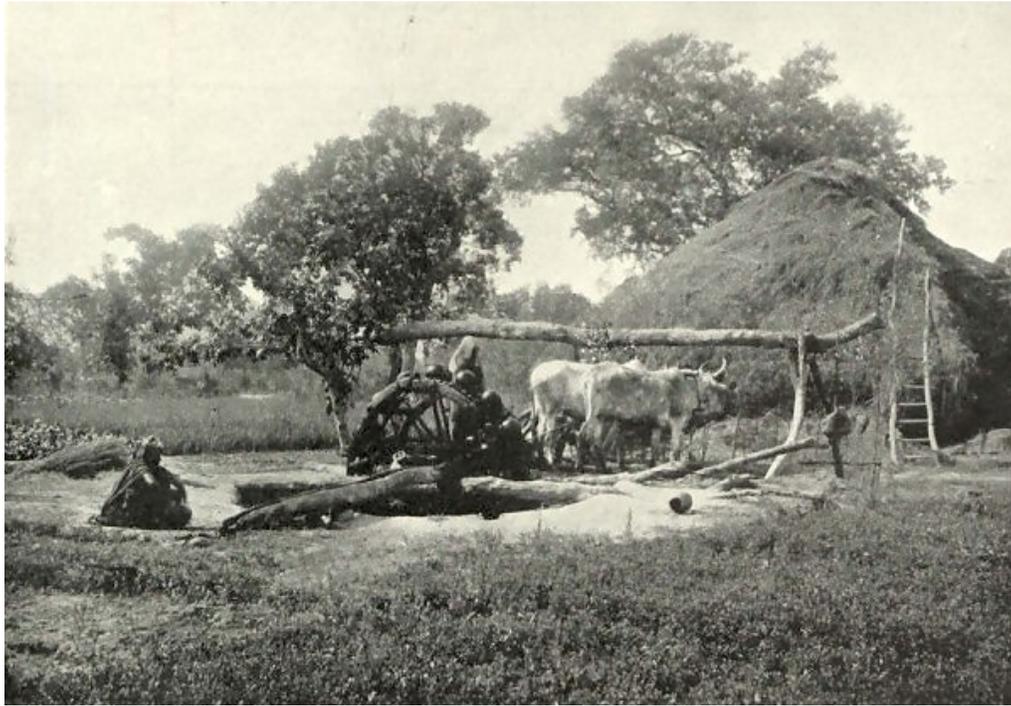


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Octavian_aureus_circa_30_BCE.jpg>

Octavian (Augustus Caesar), Emperor of Rome and Pharaoh of Egypt, 30 BCE-14 CE – Aureus, c. 30 BCE, British Museum

Rome continued the use of Greek as the language of government and made effective use of the efficient Egyptian bureaucracy. As a control measure, the Romans gave special privileges (social rights, tax exemptions, and job access) to the Greek-speaking Hellenes in Egypt who made up about one-fifth of the total population of perhaps 5 million. The Roman emperors posed as pharaohs and claimed to honor Egyptian religion and have divine rights. But they transferred much of the temple land to the state and paid the priests as bureaucrats.

The Romans introduced several key innovations – iron tools and weapons, the lathe, an improved version of the *saqiya* ox-powered waterwheel, and the *noraq* sledge for threshing grain – into Egypt. They also made significant public investments in Egyptian infrastructure – irrigation canals, new port facilities on the Red Sea, roads, water transportation, and new cities. Early Egypt thus reached its peak of economic productivity during the Roman occupation, although much of the wealth was transferred to Rome.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_%22Persian_Wheel.%22.jpg>

*Saqiya (Persian) Water Wheel –
Agricultural Innovation, Introduced to Egypt by the Romans*

Roman Taxation of Egyptian Wealth. The Romans had limited interest in Egyptian culture and religion. Their main concern was to impose political stability and extract as much tax revenue as possible from this very wealthy province. Even more than their Hellenistic predecessors, the Romans concentrated

attention on the promotion and taxation of Egyptian agriculture, as always the country's main generator of wealth.

Indications are that agricultural production increased, at least during the first two centuries of Roman rule. Roman public investments in irrigation, threshing, and transportation were focused mainly on cereal production, especially of wheat. There is little evidence that the Romans introduced new crops, better farming technologies, or improved seeds. Instead, they increased farmed area by improving irrigation and drainage. Rome sold state-owned land to wealthy Greek and Egyptian absentee landlords who rented their land in small parcels to tenant farmers.



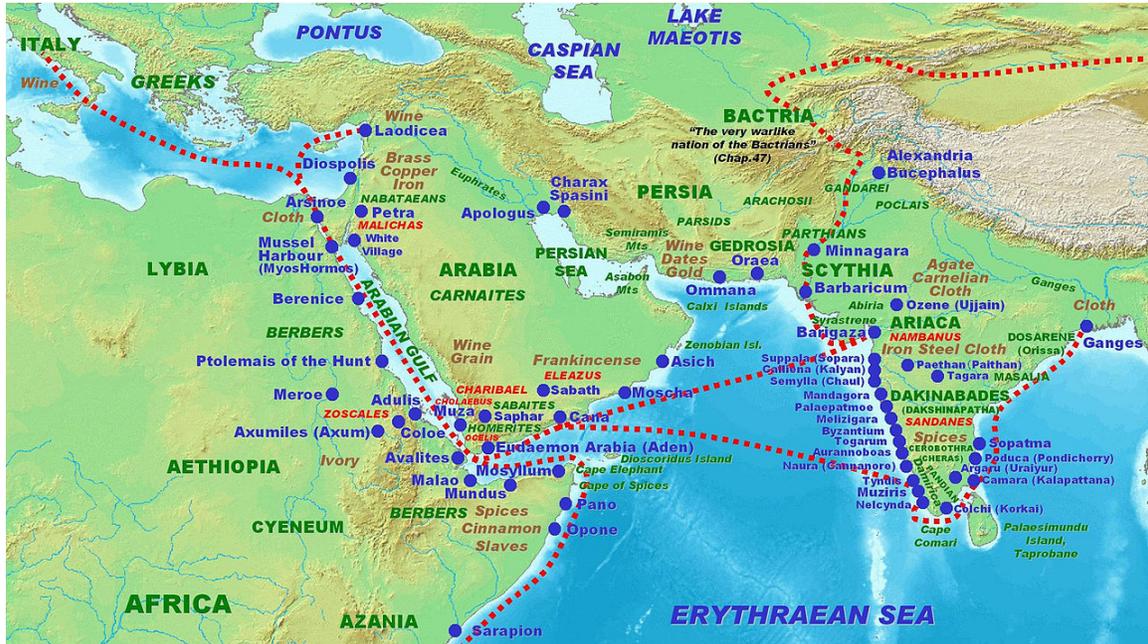
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_harvester,_Trier.jpg

Roman Harvester – Egyptian Agriculture Was the Primary Source of Wealth during the Roman Era

Roman officials then imposed an impressive array of taxes on everyone engaged in agriculture – crop shares, land rents for tenants, property taxes, and head taxes – and siphoned away most of the agricultural surpluses. To facilitate tax collection, Roman officials carried out detailed censuses of people and property. In an average year, Egypt exported about 150,000 tons of wheat to Rome and fed one-third of the city’s one million people. Most of that grain first went to Alexandria to begin its 1800-mile journey to Ostia, the port of Rome.

The Romans encouraged foreign trade and appropriated the gains from trade in the form of trade taxes. Egypt’s Red Sea ports were an intermediate point on the Asian trade route that supplied silk, spices, and incense (frankincense and myrrh) to Rome. Alexandria continued as an entrepôt for the processing, storage, and transshipment of Asian and African trade goods onward to Rome and other cities in the Roman Empire.

The Romans negotiated trade treaties with Meroe to gain access to Nubian gold, ivory, and ebony. When the kingdom of Axum in northern Ethiopia gradually replaced Meroe as the key trading power in northeastern Africa and the Red Sea region, Roman traders shifted their alliances and made greater use of Axum's Red Sea port of Adulis to gain access to trading opportunities in India. Rome also engaged in mining Nubian stones (such as *granito del foro*, a primary stone used in construction of buildings in the Roman Forum) and red granite from Aswan. Roman officials taxed crafts – weaving (linen and wool), and the making of glassware, papyri, and jewelry – which were especially prominent in Alexandria, a Greek-speaking city that most Romans distrusted.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
 < https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indo-Roman_trade.jpg >

Roman Trade Routes to Egypt, Axum, and India – 2nd-5th centuries CE

Transfer of Egypt to Byzantine Rule (395). Three trends greatly influenced the eastern Mediterranean region, including Egypt, during the first six centuries of the Christian era. The first enduring influence was the rise and spread of monotheistic Christianity, which replaced all other religions in the region except Judaism and Persian Zoroastrianism. Christianity was at times a unifying force, but doctrinal splits sometimes caused divisiveness within and between societies. The second trend was the shift

eastward of the Roman Empire that culminated in 395 in the division of the empire into a western portion governed from Rome and an eastern empire ruled from the new city of Constantinople. The third force was the continuing influence in all previously Hellenistic kingdoms of Greek culture and language (though not religion). In Egypt, Christianity gradually replaced the pantheistic Egyptian and Greek religions, starting in the 1st century CE.

The first Christian converts in Egypt were Greeks and Jews in Alexandria. The new religion spread from Alexandria to interior Egypt in the 2nd century CE. The Roman rulers saw Christianity as a disruptive political force and persecuted it intermittently, especially in the late 3rd century under Diocletian. The Egyptian Christian (Coptic) Church dates from that period. The Coptic calendar begins with the start of brutal Diocletian's reign, 284 CE, to commemorate the "Era of the Martyrs."

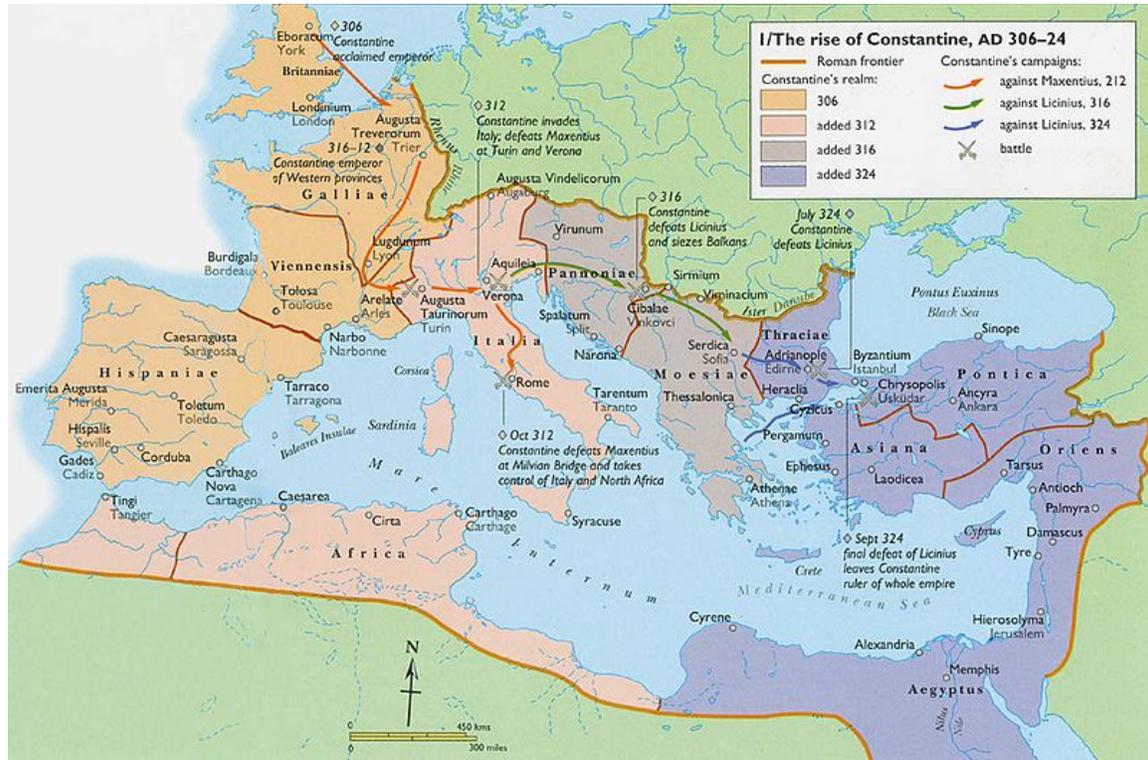


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Codex_Glazier_2.JPG>

Rome Persecuted Egyptian Christians, 3rd c. CE – Coptic Christian Cross, Based on the Egyptian Emblem of Eternal Life (Ankh)

Roman persecution ended when Constantine converted to Christianity in 324 and proclaimed that everyone in the empire should become Christian. The proclamation of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire did not mean instant conversion of the masses, but it did end religious persecution against Christians. When Emperor Theodosius I divided the Roman Empire into two just before he died in 395, Christian Egypt

became a part of the Eastern Roman Empire (later known as Byzantium).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_empire.jpg

The Roman Empire Divided in 395 CE – Egypt Was in the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire

Byzantine Rule of Egypt (395-641). Egypt suffered under Byzantine (eastern Roman) rule more than it had under either Hellene or Roman governance. Egyptian unhappiness with Byzantine rule stemmed from political instability and economic hardship. Rome pulled its legions out of Egypt in the early 5th

century, and Constantinople replaced them with Greek garrisons that manned the major towns only. As a consequence, central political control weakened and the provision of government services declined.

In response to greater political fragmentation, Byzantine officials increased the rates of agricultural taxation to maintain grain deliveries (to Constantinople rather than to Rome). Egyptian farmers thus were squeezed – officials demanded a higher share of smaller harvests. In southern Egypt, the lessened military presence was inadequate to provide border security, and Nubians (Blemmyes) periodically raided Upper Egyptian farms and towns.

A bitter doctrinal schism in the Orthodox Christian Church further contributed to Egyptian discontent. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, church officials adopted a diphysite interpretation of the Holy Trinity (Christ had two natures, divine and human) whereas Egyptian Christians insisted on a monophysite interpretation (Christ had one nature that was both divine and human). The deep schism had many other roots.

Constantinople replaced Alexandria as the second most important bishopric seat (after Rome). Moreover, the Coptic view of Christianity stressed its personal, monastic, and Egyptian facets whereas the view from Constantinople favored Orthodox Christianity that was procedural, hierarchical, and Greek. The widespread opposition to Byzantine rule paved the way for an easy takeover of Egypt in the 7th century by Arab Muslim invaders.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Byzantine_-_Votive_or_Dedicatory_Cross_-_Walters_57630.jpg

Byzantine Votive Cross, c. 550 – The Orthodox Church in Constantinople Eclipsed the Coptic Church in Alexandria

Muslim Arab Jihad and Diaspora (7th century). The new Arabic religion of Islam originated in Medina and Mecca in the early 7th century. Islam appealed to the masses because it overthrew the existing politico-social hierarchy by excluding priests, nobles, and kings and it promised a feasible route to salvation for the masses. When the Muslim Arabs began their *jihad* (religious war) and diaspora from Arabia in 634, they introduced significant innovations – religion (Islam), scripture (Quran), law (Sharia), language (Arabic, in the Semitic family), and statecraft (Islamic legitimacy, recognizing no separation between church and state).



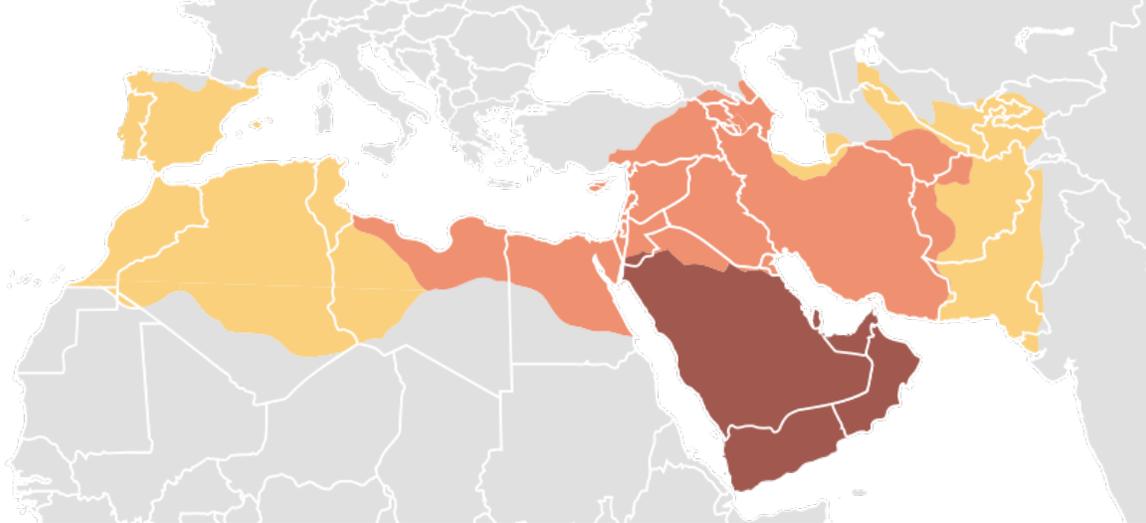
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Modern_prayer_mat.jpg>

Islamic Prayer Rug, Depicting the Kaaba in Mecca

The Arabs quickly conquered all of the Sasanian (Persian) Empire and much of the Byzantine (eastern Roman) Empire, which then dominated the Western world. Those two powers were vulnerable to Arab attack because of their incessant warfare with each other (between 540 and 629), plague infestations, and economic decline (caused by barbarian invasions, shrinking trade, stagnant agriculture, and declining cities). In 634, when Islam emerged from Arabia, King Yezdegerd in Ctesiphon, the capital of

the Zoroastrian Sassanid Empire, and Emperor Heraclius in Constantinople, the capital of the Orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire, were so busy fighting each other that they failed to counter the Islamic threat effectively. The Arab invaders had many advantages in their sweeping conquest of territories from central Asia across North Africa to Spain. Their Bedouin warriors were experienced, disciplined, mobile (due to camel transport), and motivated to spread Islam and gain booty and land.

The Arabs invaded Byzantine Egypt in 639, only five years after the onset of the jihad, and in 641 the Arabs easily defeated the Byzantine rulers and took over the country. Arab conquest of Egypt was facilitated because the Coptic Christians deeply resented the corrupt and inefficient Byzantine rulers. Moreover, the new Arab rulers guaranteed freedom for the practice of the Coptic religion, confiscated no land in Egypt, recognized traditional water rights, and discriminated against the Coptic Egyptians only by forcing them (and all other non-Muslims) to pay a poll tax (the *jizya*) from which Muslims were exempt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_expansion_of_Caliphate.svg>

*The Muslim Arab Diaspora –
622-632 (Dark Red), 632-661 (Light Red), 661-750 (Yellow)*

The Copts readily exchanged Byzantine for Arab imperial domination, and most found their new masters more tolerant than the old ones had been. The majority of Egyptians remained Christian and retained the Coptic language. The process of Islamization and Arabization in Egypt was strongly resisted, took several centuries, and remains incomplete (Coptic Christians constitute about 5-10 percent of the contemporary population of Egypt).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aswan_St_Simeon_R01.jpg>

St. Simeon's Coptic Monastery, Aswan – 7th-13th centuries

Egypt under the Islamic Caliphates (641-1169). Four successors of Muhammad ruled from Medina for almost three decades after his death. The Umayyad Islamic leaders (caliphs) established a new caliphate in Damascus, Syria in 661. The Umayyad caliphs were consolidating their power in areas where both Arabs and Muslims initially were in the minority, and central control was relatively weak. In Egypt, the Umayyads revoked the freedom for Coptic Christians to practice their religion and began persecuting the Copts in the 8th century.



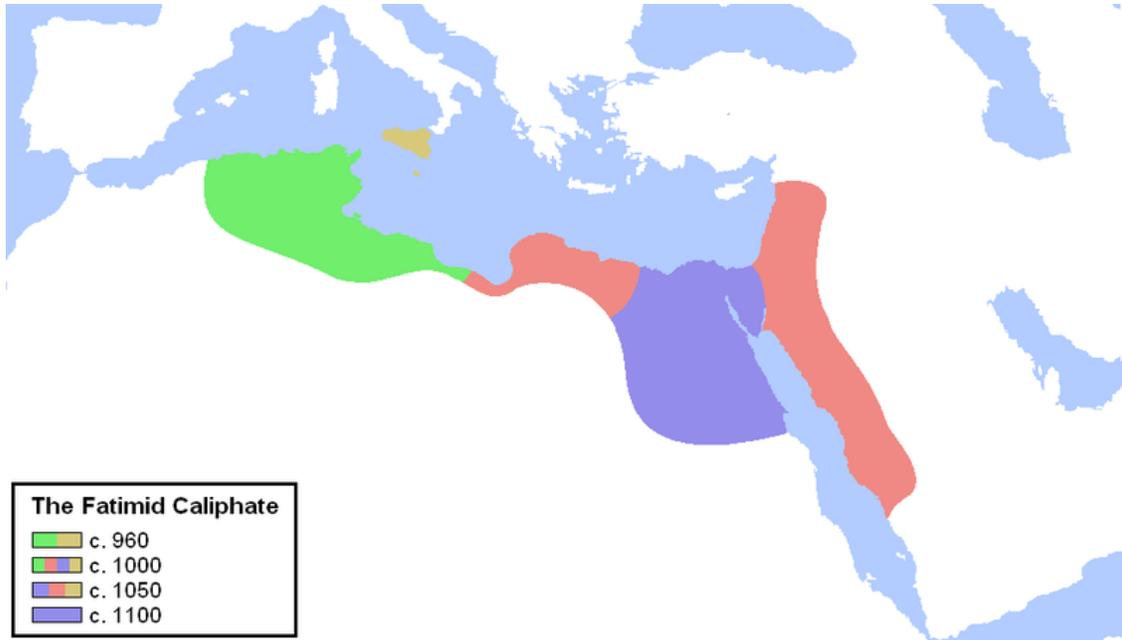
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syria_12_-_Damascus_-_Umayyad_Mosque_courtyard.jpg>

Courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus

In 749, the Abbasids set up a new caliphate in Baghdad (modern Iraq), shifting power to the east, away from the Arabs and toward the Persians. Persian advisors and bureaucrats and Turkish soldiers undercut the Arabs' control of political power during the five centuries of Abbasid rule, and Seljuk Turks held effective power after they invaded Baghdad in 1055. The Abbasid administrators in Egypt brutally suppressed revolts by the Coptic Christians and enslaved and deported many Copts during the 9th

century. In 868, Ahmad ibn Tulun, an outstanding leader of Turkish origin who ruled Egypt from 868 to 884, declared Egypt independent of Abbasid rule and set up his own dynasty. Two years later, ibn Tulun conquered Syria and began a pattern of Egyptian rule of Syria that continued for much of the following seven centuries.

Beginning in the 10th century, the Abbasid Empire splintered as Berber Muslims established independent caliphates in North Africa and Islamic Spain. Berbers, practicing the Shiite version of Islam, set up the Fatimid caliphate in Morocco and Tunisia in 909 (Shiite Muslims believed that all legitimate caliphs have to be direct descendants of Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, and Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and Fatima's husband). The Moroccan Berbers conquered Egypt in 969 and shifted the dynasty to a new capital at Cairo (*al-Qahira*).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fatimid_Caliphate.PNG>

Egypt under the Fatimid Caliphate, c. 960=11000

By the 11th century, the Fatimids gained control of North Africa, Egypt, Sicily, Syria, and western Arabia and created a more powerful empire than that of the remnant Abbasids in Baghdad who practiced the Sunni version of Islam (Sunni Muslims believed that legitimate caliphs should be elected and need not be descended directly from the Prophet).

The Fatimids became the most prominent of the world's three great Islamic empires – the declining Abbasids (centered in Baghdad to the east), the prosperous Fatimids (headquartered in

Cairo in the center), and the rising Almoravid Empire of Morocco and al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) (led from Marrakech in the west).

Fatimid wealth was based on Nile agriculture, urban crafts, and control of trade routes linking the Mediterranean via the Red Sea to the Orient (exchanging gold and ivory for spices and silk). The Shiite Fatimid leaders were tolerant both of the majority Sunni Muslims and of the minority Coptic Christians in Egypt. The wealth and power of the Fatimid Empire peaked during the reign of al-Mustansir (1036-1094).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bab_Zuwayla_Cairo_12_0864.jpg>

*Bab Zuweila, South Gate of Fatimid Cairo, Built 1092 –
Iconic Landmark of Old Cairo*

Salah al-Din and the Crusaders (1169-1250). The Crusades were a series of eight military expeditions in the 11th through the 13th centuries that pitted Christians (mostly Frankish knights) against Muslims (often termed Saracens by Western historians). In the 11th century, the Byzantine Emperor Alexis

was threatened by the prospect of Seljuk Turkish occupation of the Holy Land and of his capital in Constantinople. The Seljuks had swept out of their homelands in the Altai Mountains of Central Asia, captured Persia in the 1040s, and taken control of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 1055. Alexius requested Western European assistance to protect the Christian Byzantine Empire and to liberate Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine from the Turks. Arab Muslim armies had captured Jerusalem in 638, Muslims had built a shrine, the Dome of the Rock, and a mosque, the al-Aqsa, in the center of the city, and Jerusalem had become an important destination for Muslim pilgrims. The control of Jerusalem and Palestine, which were (and still are) high holy places in both Christianity and Judaism as well as in Islam, swung back and forth over two centuries of intermittent fighting between Christian Crusaders and Muslim Saracens.

Salah al-Din (1137-1193, known in the West as Saladin) was a Kurdish officer in the service of the Abbasid dynasty. In 1171, he went to Cairo to serve as vizier in the Fatimid government. He

quickly took power in the name of the Abbasids, proclaimed Sunni Islam as the state religion of Egypt, and established the Ayyubid dynasty that lasted until 1250. Salah al-Din channeled the lucrative Asian spice trade from Christian and Jewish merchants to Muslim traders and revived the sagging Egyptian economy. He gained control of Syria in 1174 and of Iraq five years later.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Citadel_of_Salah_El.Din.jpg>

Citadel of Cairo, Built by Salah al-Din, late 12th century

Salah al-Din then forced other bickering Muslim states to stop fighting with one another and concentrate on defeating the Crusaders. In 1187, he initiated battle with the Crusaders and recaptured Jerusalem. By the time Salah al-Din died in 1193, he had forced the Crusaders back into a narrow coastal strip on the Mediterranean in northern Palestine and Syria. However, political fragmentation, military incompetence, and corruption among his Ayyubid successors permitted the Crusaders to recover and prolong the battle for another century. Sultan Baybars of Egypt and his successors finally drove the last Crusaders from Palestine and coastal Syria in the late 13th century.

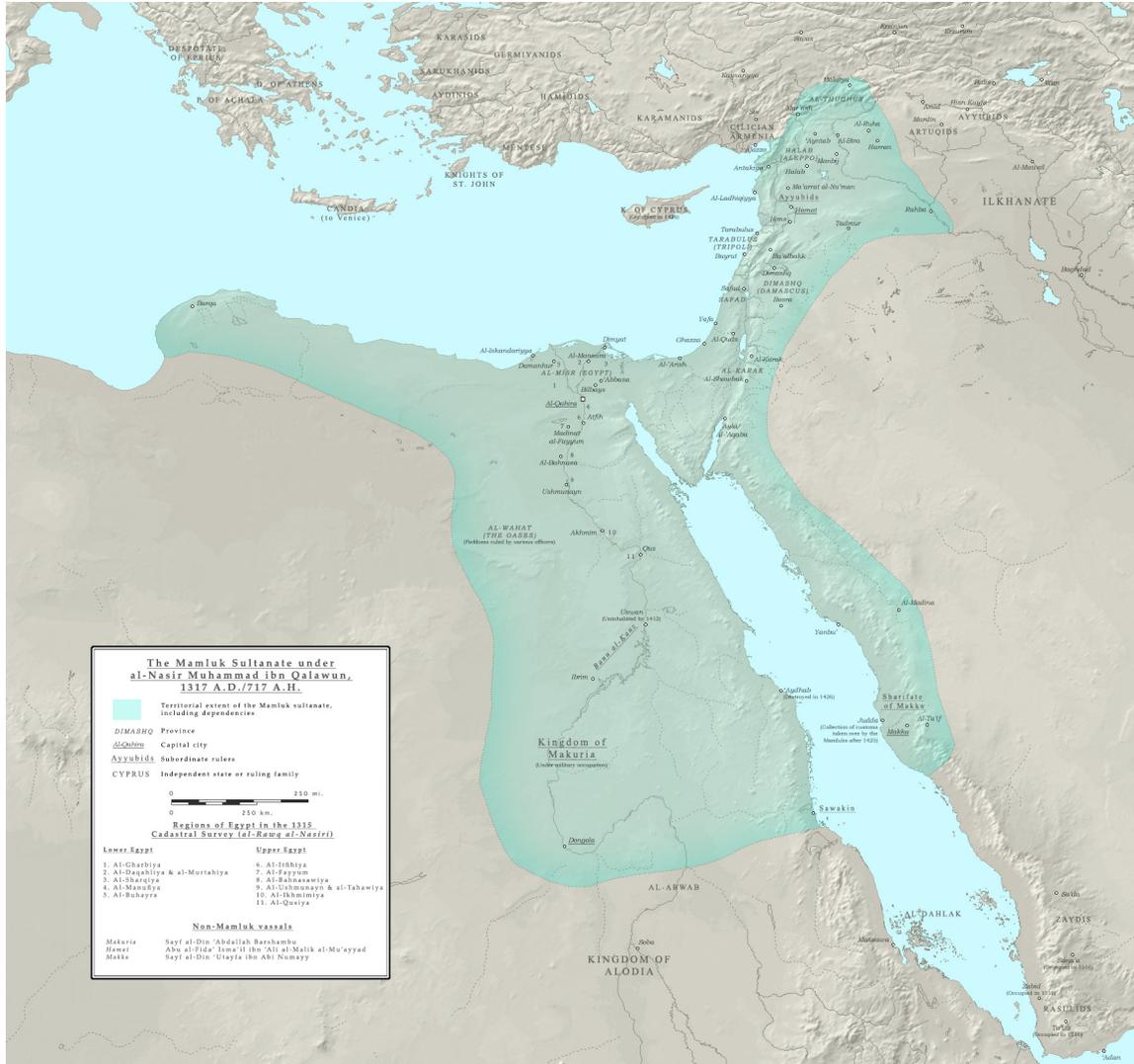


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Crusader_states_1240-eng.png>

Crusader States, c. 1229 (Red) and c. 1241 (Pink)

Mamluk Rule of Egypt (1250-1517). Mamluk means “owned” in Arabic. The mamluk system was widespread throughout the Islamic world in the 13th century. Muslim rulers

wished to have armies and bureaucracies that would remain loyal rather than usurp power. They imported young male slaves and then trained them in the Islamic religion, Arabic language, and the martial arts, especially horsemanship. When those mamluks became adults, they would be freed to join a military or bureaucratic caste, serve as apprentices, obtain land and their own households, and later become leaders. Then a new generation of young mamluk slaves would be imported, and the process would begin anew. The mamluk soldiers owed primary allegiance to their mamluk commanders. Through this loyalty, the commanders gained increasing military and political power and eventually replaced their rulers.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mamluk_Sultanate_of_Cairo_1317_AD.jpg>

Mamluk Egypt, 1250-1517

Egypt experienced two periods of Mamluk rule. During the first, 1250-1382, most of the mamluks were Kipchak Turks from the Russian steppes north of the Black Sea and the system of ruler succession was hereditary. In the second, 1382-1517, the mamluks

were principally Circassians from the Caucasus Mountains (because the Kipchaks had converted to Islam and could no longer be enslaved) and succession went to the strongest military commander. The Mamluk rulers of Egypt installed a dual administration, civil and military, and dominated both branches (although they installed puppet caliphs with alleged legitimacy). In the Turkish period, the Mamluk rulers governed effectively and Egypt had a strong economy, wielded military muscle, and emulated the Mongol conquerors of much of Asia in military tactics and dress. But Egypt went into steady decline during the Circassian Mamluk period, because the rulers experienced succession struggles, created political instability, and overtaxed agriculture and trade.

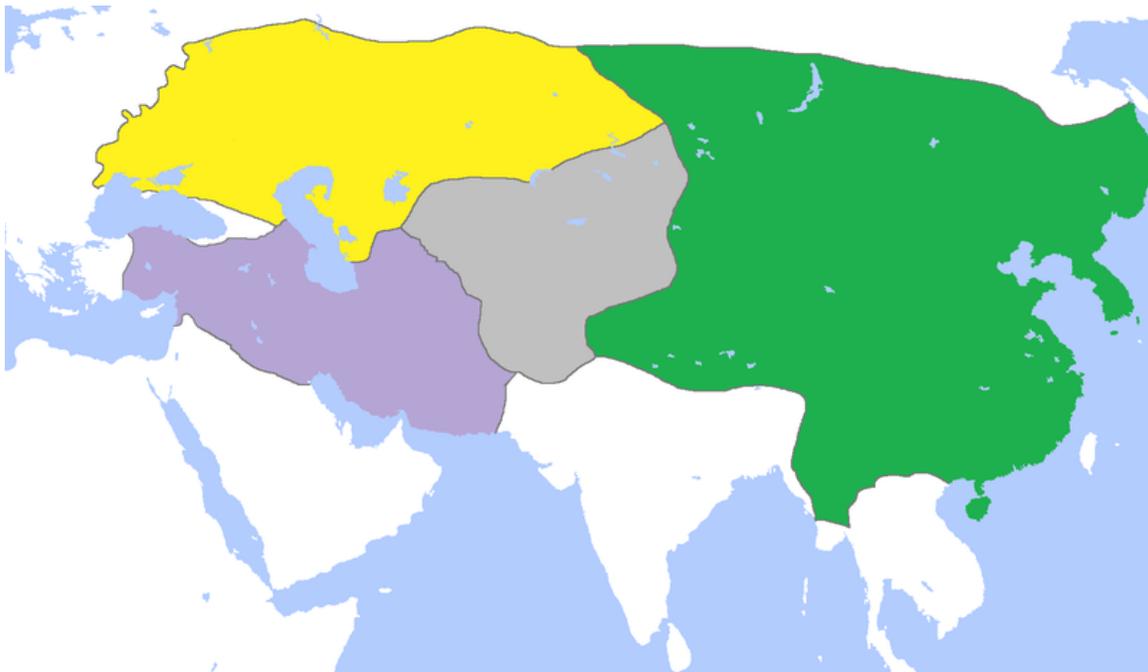


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Mamluk_from_Aleppo.jpg>

*Circassian Mamluk Nobleman, Aleppo, Syria –
Painting by William Page, c. 1816-1824*

Egypt and the Mongol Expansion (13th century). In the 13th century, the Mongols conquered China and the Mongol irruption spread across the Eurasian steppes. For several decades, the military progress of the Mongol and Turkish horse-based warriors seemed unstoppable. Those tribesmen from the Asian steppes were incredibly quick and mobile, and their military tactics, notably the feigned retreat, are still studied today. After

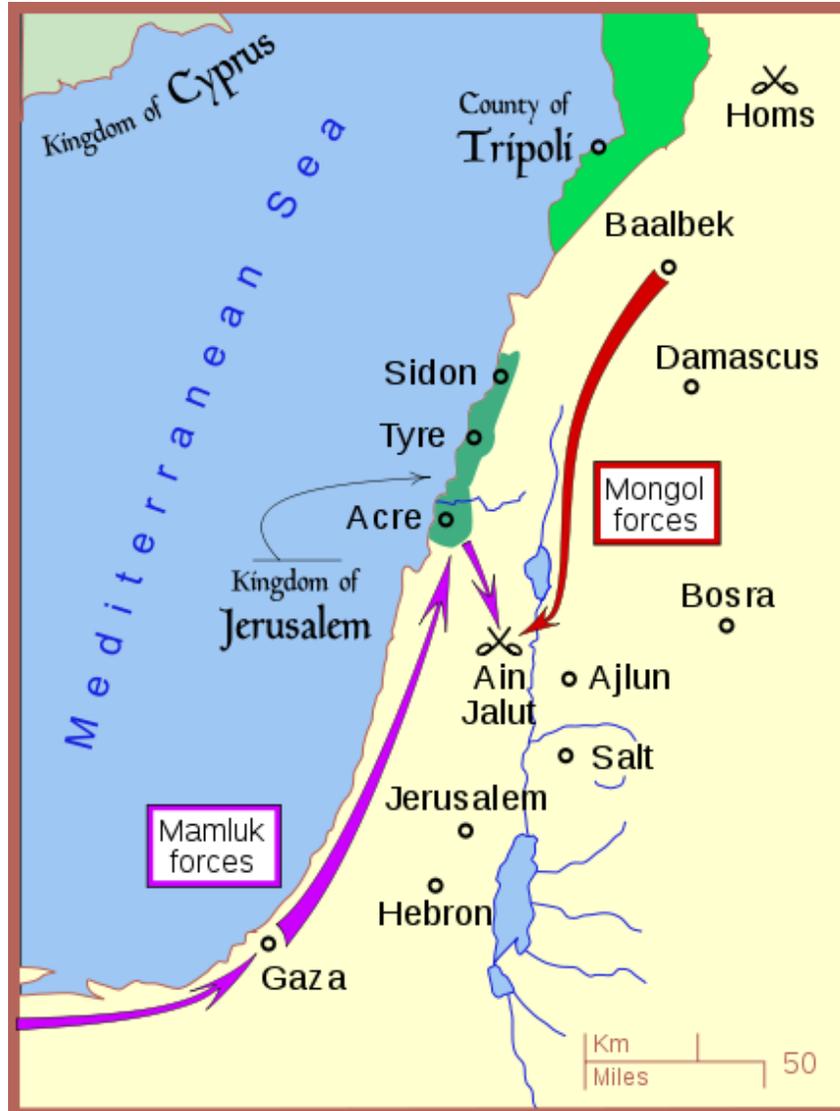
much destruction and conquest, the Mongol rulers, descendants of Genghis Khan (Chinggis Qan), set up four huge kingdoms, which they called khanates – Ilkhanate (Iran, Iraq, and western Asia), Golden Horde (Russia and southwestern Siberia), Chaghatai (Turkestan and Central Asia), and Empire of the Great Khan (China, Mongolia, and Manchuria).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MongolEmpireDivisions1300.png>>

*The Four Mongol Khanates, 1300 –
Ilkhanate (Purple), Golden Horde (Yellow), Chaghatai (Gray),
and Empire of the Great Khan (Green)*

In 1258, the army of Hulegu Khan – the leader of the Ilkhanate, grandson of Genghis Khan, and brother of Kublai Khan – swept through Iran and Iraq and continued its westward advance. Against heavy odds, the Mamluk army of Sultan Qutuz stopped the Mongol advance in Syria in 1260. The Battle of Ain Jalut (“Eye of Goliath”), one of the great upsets in military history, was fought reportedly at the site where David slew Goliath (in Galilee, in contemporary Israel). Mongol warriors from the Khanate of the Golden Horde fought with the Mamluks against their brethren, the Mongols from Hulegu’s Ilkhanate. The Mamluk general Baybars, a Turkish Mamluk from the Russian steppes whose name meant “panther”, was the hero of the Egyptian victory. When Sultan Qutuz died, Baybars took advantage of his wide military renown and proclaimed himself Sultan of Egypt.



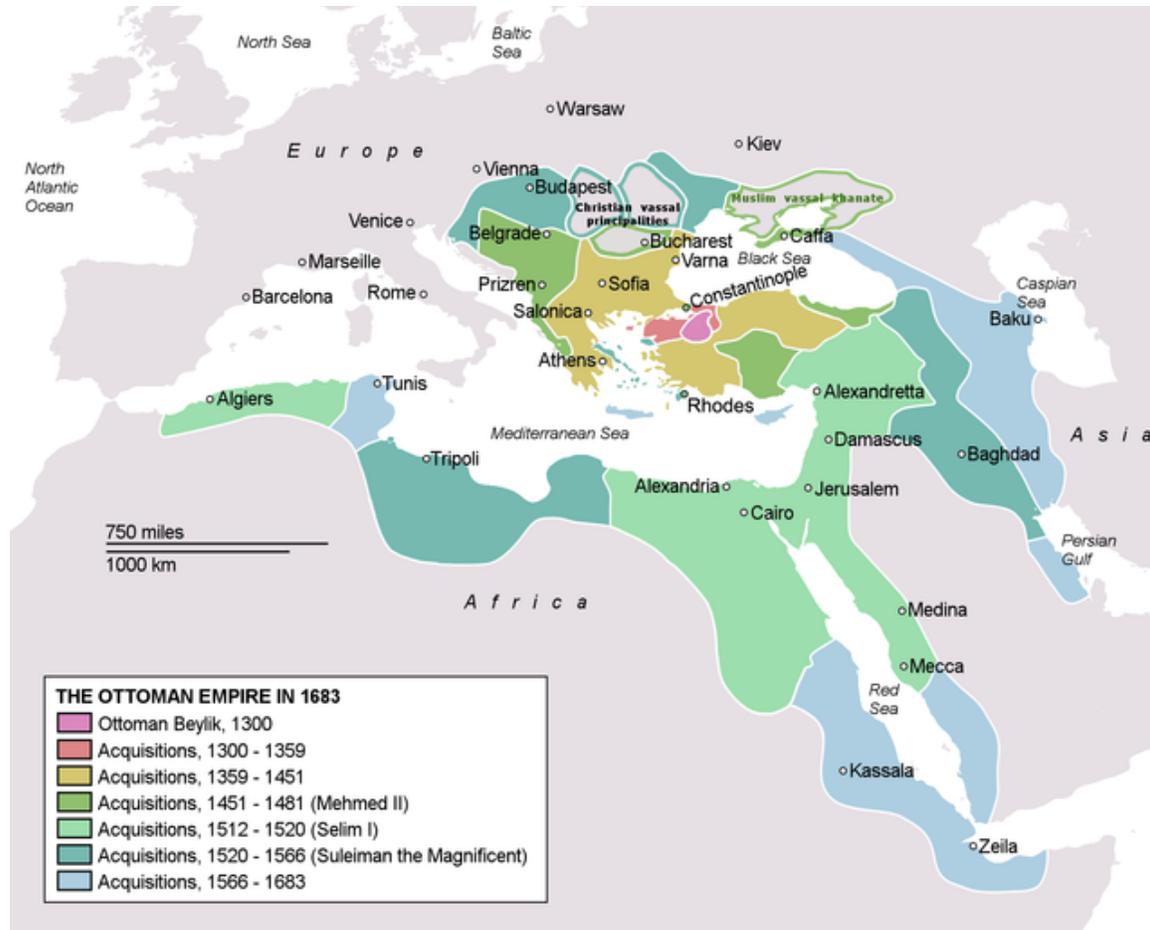
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Campaign_of_the_Battle_of_Ain_Jalut_1260.svg>

*The Battle of Ain Jalut, 1260 – Sultan Qutuz of Mamluk Egypt
Defeated Hulegu Khan of the Mongol Ilkhanate*

Hulegu Khan and his descendants ruled the Ilkhanate, in Muslim Iran and Iraq, between 1256 and 1335. The Mongols governed indirectly, using efficient Persian bureaucrats to run the

government and collect taxes in a strategy akin to the Mongol's use of Chinese bureaucrats in the Great Khanate. The Ilkhanate Mongols gradually converted to Islam and acculturated themselves to the Persian noble lifestyle. The Mongols made no further attempts to invade the areas controlled by the Egyptian Mamluks – Egypt, Syria, and western Arabia.

Ottoman Rule of Egypt (1517-1805). Between the 14th and the 16th centuries, the Ottoman Empire gradually expanded to encompass Muslim areas from North Africa through Egypt, southwestern Asia, Anatolia, Iraq, and southeastern Europe. Seljuk Turks had pushed their way out of central Asia, captured Persia and Iraq, and entered modern Turkey in the 11th century. The Turks formed the Ottoman Empire, captured most of modern-day Turkey from the Byzantines, and expanded into southeastern Europe in the 14th century. They took the last remnant of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, in 1453.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OttomanEmpireIn1683.png>

Expansion of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1683

The Turkish rulers (sultans) set up a military-administrative organization that depended on non-Turkish elements of the empire's population, mostly from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Those groups sometimes undercut the Turkish sultans and usurped power in their name, though continuing to use Turkish as the language of government. The Ottoman sultans imposed heavy (but

workable) taxes throughout their empire – on crops produced, goods traded or hand-crafted, and non-Muslims. The three Muslim empires of this period – Ottoman (Turkish), Safavid (Persian), and Mughal (Indian) – wove together a network of trade routes from Western Europe to the Orient.

At its peak in the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire was the largest political entity in the Mediterranean region since the fall of the western Roman Empire twelve centuries earlier. In eastern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa, the Ottomans ruled a multi-ethnic group of Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, and Romanians who practiced all of the Abrahamic religions – Sunni or Shiite Islam, Orthodox or Catholic Christianity, and Judaism.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islamic_Gunpowder_Empires.jpg>

The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires, c. 1700

When the Ottoman armies advanced into Circassian Mamluk Egypt and Syria in 1516-1517, they faced little resistance. The Mamluk government had been crumbling under a debilitating system of ruler succession, and their army was weak and untested. In contrast, the Ottoman military was experienced and disciplined, had better firearms and artillery, and was led by more creative generals. Egypt, along with Syria and western Arabia, fell easily to the Ottoman advance.

However, beginning in 1630 Mamluk military leaders regained effective political power in Egypt while remaining under Ottoman suzerainty. The Ottomans appointed governors in Egypt, but Mamluk officers had effective control of the military, the bureaucracy, and tax collection. Nevertheless, tax revenues from Egypt constituted a large part of Ottoman government revenues.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman_Mamluk_horseman_circa_1550.jpg>

*Ottoman Mamluk Horseman, c. 1550 – Mamluk Officers
Controlled the Military and Bureaucracy in Ottoman Egypt*

The Egyptian Economy under Ottoman Rule. Egypt, along with its former possessions, Syria and western Arabia, played key roles in the Ottoman Empire. The Turks' primary interest in Egypt was tax revenue. The Ottoman governors (pashas) taxed Egypt's productive, Nile-based agriculture, which produced cereals (wheat and barley), legumes (lentils and chickpeas), flax, and cotton. The Turkish pashas also taxed Egypt's lucrative foreign trade and urban crafts, especially textiles. As the entrepôt for Asian-African-European trade, Cairo specialized in transshipping spices from India and the East Indies and, later, coffee from Ethiopia and Yemen. The Ottomans further desired to control Egypt because of trade and security advantages derived from its location linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Egypt also served cultural purposes for the Turks, since the country was a traditional center of Islamic learning and a gathering point for pilgrimages to Mecca.



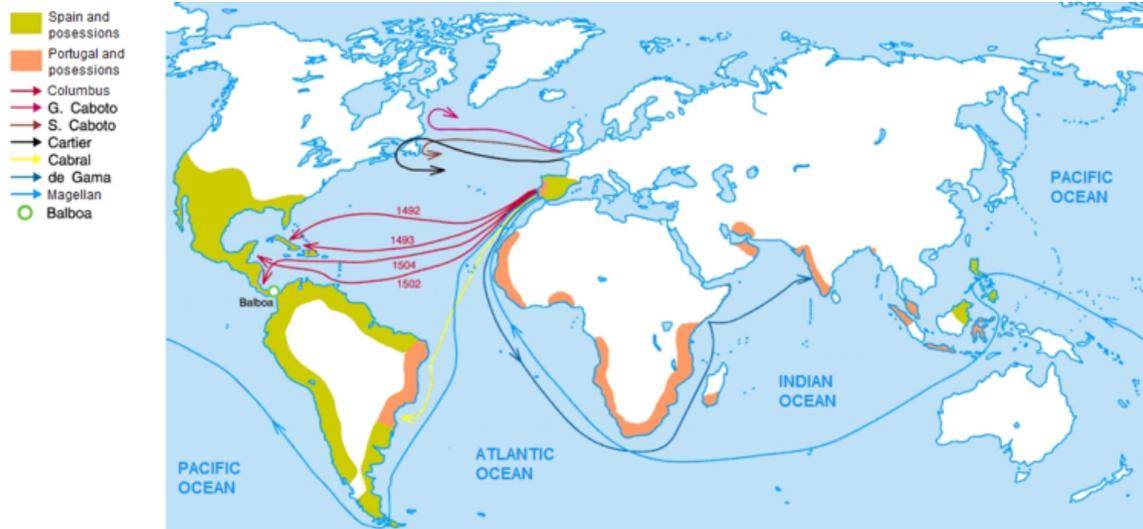
Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PC090346_coffee_Bahar_Dahr_Ethiopia.jpg>

*Coffee Production, Bahar Dar, Ethiopia –
Cairo Was a Trade Entrepôt Linking Europe, Africa, and Asia*

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Egypt and the rest of the Ottoman Empire seemed prosperous and powerful in the region. Agriculture, based on irrigation, and artisanship grew modestly, and long-distance trade – in precious minerals, slaves, and luxury goods – expanded significantly. The Ottoman Empire thus had sufficient tax revenue to maintain hegemony in the Mediterranean and western Asia. But this secure position was transitory.

European kingdoms gradually eclipsed Ottoman power in the 18th and 19th centuries. Europe replaced the Middle East as the center of scientific and technical innovations for both agriculture and industry.

European maritime progress diverted the Asian trade from land-based routes through the Muslim Middle East to sea-based routes around Africa. The European countries had a richer base of natural resources (timber, minerals, and water power) than the Ottoman areas, and European colonization transferred much wealth from North America and Asia. Christian European kingdoms had overtaken the Muslim Ottoman Empire economically and technologically, and, with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, they would soon usurp its imperial roles as well.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Age_of_Discovery_explorations_in_English.png

Spanish (Green) and Portuguese (Orange) Exploration and Imperialism, 15th-16th centuries

Napoleon's Invasion of Egypt (1798-1801). Napoleon Bonaparte, then a French general, invaded Egypt with an army of 36,000 troops in July 1798, when France was at war with England. The brash young Napoleon had three main motivations in that expedition. His main economic motive was to gain a much stronger French position in the trade with Asia by creating a link between the Mediterranean and Red Seas across the Egyptian Isthmus of Suez. Napoleon's political goal was to challenge British hegemony in the Middle East and indirectly in India by

colonizing Egypt and then using Egypt as a stepping-stone for the establishment of further French colonies in Asia. At that time, Napoleon hoped that French naval power might become equal to that of the British navy. To the surprise of his military personnel, Napoleon had a clear scientific objective and brought with him to Egypt 154 French savants (scholars) – mathematicians, astronomers, civil engineers, naturalists, mining engineers, architects, draftsmen, writers, and printers – to study Egyptian history and antiquities.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gros_-_First_Consul_Bonaparte_\(Detail\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gros_-_First_Consul_Bonaparte_(Detail).png)>

Napoleon Bonaparte, General in the French Army, 1798

This military adventure had limited success and resulted in French rule of Egypt (mainly the capital) for only three years. The French forces easily overwhelmed the under-equipped Mamluk army at the Battle of the Pyramids in 1798 in a one-sided battle that lasted only two hours. Napoleon returned to France in 1799, after spending 14 months in Egypt, to participate in a *coup d'état*. The French invaders defeated an Ottoman attempt to regain control of Egypt in 1800. Later that year, the British navy destroyed the French fleet, and an Anglo-Ottoman force drove the French out of Egypt in 1801. The French expedition achieved little, militarily or politically, *via-à-vis* Britain. But the French scientific expedition initiated the field of Egyptology by publishing the impressive, 20-volume *Description of Egypt* between 1809 and 1822.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leon_Cogniet_-_L_Expedition_D_Egypte_Sous_Les_Ordres_De_Bonaparte.jpg>

*The Egyptian Expedition Under the Orders of Bonaparte –
Painting by Léon Cogniet, Early 19th century, Louvre, Paris*

Muhammad Ali’s Rule of Egypt (1805-1848). Muhammad Ali Pasha served as governor (pasha) of Egypt for forty-three years (1805-1848). Ali, a Macedonian of likely Albanian origin, was a general in charge of the notoriously brutal Albanian wing of the Ottoman army. Ali came to Egypt in 1801 to fight the French and maneuvered his way to power at age 36. He fought a bloody six-year battle with Egyptian Mamluks before suppressing them – and

executing many – in 1811. As pasha, Ali set up a standard system using Mamluk Turks as the elite leaders of the military and the administration. He reformed public administration, especially tax collection, and created a modern military with effective leadership.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ModernEgypt,_Muhammad_Ali_by_Auguste_Couder,_BAP_17996.jpg>

*Muhammad Ali Pasha (Ruled Egypt, 1805-1848) –
Painting by Auguste Couder, 1841, Palace of Versailles, France*

Egypt achieved significant economic progress during Ali's half-century of rule, although the elite kept most of the benefits.

Ali centralized land ownership – his family owned one-fifth of

land under cultivation – and gave tax exemptions to tenants to induce greater land reclamation. He revolutionized Egyptian agriculture by introducing a year-round irrigation system, utilizing water storage and movement by canals, and expanded farmed area by one-third. Year-round water control meant that summer crops for export – cotton, sugarcane, rice, and indigo – could be grown widely. Ali introduced long-staple cotton from the U.S. in 1822, and cotton became Egypt’s leading export commodity. Egypt thus evolved into a plantation-based, export economy. Egyptian peasants bore most of the tax burden and remained desperately poor.

Muhammad Ali also expanded Egypt’s territory, following major international trade routes. He first conquered the Hijaz (western Arabia, in 1818) and then took the Sudan (1822), Crete and Cyprus (1828), and Syria (1833). To protect their trade routes to India and prop up the weak Ottoman sultans, the British forced Ali to give up Syria and the Hijaz. Ali settled for virtual independence in Egypt, although Egypt remained nominally a

province of the Ottoman Empire, and hereditary succession for his family. His successors ruled Egypt until 1952 (with forced British protection after 1882).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at

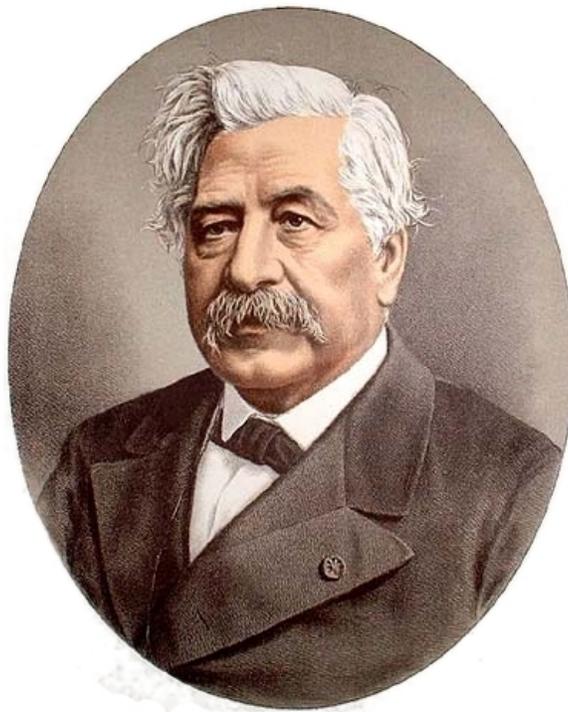
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_under_Muhammad_Ali_map_de.png>

Egyptian Expansion Under Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805-1848)

Britain in Egypt (19th-20th centuries). Great Britain, then the world's leading naval and imperial power, intervened increasingly in Egypt during the 19th century. Britain's central objective in the Middle East was to maintain its trade and military routes to India, the jewel of the British Empire. To that end, Britain propped up the tottering Ottoman Empire and intervened directly in Egypt, which controlled the land link between the Mediterranean and Red Seas. The British also had imperial motives – to extend British political control in Egypt and the Middle East and to forestall expansion by Britain's European competitors – France, Germany, and Russia. Egypt's main economic attraction for Britain was its growing export of long-staple cotton to Lancashire mills.

Egypt's transportation link between the Mediterranean and Red Seas (the "Med-Red link") evolved significantly. Britain began steamboat service to Alexandria in 1837 and built a railroad connecting Alexandria, Cairo, and Suez in 1851. France, led by Ferdinand de Lesseps, constructed the Suez Canal between 1859

and 1869, using French and Egyptian capital and 25,000 Egyptian laborers. Britain had miscalculated the importance of the Suez Canal, but bought Egypt's shares in 1875 when Egypt was nearing bankruptcy. In the 1870s, Britain and France together forced Egypt to make payments on its huge foreign debt, paving the way for British takeover. (British and French machinations over the Suez Canal are recounted in detail in a postscript to this chapter.)



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ferdinand_de_Lesseps_1.jpg>

Ferdinand de Lesseps, Visionary and Entrepreneur for the Suez Canal – Completed 1869

Britain carried out a military occupation of Egypt between 1882 and 1914, although Egypt remained nominally within the Ottoman Empire. In 1896, Jean-Baptiste Marchand, a French officer, began an incredible two-year journey across Africa – 3000 miles from Loango (in the French Congo on the Atlantic Ocean) to Djibouti (a French colony in Somalia on the Red Sea).

Marchand's mission was to claim the upper Nile (in today's South Sudan) before Britain did. He reached Fashoda in 1898, raised the French flag, and nearly caused war between France and Britain.

Herbert Kitchener arrived from Khartoum, demanded that Marchand leave, and then departed himself. France gave in, and relations with Britain warmed.

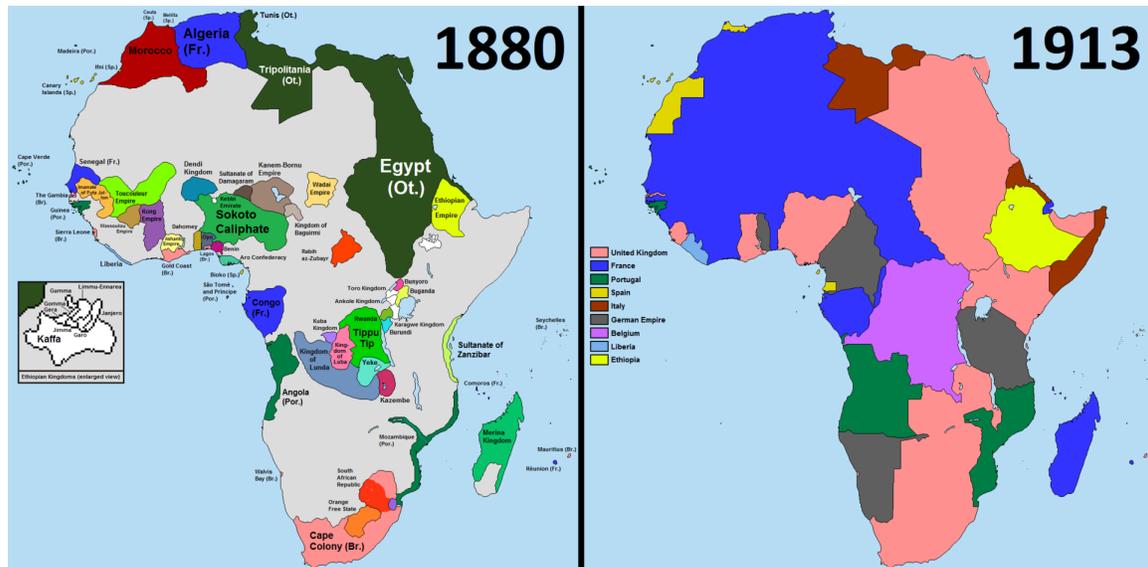


Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CommandantMarchandFachoda.jpg>>

*Major (Later General) Jean-Baptiste Marchand –
French Commander at Fashoda, 1898*

Britain and Egypt then jointly declared a protectorate in Sudan, calling it the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. In the Entente Cordiale of 1904, France agreed to relinquish its historical rights in Egypt and Britain gave France a free hand in Morocco. In 1914 (when the Ottoman Empire had aligned with Germany and

Austria-Hungary in World War I), Britain declared a protectorate over Egypt.

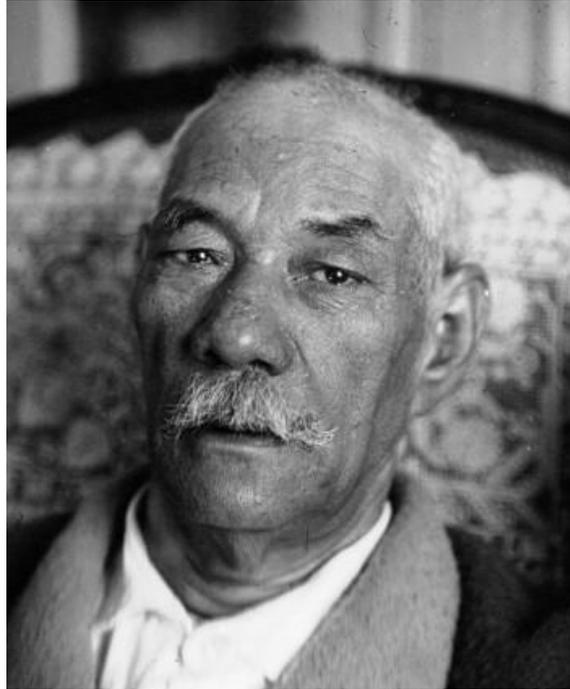


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scramble-for-Africa-1880-1913.png>

*European Colonies in Africa, 1880 and 1913 –
Great Britain Took Egypt from the Ottoman Empire in 1882*

Constitutional Monarchy (1922-1952). In 1919, Egyptian nationalists, led by Saad Zaghloul, wanted to attend the Versailles Peace Conference and present their case for Egyptian independence. Britain refused, sparking massive protests in which at least 800 Egyptians were killed. Britain then permitted the delegation to make an unsuccessful plea to the Allies. The

nationalists subsequently formed the Wafd (“Delegation”) Party that dominated Egyptian politics.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saad_Zaghloul_1924.jpg>

*Saad Zaghloul –
Leader of Wafd Party and Winner of Election, 1924*

Britain granted Egypt independence in 1922, a constitutional monarchy was formed in 1923, and elections were held in 1924 (won by Zaghloul’s Wafd Party). In making the unilateral declaration of independence in 1922, Britain reserved four points for future negotiations – the defense of Egypt against foreign aggression, the security of the Suez Canal, the protection of

foreigners' interests in Egypt, and the future status of Sudan. In particular, Britain hoped to retain its access to the Suez Canal, its military bases, and the use of ports in Egypt as well as in Palestine and Iraq.

Egypt then began a rocky three-decade experiment in parliamentary democracy. The government was unstable because of constant bickering among three groups – the nationalist politicians, the anti-democratic monarchists (led by Kings Fuad and Faruq), and British advisors. The nationalists fought to offset attempts by the monarchists to undermine the role of parliament, but both sides agreed on the desirability of ending Britain's involvement in Egypt.

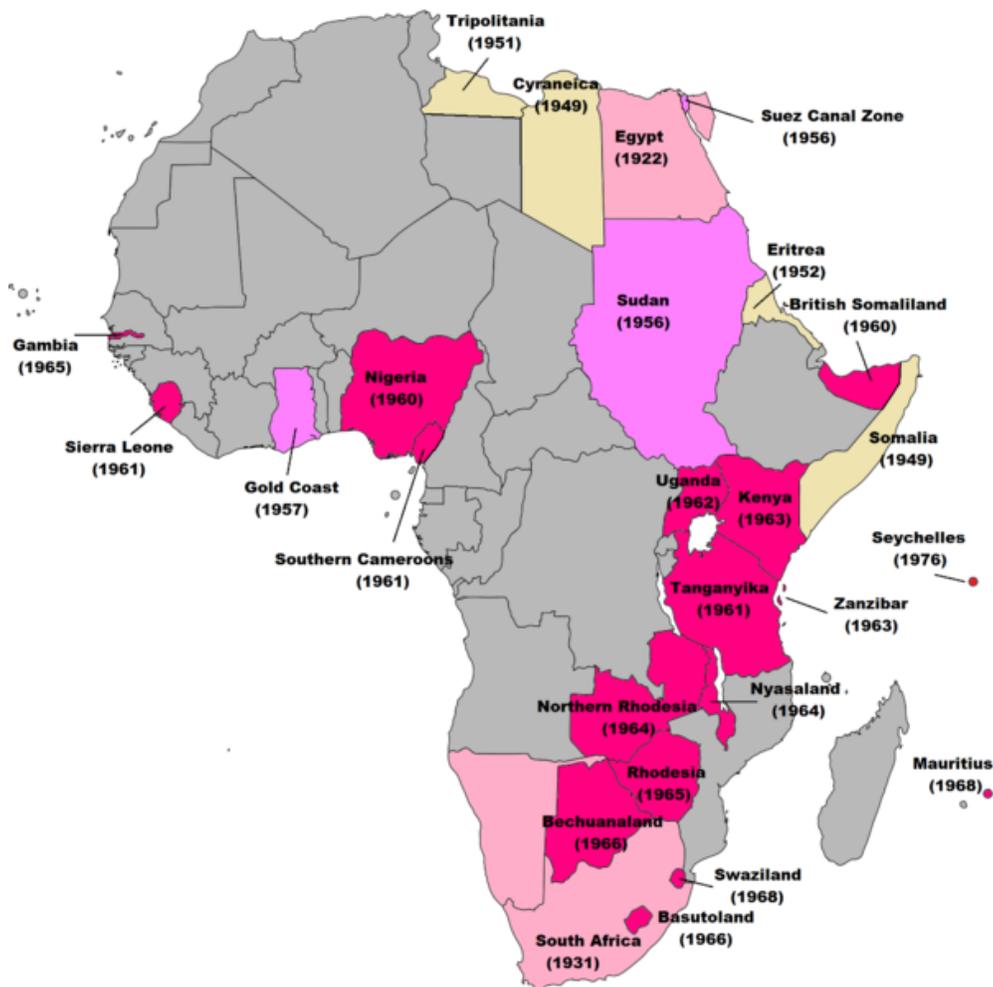


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:King_Farouk_and_Queen_Nariman_of_Egypt.JPG>

King Faruq and His New Wife, 17-year-old Narriman Sadeq, 1951

The Egyptian economy was weak in part because of the Depression, World War II, and the post-war conflict over Israel. But political instability and incompetent economic management exacerbated economic weakness. Agricultural productivity was lower in 1950 than it had been in 1900 due to unforeseen drainage and irrigation problems (resulting from the first Aswan dam built by the British at the turn of the century) and serious infestations of cotton pests (that cut yields by half). Early industrial development

focused excessively on low-quality cotton textiles that used high-quality Egyptian cotton. Political instability and economic distress set the stage for the revolution of 1952, a military coup led by General Muhammad Naguib. British military presence in the Suez Canal Zone finally ended in 1954.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_Decolonisation_in_Africa.png

British Decolonization in Africa, 1922-1990 – Egypt Gained Partial Independence in 1922 and Full Independence in 1954

Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970). Gamal Abdel Nasser (Jamal Abd al-Nasir), a military officer and nationalist politician, eased Naguib from power in 1954 and ruled Egypt autocratically until his death in 1970. Nasser developed the political philosophy of Arab Socialism and made it the official credo of Egypt in 1962. The idea was to create a classless, egalitarian society through government management of the economy. A central tenet was social justice. Nasser's government thus limited working hours, set minimum wages, and increased public health services. Nasser expected Egypt to be an example for other Arab countries and the non-aligned Third World countries. Arab socialism, meant to promote pan-Arab unity, focused on an independent Palestine and on freedom from American or Soviet assistance.

The reality differed widely from that ideal. In the early 1960s, Nasser nationalized private industry and instituted tight trade controls. He introduced large food subsidies for consumers. The Nasser government also carried out a series of land reforms that reduced average farm size to 1.9 acres, one-third of the 1950

level. However, farmers were forced to join state cooperatives that mismanaged input deliveries and cut production. Economic growth was modest, and income distribution remained skewed.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nasser_and_Eisenhower,_1960.jpg>

Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of Egypt (1956-1970), with Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of US (1953-1961), in 1960

Nasser's status as an Arab leader rose in two international incidents but fell markedly in a third. He precipitated the Suez

Crisis of 1956 by nationalizing the Suez Canal (following Western refusal to finance the High Dam at Aswan) and became a hero after the United States and the USSR together forced the British, French, and Israeli invaders to retreat. He obtained Soviet assistance to build the High Aswan Dam (between 1959 and 1971) and greatly expanded Egypt's hydropower capacity.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aswan_High_Dam-3.jpg>

Lake Nasser, Behind the High Aswan Dam – Completed in 1971

But in 1967, Nasser and Arab Socialism were badly embarrassed when Israel defeated the Arabs and claimed the Sinai Peninsula and much of Palestine. The subsequent closing of the

Suez Canal for eight years also deprived Egypt of a major source of foreign exchange earnings.

Anwar Sadat (1970-1981). Anwar Sadat was vice-president of Egypt when Nasser died in 1970. Unlike his predecessor, Sadat as incoming president was non-charismatic, unpopular, and not well known. Needing a separate political identity, Sadat radically shifted away from Nasser's approach. He turned from Arab Socialism to private investment and from the USSR to the United States. Sadat's global strategy was reflected in his new policy called *infitah* (opening to the West). He quickly eased out Egypt's Soviet economic and political advisors and sought a strategy to eliminate Soviet influence in Egypt and the Middle East.

Under Sadat's lead, Egypt and Syria coordinated an attack on Israel in 1973. Although Israel recovered to win the war, Sadat's purpose was to precipitate American intervention, expecting that the United States would not allow either side to lose in the negotiations for peace. In the Camp David Accord of 1978, Egypt and Israel signed a peace agreement. In return for being ostracized

by most other Arab states, Sadat regained the Sinai Peninsula and earned massive American military and economic assistance (about \$2 billion per year).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camp_David,_Menachem_Begin,_Anwar_Sadat,_1978.jpg>

Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Jimmy Carter of the US, and Menachem Begin of Israel – Meeting in Camp David, Maryland, 1978

Sadat had a mixed record of political and economic achievements. He continued much of Nasser's heavy political repression, although he permitted Islamist activity. With his *infatah* policy, Sadat encouraged foreign and domestic private

investment, allowed Egyptian workers to emigrate to the Arab OPEC countries, and greatly reduced the taxation of agriculture.

Corruption continued unabated, but its beneficiaries switched from Nasser's military bureaucrats to Sadat's political friends.

Economic growth was quite high (4.3 percent per capita annually between 1970 and 1981), especially strong in the petroleum, electricity (Aswan), transportation (Suez), and remittances (Gulf oil workers) sectors. But it was less than the American and European donors expected from their high levels of foreign aid.

Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). Anwar Sadat was assassinated by an Islamic fundamentalist in 1981, and Hosni Mubarak became president of Egypt. Unlike Sadat, Mubarak did not try to overthrow his predecessor's politico-economic system. Most observers credit Mubarak with political liberalization because he held regular elections during his 30 years in power. But Mubarak's system is best characterized as one of "liberalized control," because the elections were rigged to ensure that the government would not change.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hosni_Mubarak_2009.jpg>

President Hosni Mubarak (1928-2020), President of Egypt, 1981-2011 – Pictured in 2009

In the presidential election of 1995, for example, Mubarak ran unopposed and garnered 94 percent of the votes. The National Democratic Party, created by Sadat, was the government's party and was largely imposed through the bureaucracy rather than based on grass roots support. The Muslim Brotherhood, whose activities ranged from religion through social services to politics, provided the main opposition. The Mubarak government restricted the

activities of the Brotherhood, and it cracked down on Islamic terrorists, sometimes so heavily that it elicited severe criticism from human rights agencies.

Mubarak's economic strategy was to maximize Egypt's "strategic rents," the payoffs for supporting Western policies in the Middle East. Egypt became the world's leading recipient of foreign aid, averaging \$2 billion per year from the United States alone. In addition to the Camp David bonus, Egypt received a \$25 billion reduction of its foreign debt after contributing 30,000 troops to the West in the Gulf War. It was not possible for Egypt to absorb that massive aid efficiently, and the availability of strategic aid undercut donor pressure for meaningful economic reforms, especially those that were politically unpopular. During Mubarak's three decades in power (1981-2011), the annual average growth rate of per capita GDP (in constant prices) was a modest 2.8 percent.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Young_boy_and_girl_harvest_farm_crops_in_Egypt.jpg>

*Widespread Rural Poverty in Egypt –
Children of Fellahin (Farm Laborers) Working in the Harvest*

Egypt’s New Leaders (2011-present). Mubarak was forced to resign in early 2011, following massive demonstrations against his regime (during the “Arab Spring”). Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood was elected president of Egypt in 2012. But he was forced out a year later after being charged with overreaching his executive authority. Adly Mansour then served as

interim president for a year. In June 2014, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the former head of the Egyptian armed forces, was elected president, winning 97 percent of the votes cast in a controversial election.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abdel_Fattah_el-Sisi-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A.jpeg>

Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (1954 –) – President of Egypt, 2014-present

As president, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has engaged in strong-armed political suppression, intimidating and arresting political opponents, under the guise of restricting the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood. In a rigged election in 2018, El-Sisi was re-

elected president with 97 percent of the vote. In 2019, El-Sisi rammed through a constitutional referendum, approved by 88 percent of the voters, that will allow him to remain as president until 2030 if he is re-elected in 2024.

Economic and Quality-of-Life Indicators in 2019. Egypt's land area, 386,659 square miles, is two-thirds that of Alaska. The Egyptian population of 100.4 million nearly all have Egyptian, Beduin, or Berber ancestry and are 90 percent Islamic (most practicing Sunni Islam) and 10 percent Christian (practicing Coptic Orthodox Christianity). Between 1981 and 2011 (under the regime of Mubarak), Egypt's GDP per capita (in constant prices) grew at an annual rate of 2.8 percent. But growth slowed to 1.7 percent annually in 2012-2019 (under the Morsi and El-Sisi governments).

In 2019, Egypt had a price-adjusted income level of \$12,251 per year (69 percent of the world average), a 71 percent literacy rate, and a life expectancy of 72 years. This modest performance in health and education lowered Egypt's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index (116th of 189 countries) relative to that

The Egyptian economy depends on personal remittances, mostly from migrant workers in the Arabian Gulf region (\$26.8 billion), petroleum exports (\$16.6 billion), international tourism (\$12.7 billion from 11.2 million international-tourist arrivals), transit fees from the Suez Canal (\$5.8 billion from 18,880 ship transits), and foreign assistance (\$2.1 billion). Despite its steady growth of average per capita income, Egypt suffers from a high rate of poverty – 32.5 percent of Egyptians received incomes less than the government-established poverty line of \$1.45 per day.

Challenges Facing Egyptian Policymakers. Egypt faces a highly uncertain future. Even in the absence of future crises in the Middle East, Egypt's policymakers will have to confront several critical constraints that limit the country's political and economic development. To ensure support for future governments, it will be desirable to widen Egypt's power base to include more interest groups. Reflecting changes in the past 50 years, the bureaucracy (which has ballooned to 5.6 million), the military, and workers in the public sector now have disproportionate political power. If

more groups are allowed to form broad-based political parties, there will be a greater prospect for democratic elections that are not manipulated by the government in power. Future Egyptian governments also will need to protect human rights by finding the right balance between containing violence and maintaining the basic rights of citizens. That problem is particularly acute in Egypt because of the operations of radical Islamist groups.

The primary challenge for economic development is to alleviate poverty in the context of rapid economic progress. Egypt has become excessively dependent on foreign aid (which totaled \$5.5 billion in 2013 but declined to \$2.1 billion in 2019).

Policymakers need to increase competitiveness to reduce this dangerous reliance. Greater competitiveness requires the introduction of better technologies that will conserve natural resources and increase the productivity of Egypt's labor, land, and capital stock.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Suger_boy.jpg>

Sugarcane Harvest in the Nile Valley of Egypt – Using Low Level Technology

Special efforts are needed to diversify foreign exchange earnings so that Egypt will become less dependent on emigrant remittances (\$26.8 billion in 2019) and transit fees from the Suez Canal (\$5.8 billion in 2019). If Egypt is to participate fully in globalization – the only road to sustained development, policymakers will need to prepare the country to benefit from future negotiations aimed at reducing barriers to international trade and investment and from investments in better quality education.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Egypt#/media/File:Egypt_Map.jpg

Contemporary Egypt

A Postscript on the Suez Canal

Early Canals and Later Surveys. Herodotus credited the first Suez Canal to Pharaoh Necho (ruled 609-593 BCE), who linked the Pelusiac Nile to the Bitter Lakes in the Isthmus of Suez. The Persian Emperor Darius (ruled 521-486 BCE) upgraded Necho's canal to improve communications with the Persian Gulf. Ptolemy II, a Hellenistic (Macedonian) emperor (ruled 285-246 BCE), rebuilt the canal, extended it from the Bitter Lakes to the Red Sea, built a lock to control inflow from the Red Sea, and opened the port of Arsinoe. But Ptolemy II's canal soon silted up and went into disuse.

Trajan, a Roman emperor, restored the canal at the end of the first century CE to improve Roman control of trade and piracy in the Red Sea. The Romans operated the canal for about a century. The Arab Islamic Caliph Omar reopened the canal shortly after conquering Egypt in the 7th century CE to provision food for Mecca and Medina. However, the canal was filled in during the 8th

century to starve a rebellious Medina. No further work was done on canals in the Suez region for more than a millennium.

French imperialists later revived interest in a Suez Canal. Napoleon Bonaparte's engineer, Jacques-Marie Le Père, surveyed the Isthmus of Suez in the late 1790s, but he erroneously concluded that the Red Sea was 30 feet higher than the Mediterranean Sea. In the 1840s, Prosper Enfantin, the leader of the French Saint-Simonian religious movement, decided that his calling was to develop Egypt. Muhammad Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt, opposed a Suez Canal, fearing that it would undercut his transit trade monopoly. In 1846, however, he reluctantly agreed to allow Enfantin's Suez Canal Study Group to survey the isthmus.



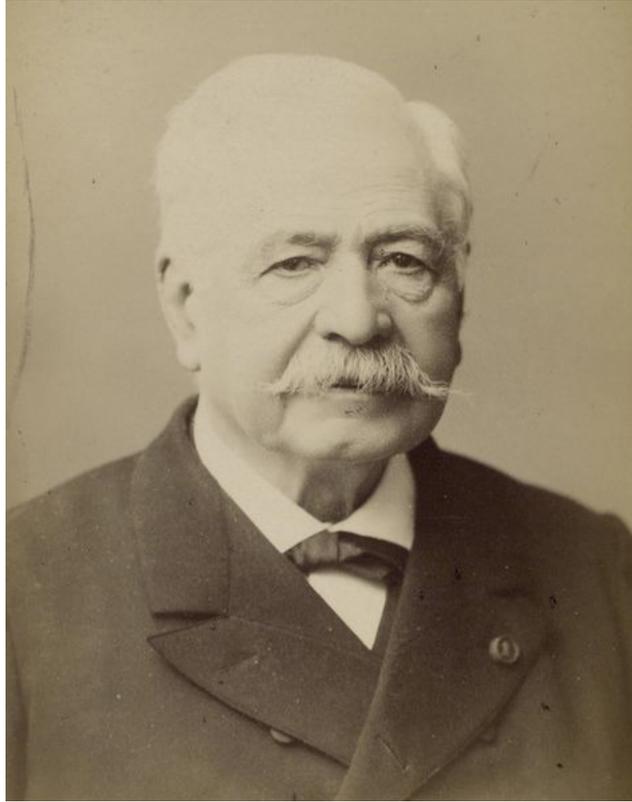
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prosper-Enfantin.jpg>>

Prosper Enfantin, “The Father” – Saint-Simonian Leader and Sponsor of Talabot’s Survey of the Suez Canal in the 1840s

Enfantin’s engineer, Paulin Talabot, found no significant differences in the levels of the Red and Mediterranean Seas, ruled out a potential flooding problem, and concluded that a direct north-south route across the Isthmus of Suez was feasible. French interest in building a Suez Canal was sparked by Talabot’s report.

Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894). Historians argue whether Ferdinand de Lesseps was a diplomatic genius or a

devious schemer (or both), but no one disputes that he was essential in the construction of the Suez Canal. Lesseps was born in 1805 into a wealthy French family of successful diplomats. His father, Mathieu de Lesseps, was a renowned French diplomat. Ferdinand became a diplomat at age 19 and spent much of the 1830s in Egypt, serving as French Consul. He became enchanted with Egypt, learned Arabic and Turkish, and befriended Muhammad Said Pasha, Muhammad Ali's teen-age son. Following a successful tour of duty in Spain, in 1849 Lesseps was entangled in a French diplomatic intrigue in Rome, made a scapegoat by the French Government, and retired from diplomatic service at age 44 to become a model farmer on his estate in France.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ferdinand_de_Lesseps_by_Nadar.jpg>

*Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894), “Le Grand Francais” –
Entrepreneur Extraordinaire*

When Said Pasha became Viceroy of Egypt in 1854, Lesseps began his visionary quest to construct the Suez Canal.

He desired to restore his professional reputation and gain international kudos, he hoped to advance both French and Egyptian interests by building a canal that would link West with East, and he expected to promote world peace by deepening commercial ties among nation states. Lesseps’s modus operandi was to combine

connections with propaganda. He knew he had to overcome his lack of training in canal engineering, international finance, and commercial management. Lesseps therefore relied on his close personal connections with the Egyptian ruler, Said (his protégé), and French Empress Eugénie (his cousin and “guardian angel”). Lesseps’s tactics were to isolate the British Government, rally the support of trading interests throughout Europe, and ultimately convince the French Emperor, Napoleon III, to support construction of the Suez Canal.

Canal Politics. Lesseps’s main problems in constructing the Suez Canal were political. He faced daunting obstacles. Great Britain, the world’s leading naval and commercial power, was staunchly opposed to the canal. Lord Palmerston, the British Prime Minister in the 1850s, favored British railroads on the overland route from Alexandria via Cairo to Suez. Palmerston feared the canal would complicate the “Eastern Question,” Britain’s effort to prop up the Ottoman Empire and fend off Russian expansion so as to maintain British control of India.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lord_Palmerston_1855.jpg>

*Lord Palmerston, British Prime Minister, 1855-1865 –
Staunch Lifelong Opponent of the Suez Canal*

Sir Henry Bulwer, in the 1860s, used British influence to try to effect Egyptian ownership of the canal company. France, under Emperor Napoleon III, indirectly supported Lesseps's efforts in the 1850s, but refused to give open support to the canal project to avoid conflict with Britain. In the 1860s, Napoleon III gave direct support by favorably arbitrating a dispute with Egypt and underwriting a bond issue. Said Pasha granted two concessions to

Lesseps's company in the 1850s and bought nearly half the shares in the canal company.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muhammad_Said_Pascha_1855_Nadar.jpg>

Muhammad Said Pasha (ruled 1854-1863) – Suez Canal Sponsor

In the 1860s, with the encouragement of Britain and the Ottoman Empire, Ismail Pasha (Khedive of Egypt, 1863-1879) attempted, but failed, to gain control of the canal company by purchasing shares. He then concluded that completing the canal was in Egypt's best interest. The Porte (as the Ottoman Government was called) followed a policy of passive resistance by

refusing to grant Egypt's application for a firman (official decree) to sanction construction of the canal. The Porte hoped to retain the support of both Britain and France against threatened incursions by Russia into Ottoman territory. It also wanted to retain tax transfers from Egypt, its most lucrative possession. In the 1860s, the Porte supported Ismail's abortive attempt to buy the canal company, and in 1866 the Sultan belatedly issued a firman to authorize construction of the Suez Canal.

Canal Economics. Said's concession in 1854 gave Lesseps the right to set up the *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez* (Suez Canal Company). Construction began in 1859, and the Suez Canal opened in 1869. The total cost of the project was 509 million francs (mfr) (20.4 million pounds sterling or US\$ 102 million), six times the annual budget of the Egyptian Government. Of that total, the Government of Egypt furnished 297 mfr (58 percent). The Company raised 200 mfr in its 1858 sale of shares (88 mfr from Said), an amount that was expected to fund the entire canal project. Following Napoleon III's arbitration in 1864, the

Egyptian Government was forced to pay 84 mfr to the Company as an indemnity (a settlement for taking back Company rights to Egyptian labor and land).

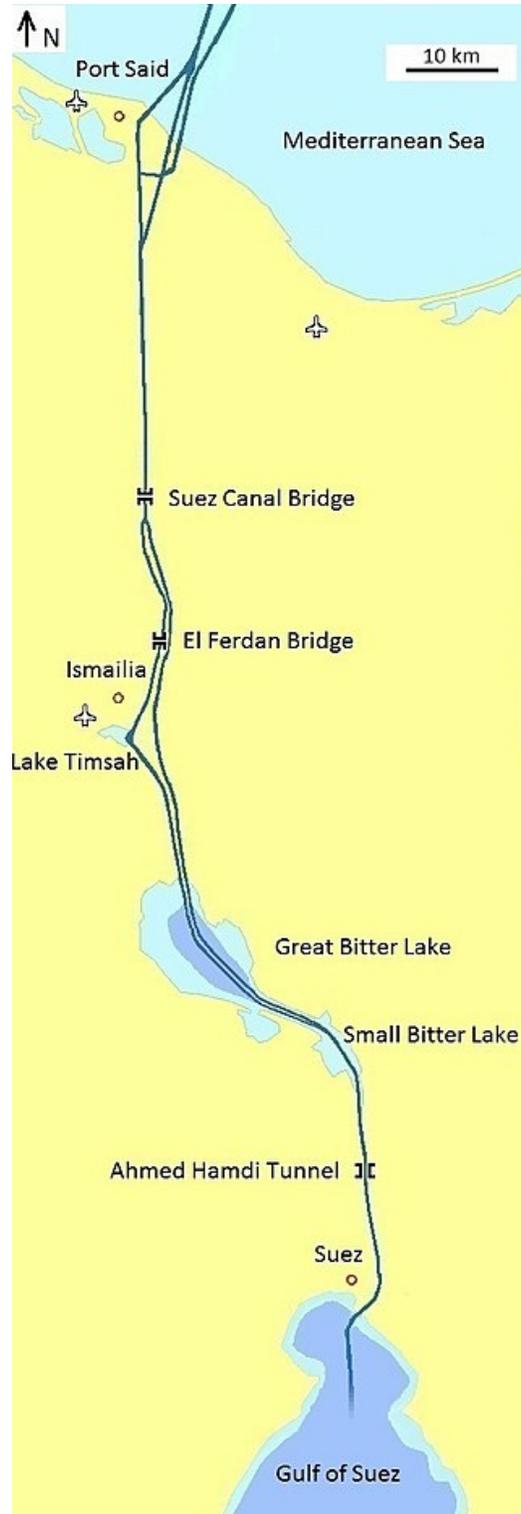
In 1867, the Company sold bonds in Europe to raise additional capital. The original subscription for 100 mfr was only one-third sold, but Napoleon III intervened with incentives that permitted the remaining bonds to be sold in 1868. The Egyptian Government also agreed to pay another 70 mfr to the Company to buy physical assets and land and to pay arrears on interest owed. The Company thus spent 454 mfr, and the Egyptian Government furnished 242 mfr (53 percent) of that total. The Egyptian Government also invested 55 mfr in canal-related infrastructure (the westerly portion of the Sweet Water Canal, lighthouses, and port works and the Radoub Basin at Suez).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ferdinand_de_Lesseps,_Vanity_Fair,_1869-11-27.jpg>

*Ferdinand de Lesseps, Super Salesman –
Caricatured in Vanity Fair, After the Suez Canal Opened in 1869*

The original price for each of the Company's 400,000 shares was 500 francs. Shares sold at a discount throughout construction and hit a low point of 163 francs in 1871. When canal traffic picked up and arrears were paid off in 1875, the share price went above 500 francs for the first time. The Company was solvent at last.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Suez_canal_english.jpg

The Suez Canal in 2015



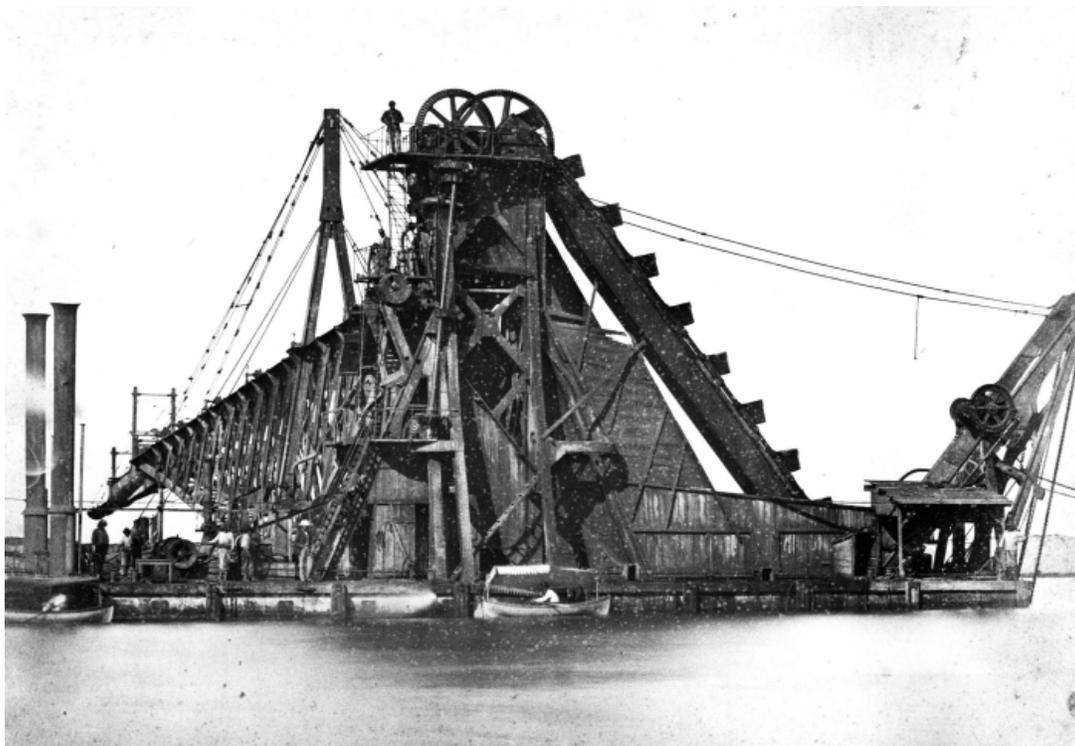
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SuezCanal-EO.JPG>>

*The Suez Canal, Photographed From Space, Showing the Great
Bitter Lake At the Center*

Construction and Opening. Lesseps and his Company engineers developed a six-year plan for construction of the Suez Canal. The primary task was to excavate 75 million cubic meters of sand and gravel in a 100-mile, north-south, natural depression. The first step, completed in 1862, was to build the Sweet Water Canal to bring fresh water from the Nile River to the waterless Isthmus of Suez. Then an access canal (*rigole*) and the full maritime canal were constructed southward from Port Said (on the Mediterranean Sea) through Lake Manzala and the El-Guisr plateau to fill Lake Timsah with Mediterranean water. Access and maritime canals were built from Suez (on the Red Sea) northward through the Chalufa ridge to fill the Bitter Lakes with Red Sea water. The final step was to join Lake Timsah with the Bitter Lakes by cutting through the Serapeum ridge and then to deepen (to 26 feet at the bottom) and widen (to 72 feet) the maritime canal.

Between 1859 and 1864, Egyptian *fellahin* (peasants), working under *corvée* (temporary servitude) arrangements, excavated 15 million cubic meters, one-fifth of the total. From

1864 to completion in 1869, the remaining four-fifths of the canal was excavated mostly by 300 coal-powered dredgers, designed and operated by the French engineering firm, Borel and Levalley. The French Dussaud brothers built two jetties at Port Said (2 miles and 1.5 miles long) to create an artificial port. After a slow start, the French team had conquered the technical dimensions of constructing the Suez Canal.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Baggernolen_in_het_Suezkanaal_TMnr_60019632.jpg>

Phase Two of Construction, Steam-powered Dredgers (1864-1869)
– Photograph Taken Between 1865 and 1870

The opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869 was the party of the 19th century. Empress Eugénie of France presided over the 46-ship opening, many other European royalty attended, and Ismail paid all expenses for 1000 invited guests (100 of whom spent three weeks cruising up the Nile to visit Egyptian antiquities). The specially-invited guest ships transited the 100 miles of the newly constructed canal in an average sailing time of 16 hours each.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%27inauguration_du_canal_de_Suez,_17_Novembre_1869_Gal18_riou_001f.jpg>

The Opening of the Suez Canal, November 17, 1869 – Photograph Taken by Edouard Riou For The Album of the Empress

Afterward, the Khedive and his royal guests moved on to Cairo, where they partied for another week. Khedive Ismail had hoped to hire Giuseppe Verdi, the renowned Italian composer, to write an opera to commemorate the occasion. Initially Verdi declined, but he changed his mind in return for a commission of 150,000 francs. The new opera, *Aida*, premiered at the Cairo Opera House two years later – in December 1871. For his enormous efforts in shepherding the Suez Canal to completion, Ferdinand de Lesseps, the visionary entrepreneur, was lionized.

British Takeover. Khedive Ismail's (and Egypt's) massive debt in 1875 was 80 million pounds sterling. Because of discounting to reflect high interest charges, Egypt had received only two-thirds of that total. Only one-fifth of Egyptian borrowing was related to the Suez Canal. Ismail, though fiscally reckless, spent most borrowed funds on the modernization and reform of Egypt. He invested heavily in irrigation, processing, and marketing infrastructure for agricultural development, especially for long-staple cotton and sugar cane. During the American Civil

War (1861-1865), cotton prices had quadrupled, but they collapsed after the war ended. Ismail spent lavishly on public works (roads, ports, bridges, light-houses, gardens, and face-lifts for Cairo and Alexandria), factories, and military equipment. He gambled that canal-related income – from his 188,000 shares in the Suez Canal Company, his 15 percent share of canal profits, and tariff duties – would pay his debts.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ismail_Pacha.JPG>

*Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, 1863-1879 –
Reformer and Debtor*

Canal income in the early 1870s was disappointing, however, and Ismail continued to spend recklessly. In 1875, he faced a fiscal crisis and was forced to sell his Company shares, 44 percent

of the Company's total. Benjamin Disraeli, the British Prime Minister, outbid a private French syndicate and bought all of Ismail's shares for 4 million pounds sterling, a market price that was 13 percent more than Egypt had paid for the shares in 1858. Disraeli had arranged a loan for the entire amount from the Rothschilds that paid 5 percent interest and a 2.5 percent commission. Penning one of the 19th century's most memorable political quotations, Disraeli wrote to Queen Victoria, "You have it, Madam."



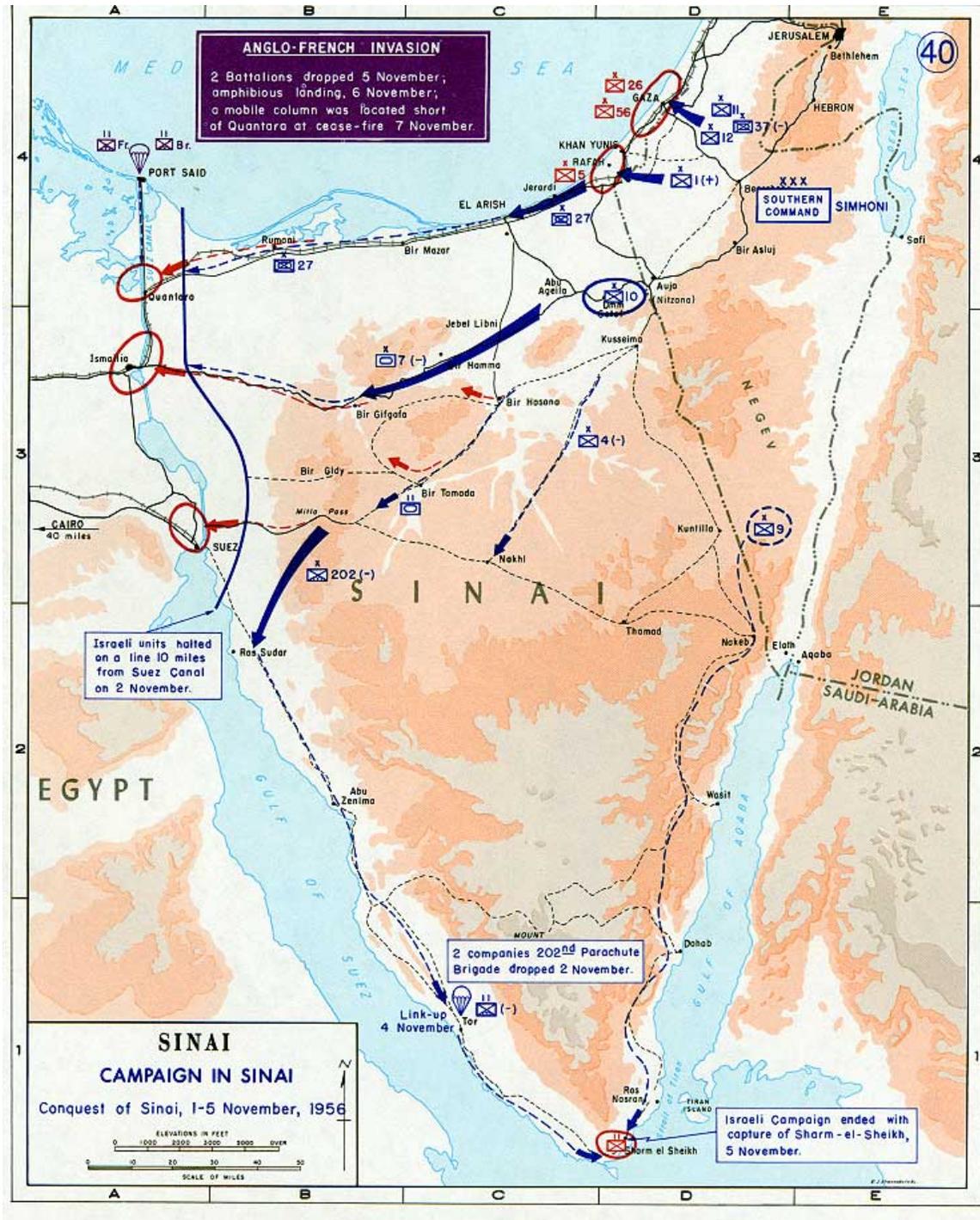
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victoria_Disraeli_cartoon.jpg>

"You Have It, Madam." – Benjamin Disraeli Bought 44 Percent of the Suez Canal for Britain's Queen Victoria, 1875

In 1876, foreign lending nations imposed a system of Dual Control on Egypt in which one British and one French controller oversaw Egyptian finances. Six years later, Britain invaded Egypt to effect British imperial control of Egyptian finances and trade and of the Suez Canal. The value of the British Canal shares appreciated ten times to 40 million pounds by 1914.

Canal Legacy. The legacy of the Suez Canal began with a series of misfortunes for Egypt. The first was the British takeover of Egypt in 1882. Britain's principal interest in Egypt was to maintain firm British control of the Suez Canal, which it saw as the key to communications within the British Empire – especially to India, Australia and New Zealand, and Hong Kong. Neutrality of the canal was declared in both the 1856 Concession by Egypt and the 1866 firman by the Ottoman Empire, but it had not been confirmed in an international agreement. Nine powers signed an international convention in 1888, guaranteeing the open use of the canal by all nations and demilitarization of the canal. But Britain preferred direct control.

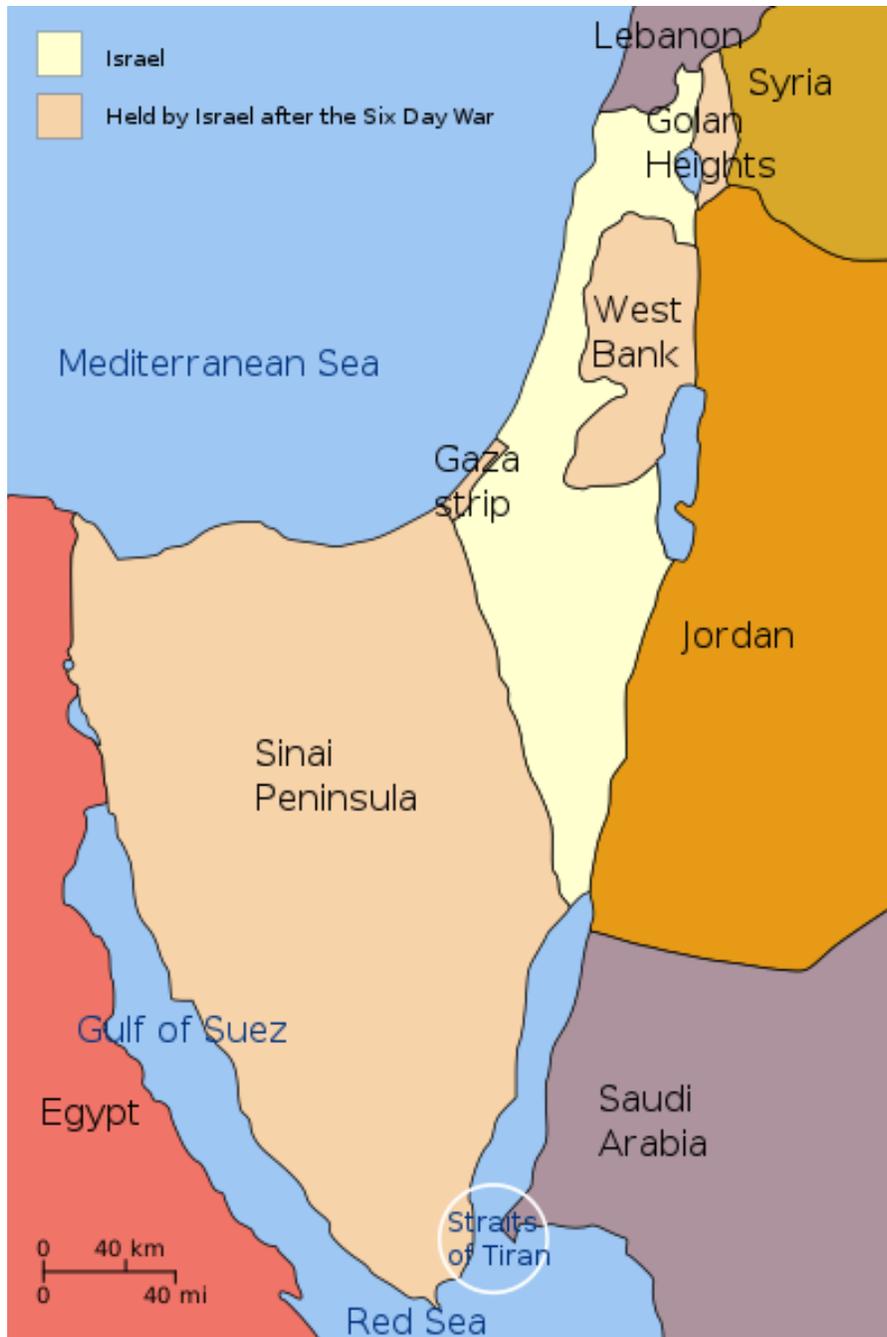
Britain continued to defend the canal with British troops when it granted Egypt nominal independence in 1922. The Suez Crisis of 1956 shifted control to Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the President of Egypt, nationalized the Suez Canal in retaliation for the refusal of the United States and the World Bank to provide financing for the High Aswan Dam. Britain, France, and Israel then attacked Egypt and re-took parts of the canal. In retaliation, angry Egyptians destroyed the 35-foot statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps at the canal's entrance. The United States and the USSR then forced a settlement that returned the canal to Egypt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1956_Suez_war_-_conquest_of_Sinai.jpg

Israeli, British, and French Invasion of Egypt – October-November 1956

In the Israeli-Egyptian War of 1967, Israel devastated the three canal cities (Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez), occupied the Sinai Peninsula and eastern shore of the canal, and crossed the canal. Nasser scuttled numerous ships in the canal, and the canal remained closed until 1975. By embroiling Egypt deeply in European imperial struggles and serving as a battleground in Arab-Israeli wars, the Canal, during its first century, was a Trojan horse for the Egyptian people. After Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David accords in 1978, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt in return for Egypt's recognizing the state of Israel.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Six_Day_War_Territories.svg>

Territorial Shifts After the Six-Day War, 1967

Canal traffic, measured in tonnage of ships transiting, rose steadily and reached 1.2 billion tons in 2019. The number of transiting ships peaked at 22,500 in 1982 and retracted to 18,880 in 2019, reflecting the increasing size of transiting ships. The Suez Canal generated annual revenues for Egypt of \$5.8 billion in 2019. In 2014, Egypt embarked on an \$8.2 billion expansion of the canal to double its capacity (from 49 to 97 ships per day). The “New Suez Canal” was opened with great celebration in August 2015.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SuezCanal4_byDanielCsorfoly.JPG>

*Container Ship, Hanjin Kaohsiung, Transiting the Suez Canal –
Creating Revenue for the Egyptian Government*

Lessons for Contemporary Powers

What lessons for contemporary powers can be drawn from the experiences of dynastic Egypt's New Kingdom and of successor rulers of Egypt? Several relevant lessons emerge from the gradual, centuries-long downfall of dynastic Egypt during the millennium leading up to its final collapse in 332 BCE. A primary objective for ruling dynasts should be to protect their primary tax base. When agriculture provided most wealth, Egyptian governments needed to maintain workable balances between taxable and tax-free landholdings. Dynastic Egypt began to slide downhill in the 13th century BCE, when pharaohs tried to buttress their political legitimacy by transferring land and tenants to tax-free temple foundations. Near the end of the New Kingdom, temples owned one-third of arable land. Pharaohs also decentralized authority and allowed regions (*nomes*) to retain tax revenues. The regions distrusted the center and created their own militaries. Those two trends – the shift of land to temples and of

power to regions – removed central revenues, weakened the military, and debilitated the empire.

It is dangerous politically when rulers and their advisors convince themselves that they are omnipotent. Egyptian pharaohs were perceived as omnipotent because they were living gods who communicated with other gods in the pantheon to preserve order (*maat*). But even when religion is intended to underpin political power, the arrogant wielding of power can come back to haunt the ruling class and dominant state. The pharaohs during the New Kingdom created an advantageous trading network linking Asia with Africa and putting Egypt in the center as the lucrative entrepôt. That ingenious system added greatly to Egyptian wealth previously dependent almost wholly on Nile agriculture.

But the dynastic Egyptians based that trading system on foreign conquest in Nubia and on the threat of tax-collecting raids in the Levant, not on widely understood mutual advantage. When Egyptian military strength declined in the 11th century BCE, Nubia and the Levantine city-states declared their independence, the

trading network fell apart, and Egypt lost a source of considerable wealth. Similarly, the Egyptian colonial rulers and their resident soldiers in Nubia behaved arrogantly, believing that their culture and political system were inherently superior. The resentful Nubians had long memories. They gloated when at last they were able to gain revenge and rule Egypt as the 25th Dynasty in the 8th-7th centuries BCE. Arrogance never pays.

Some additional lessons can be derived from Egypt's experience after the Dynastic Era came to a close in the 4th century BCE. Egyptian history for the more than two millennia after Egypt lost hegemony demonstrates why it is more comfortable to be the conqueror than the conquered. One insight is to be wary of a foreign power that claims to be invading your country to liberate it from another foreign conqueror. That declared altruistic act of liberation too often results in the replacement of one hated foreign oppressor by yet another. When Alexander the Great liberated Egypt from the despised Persians in 332 BCE, the Macedonians replaced the Persians as foreign conquerors and ruled for three

centuries. Another lesson is to be cautious in believing promises by foreign invaders who guarantee religious tolerance, especially if the invasion was inspired in part by an attempt to impose the invaders' religion on the conquered people. When the Arab Muslim invaders liberated Egypt from the disliked Byzantine rulers in 641, the new rulers promised Egypt's Coptic Christians that they would be permitted to practice their religion and culture. That promise of religious freedom lasted no longer than a century before the Muslims began to persecute the Copts.

A crucial lesson for contemporary powers emerges from Egyptian history in the 17th and 18th centuries, when Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire. In allocating government funds, it is critically important to place a high priority on research for science and technology and on public investments in infrastructure. Those central underpinnings of imperial strength require government attention because people in the private sector do not have adequate incentive to make those kinds of investment in sufficient amounts. The military aristocracies that led the Ottoman Empire – and also

the Safavid Persian and Mughal Indian Empires – lost sight of this key principle. At a time when European countries were benefiting from commercial, agricultural, and industrial revolutions, the world's three leading Muslim empires gave inadequate attention to investments in science, technology, and public infrastructure. Muslim states – Fatimid Egypt, Moorish Spain, and the early Ottoman Empire – had led the Western world in making advances in applications of science and technology between the 9th and 16th centuries. When the Muslim governments' attention shifted elsewhere, Christian European governments emerged from the Middle Ages, occupied the scientific vacuum, and regained the lead held much earlier by Greece and Rome. By the 19th century, European nations had become imperialistic whereas Muslim countries, including Egypt, were on the defensive.

Egypt Time Line

from 8500 BCE	origins of agriculture – Fertile Crescent
c. 6000-5000 BCE	agriculture spread to Egypt – from Fertile Crescent
c. 5000 BCE	population of Egypt – 20,000
4000-3000 BCE	pre-dynastic Egypt – political consolidation
c. 3000 BCE	Egyptian hieroglyphic and cursive scripts – from Fertile Crescent
3000-2900 BCE	proto-dynastic Egypt – political unification
3000 BCE-1000 CE	Egyptian language predominant – spoken continuously
2900-332 BCE	Dynastic Era – peak period of ancient Egyptian power
2900-2195 BCE	Old Kingdom – early Pharaonic power, Egyptian artistic and engineering creativity
27 th -25 th c. BCE	great pyramids and Sphinx – constructed at Sakkara, Giza
2500 BCE	population of Egypt – 3 million
2195-2066 BCE	First Intermediate Period – Egypt splintered after Pepy II's 94 years of ineffectual rule
2066-1650 BCE	Middle Kingdom – Montjuhotep II of Thebes reunified Upper and Lower Egypt

1650-1559 BCE	Second Intermediate Period – Palestinian Hyksos invaded, ruled
1559-1064 BCE	New Kingdom – Kamose and Ahmose of Thebes reunified Upper and Lower Egypt
16 th century BCE	Egypt conquered Nubia – trade network between Egypt and Nubia
16 th century BCE	trade network between Egypt and the Levant – centered in ports of Syria-Palestine
15 th century BCE	Hatshepsut, female pharaoh – trade expedition to Punt, Temple at Deir el-Bahri in Western Thebes
15 th century BCE	Thutmose III – led 17 campaigns in 21 years to control the Levant
c. 1457 BCE	Thutmose III – defeated the Hurrians at the Battle of Megiddo
14 th century BCE	Amarna heresy – Akhenaten worshipped only one sun-god, Aten
c. 1275 BCE	Ramesses II – fought a draw with the Hittites at the Battle of Kadesh
13 th -11 th c. BCE	Egyptian/Hittite peace treaty – divided Levantine trade routes
12 th century BCE	Ramesses III – temples controlled one-third of cultivated land

1064-664 BCE	Third Intermediate Period – foreign dynasties, brief reunification
11 th century BCE	Pharaohs of Nubia revolted – removed Nubia from Egyptian control
10 th century BCE	Levantine city-states revolted – Egypt lost control of southern Levant
10 th -8 th c. BCE	22 nd Dynasty – Libyan rule of Egypt
8 th century BCE	Pharaohs of Nubia – conquered Upper Egypt, established Kushite (Nubian) dynasty
667 BCE	Assurbanipal of Assyria – invaded Egypt, defeated Nubian pharaoh
664-332 BCE	Late (Assyrian, Saite, and Persian) Period – foreign takeovers
664-525 BCE	Psamtik I of Sais – installed by Assyrians as puppet pharaoh, declared independence and reunified Egypt under Saite dynasty
605 BCE	Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon – defeated Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish, ending Egyptian attempt to dominate the Levant
525 BCE	Battle of Pelusium – Cambyses of Persia – invaded Egypt, defeated Egyptian army
525-404 BCE	First Persian Dynasty – Persian kings claimed to be pharaohs

404-343 BCE	Egypt regained independence – Sais rulers returned to power
343-332 BCE	Second Persian Dynasty – Artaxerxes III reasserted Persian control
332 BCE	Alexander the Great – conquered Egypt, asserted Hellenistic rule
332 BCE-641 CE	Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Era – Greek official language
332-30 BCE	Ptolemaic Period – Hellenes ruled Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus
305-222 BCE	first three Ptolemies – exercised effective leadership, Egypt stable
290 BCE-1362 CE	marble lighthouse at Pharos – designed by Sostratus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world
271 BCE	Ptolemy II – forged alliance with upstart Roman Empire
222-30 BCE	last twelve Ptolemies – internecine warfare, widespread civil strife
51-30 BCE	Cleopatra VII ruled – last Ptolemaic pharaoh of Egypt
31 BCE	naval Battle of Actium – Octavian (Augustus Caesar) of Rome defeated Antony of Rome and Cleopatra of Egypt

30 BCE	Octavian invaded Egypt – Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide, Egypt became Roman province
30 BCE-395 CE	Roman Rule of Egypt – Egypt attained peak of agricultural output
2 nd century CE	population of Egypt – 5 million, including 1 million Greek-speaking Hellenes
2 nd century CE	Christianity spread throughout Egypt
3 rd century CE	Egyptian Christian (Coptic) Church founded
395	Emperor Theodoseus I divided Roman Empire – Egypt governed as part of eastern empire, from new city of Constantinople
395-641	Byzantine Rule of Egypt – inefficient and unpopular
early 5 th century	Roman legions left Egypt – Greek garrisons manned major towns
451	Council of Chalcedon divided Christianity – Egyptian Christians believed Christ had one nature that was both divine and human
634	Muslim Arabs began Islamic diaspora and jihad
639-641	Muslim Arabs invaded Egypt – defeated Byzantine rulers, ruled
641-1805	Arabic, Mamluk, and Ottoman Era

641-1250	Egypt ruled under Islamic Caliphates
641-661	four successors of Muhammad ruled Egypt – centered in Medina
661-750	Umayyad Caliphate ruled Egypt – Arabs centered in Damascus
750-868	Abbasid Caliphate ruled Egypt – Arabs and Persians centered in Baghdad
868-969	Tulunid Dynasty ruled Egypt – Turks centered in Cairo
969-1173	Fatimid Caliphate ruled Egypt – Berbers centered in Cairo
1036-1094	Caliph al-Mustansir ruled Egypt – Fatimid Empire peaked
1173-1193	Salah al-Din ruled Egypt – established Ayyubid Caliphate
1173-1250	Ayyubid Caliphate ruled Egypt – Kurds centered in Cairo
1187	Salah al-Din defeated Crusaders – recaptured Jerusalem
1250-1517	Mamluk Rule of Egypt – Mamluks were freed ex-slave apprentices
1250-1382	Mamluk rulers were Kipchak Turks – from Russian steppes north of the Black Sea

1260	Battle of Ain Jalut (“Eye of Goliath”) – Mamluk General Baybars defeated Hulegu Khan, leader of Mongol Ilkhanate state
1382-1517	Mamluk rulers were Circassians – from the Caucasus Mountains
1453	Turkish Ottoman Empire captured Constantinople – ended Byzantine Empire
1517-1805	Ottoman Rule of Egypt
1517	Ottoman Turks conquered Egypt, Syria – faced little resistance
1630-1805	Mamluk military leaders regained effective political power – Egypt remained under Ottoman suzerainty
1798	Battle of the Pyramids – Napoleon Bonaparte led France’s invading army, overwhelmed Ottoman army in Egypt
1798-1801	France ruled Lower Egypt – Cairo and parts of the Nile Delta
1801	Anglo-Ottoman military force – drove the French out of Egypt
1805-present	Colonial and Independent Era
1809-1822	French scientists published 20-volume <i>Description of Egypt</i> – initiated the field of Egyptology

- 1805-1882 Muhammad Ali's and Khedives' Rule of Egypt – nominally under Ottoman Empire
- 1805-1848 Muhammad Ali Pasha ruled Egypt – reformed public administration, created modern military
- 1818-1833 Muhammad Ali conquered the Hijaz (western Arabia), Sudan, Crete, Cyprus, and Syria
- 1851 Great Britain built railroad – connected Alexandria, Cairo, Suez
- 1854-1863 Said Pasha ruled as Viceroy of Egypt – supported Suez Canal
- 1854 *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez* (Suez Canal Company) – set up by Ferdinand de Lesseps with grant from Said
- 1859-1869 France, led by Ferdinand de Lesseps, constructed the Suez Canal
- 1863-1879 Ismail Pasha ruled as Khedive of Egypt – opened Suez Canal, developed and bankrupted Egypt
- 1869 Suez Canal opened – Khedive Ismail Pasha and Empress Eugénie of France presided over 46-ship ceremony

- 1875 Khedive Ismail faced a fiscal crisis – sold 44 percent of Suez Canal shares to Great Britain, led by Benjamin Disraeli
- 1876 Dual Control System imposed on Egypt by four creditor nations – one British and one French controller oversaw Egyptian finances
- 1882 Great Britain invaded Egypt – imposed British imperial control of Egyptian finances and trade and military control of Suez Canal
- 1882-1914 British Military Occupation of Egypt
- 1898 Fashoda Incident – France occupied southern Sudan, Britain retaliated, but two nations avoided war
- 1914-1922 British Protectorate over Egypt
- 1919 800 Egyptians killed in massive anti-British protests – Egyptian nationalists, led by Saad Zaghloul, formed Wafd Party
- 1922 Great Britain granted Egypt independence – British retained control of economy, military, foreign affairs, Suez Canal
- 1922-1952 Constitutional Monarchy – led by Kings Fuad and Faruq
- 1948-1949 first Arab-Israeli war – Israel won, Egypt gained Gaza Strip

1952	military coup, led by General Muhammad Naguib – anti-monarchy, anti-British revolution
1953-present	Arab Republic of Egypt
1952-1954	President Muhammad Naguib – head of military council
1954-1970	President Gamal Abdel Nasser – Arab Socialism, non-alignment
1956	Suez Crisis – Nasser nationalized Suez Canal, US and USSR forced British, French, and Israeli invaders to retreat
1958-1961	United Arab Republic – Egyptian political union with Syria – ended after military coup in Syria in 1961
1959-1971	High Aswan Dam constructed – Soviet aid, expanded Egypt’s hydropower capacity
1967	Israel defeated Arab coalition – claimed Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights
1970-1981	President Anwar Sadat – <i>infitah</i> (opening to the West)
1973	Yom Kippur War – Egypt and Syria attacked Israel, lost the war – United States and USSR intervened

1978	Camp David Agreement – Egypt and Israel recognized each other’s sovereignty, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt, both states received substantial American foreign aid
1981-2011	President Hosni Mubarak – repressive control, strategic rents – forced to resign
2012-2013	President Mohamed Morsi – overreached executive authority – forced to resign
2013-2014	President Adly Mansour – interim rule
2014	Abdel Fattah El-Sisi – elected president, winning 97 percent of the vote
2014-2015	Egypt invested \$8.2 billion – doubled the capacity of the Suez Canal
2018	Abdel Fattah El-Sisi – re-elected president, winning 97 percent of the vote
2019	constitutional amendment passed with 88 percent in favor – Abdel Fattah El-Sisi can be re-elected for another 6-year term in 2024
2019	18,880 ships, weighing 1.2 billion tons, transited the Suez Canal – Egypt earned \$5.8 billion

Bibliography

I am offering below annotations on selected books that I found particularly helpful in understanding Egypt's political and economic history. I have divided my recommendations into five categories – books that cover ancient Egyptian history, books on early post-dynastic Egyptian history, books on recent Egyptian history, books on Egyptian culture, and narrative and fictional books on Egypt. In each category, I list two highly suggested readings and two supplementary readings.

Books on Ancient Egyptian History

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Stephen Quirke and Jeffrey Spencer (ed.), *The British Museum Book of Ancient Egypt*, New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1999. This remarkable short volume gives a balanced introduction to the history and culture of the ancient Egyptian civilization. The book is especially strong in describing religion, art, and architecture but less complete in analyzing political and economic changes within the empire. Its beautiful illustrations provide vivid insights into the complex ancient Egyptian culture.

2. Bill Manley, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, London: Penguin Books, 1996. Readers who, like me, can best learn their history through maps will want to read this wonderful little historical atlas. The maps are superb in detail and coloring, the accompanying photos are more than adequate, and the text is refreshingly informative given its brevity. This book is an excellent reference work for both locations and information. It has more information per page than any other on ancient Egypt.

Supplementary Readings

1. Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000. This massive book is the only history that covers the Nile valley from earliest settlement through Roman rule. All of the contributors make valiant efforts to explain economic and political changes, but some succeed much better than others. Although uneven in quality and suited only for readers with lots of time and patience, this book is the most comprehensive history of ancient Egypt that I have seen.

2. Joyce Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut, The Female Pharaoh*, London: Penguin Books, 1998. After a long siege of faceless history books, it was very refreshing to read a book devoted to an incredibly fascinating female pharaoh in Egypt's New Kingdom. The author, an archaeologist, has written two books on women leaders in ancient Egypt. She debunks much of the mythology surrounding Hatchepsut. I recommend this book to those who find it pleasing to learn history largely through the exploits of individuals.

Books on Post-Dynastic Egyptian History

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010. It is rare that a detailed history book enjoys a lengthy stay on the New York Times bestseller list. This book fully deserves all of the acclaim that it has received. It gives an insightful analysis of the rise and spread of Islam and of its impact on the Arab peoples and the Middle East. This superb book places the history of Egypt during the past fourteen centuries in a broad regional context.

2. Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East, A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*, New York: Touchstone, 1997. This controversial book, along with Hourani's equally impressive work, gives readers a choice of extraordinary histories of the Middle East during the

past two millennia. Lewis's book explores the antecedents of the Arab Muslim jihad and diaspora, examines the intricate linkages effecting social, political, economic, and cultural change, and focuses on themes rather than time periods.

Supplementary Readings

1. Barbara Watterson, *The Egyptians*, Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997. I recommend this book for those who prefer their history to be user-friendly and a bit chatty. The entry on Egypt in the well-received Peoples of Africa series, this volume contains chapters from geography to contemporary Egypt. The coverage of ancient Egypt is thorough, but that of Islamic and modern Egypt is thin. Readers who have time to read only one book on Egyptian history might want to give this one a try.
2. Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Modern Egypt*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Afaf Marsot is a Professor Emerita of history at the University of California, Los Angeles. Any book, like this one, that has gone through seven reprintings has met the market test. It is important to read a country's history as interpreted by nationals of that country. This book has the advantage of being short and succinct. The author's ardently nationalistic viewpoint can be controversial.

Books on Recent Egyptian History

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Zachary Karabell, *Parting the Desert, The Creation of the Suez Canal*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. This captivating book neatly achieves several goals. It explains why the construction of the Suez Canal was the leading engineering feat of the 19th century, how Ferdinand de Lesseps snaked his way through the minefields of Egyptian, European, and Ottoman politics to build

the canal, and what implications the completed canal had for the onset of British imperialism in Egypt and the Middle East.

2. Bent Hansen, *Egypt and Turkey, The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity, and Growth*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1991. This book is the best study of 20th century economic and political change in Egypt. Formerly at the University of California-Berkeley, the author was a leading authority on Egyptian development. The book is written for specialists, and it is a goldmine of information and economic analysis. It explains how Britain, Faruq, and Nasser contributed to Egypt's malaise.

Supplementary Readings

1. Dieter Weiss and Ulrich Wurtzel, *The Economics and Politics of Transition to an Open Market Economy, Egypt*, Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998. This study, written by two German economists, shows how Western hopes for peace in the Middle East have permitted Egypt to become the world's largest recipient of foreign aid and to avoid making desirable economic reforms. Although the book's writing style lacks flair, its analysis is comprehensive and sound.

2. Lord Kinross, *Between the Seas, The Creation of the Suez Canal*, New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1969. Before the recent appearance of Karabell's book, Lord Kinross's masterful study was the leading work on the Suez Canal. Lord Kinross wrote widely on the Middle East, including a classic biography of Ataturk. This book serves as a good complement to Karabell's newer study, because Kinross provides keen insights into British and French political intrigues in the Suez chess match.

Books on Egyptian Culture

Highly Suggested Readings

1. W. Stevenson Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998. For more than four decades, this book has been reputed to be the best and most encyclopedic source on ancient Egyptian art and architecture. Though this big paperback is not easy reading, it is clearly a tour de force in its field. It takes the persevering reader from tomb to tomb for more than three millennia. The book contains magnificent illustrations, but only a few are in color.
2. Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians*, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1998. This accessible volume, by a noted art historian who specialized in ancient Egypt, is written as a history of Egypt from first settlement to the Greek conquest. I classify it under Egyptian culture because the book is mainly a specialized history of ancient Egyptian art and culture. Nearly every page contains an illustration, and the text focuses principally on cultural changes. I found it easier to follow than Smith's encyclopedic work on art.

Supplementary Readings

1. Nicholas Reeves and Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Valley of the Kings, Tombs and Treasures of Egypt's Greatest Pharaohs*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1996. This impeccably thorough volume carries the reader through the pharaonic history, tomb construction, funerary equipment, and later tomb discovery of the 30 monarchs and five centuries of Egypt's New Kingdom. Replete with tomb illustrations, maps, and time-lines, this book is an essential companion for very serious scholars and tourists.
2. Stephen Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997. This highly detailed and well-illustrated paperback tells the reader all that – or perhaps quite a bit more than – s/he might want to know about ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and funerary customs. I suggest that readers work through the

third and fourth chapters of the British Museum book (also written by this author) and then consult this volume if they feel the need for additional details. They most likely will find them here.

Narrative and Fictional Books on Egypt

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Naguib Mahfouz, *Miramar*, Pueblo, Colorado: Passeggiata Press, 1999. Mahfouz, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988, was Egypt's preeminent novelist and social critic. *Miramar* is a pension in Alexandria where Zohra, a country exile, works as a maid. The strong-willed, alluring Zohra is a metaphor for Egypt as she fends off suitors and attempts to survive in troubled times. This short story is a Mahfouz masterpiece – deeply insightful, wistful for the past, and critical of revolutionary change.

2. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat, Myth or Reality?*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999. This balanced, well-written essay examines recent Islamic revivalism and explores how it constitutes a threat to Western democracy. The author nicely summarizes the rise, expansion, decline, and revival of Islamic religion, culture, and power. The book is helpful in explaining modern Islamist politics and in placing the tragic events of September 11, 2001 into historical and contemporary context.

Supplementary Readings

1. E. M. Forster, *Alexandria: A History and A Guide*, Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1968. Forster was a Red Cross volunteer in Alexandria during World War I. Following that experience, he was moved to write a remarkable book that serves both as a history of and a travel guide to Alexandria. Penned with Forster's characteristic verve, this volume beautifully encapsulates

Alexandria's critical role in the last 2300 years of Egyptian history. Try it if you like history written with a literary twist.

2. Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk*, New York: Anchor Books, 1991. Mahfouz is best known for authoring The Cairo Trilogy – *Palace Walk, Palace of Desire, and Sugar Street*. *Palace Walk*, written in 1956, is the first novel in this study of three generations of a well-to-do family in Cairo. This book is profoundly insightful and deeply disturbing as it weaves and unravels the middle-class Egyptian societal fabric of devotion to Islam, two-faced male dominance, and nationalistic desire for independence.

Sites Visited in Egypt

Egypt and Jordan by Private Air, A Family Adventure

Bushtracks Expeditions

December 17-28, 2010

Airplane-based, with a Cruise Aboard the *Nile Adventurer*

Lower Egypt – Memphis, Saqqara, and Giza

We spent our first day touring Lower Egypt, the northern half of Dynastic Egypt. The formation of Egypt's Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms all occurred when southern rulers took over the north (Lower Egypt). We explored Memphis, the ancient northern capital that features a statue of Ramesses II and the Alabaster Sphinx, and its necropolis, Saqqara, where we visited the Step Pyramid of Djoser, the Pyramid of Teti, and the Tomb of Kagemna. We stood in awe of Lower Egypt's principal funerary monuments – the three Great Pyramids of Khufu, Khafra, and Menkaura in Giza – which were constructed more than 4500 years ago and are the only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world still intact today. In front of the second largest pyramid, that of Khafra, we marveled at the stone-cut Sphinx, then and now the world's largest statue.

The Nile Delta – Cairo

During our second day, we shifted our focus to Islamic and modern Egypt with a visit to Cairo. Cairo, today a massive city of more than 20 million residents, became the capital of Egypt after the country converted to Islam in the 7th century. There, we toured the beautiful Ibn Tulun Mosque (constructed 870-905 and now the oldest mosque in Cairo) and the renowned Egyptian National Museum (featuring the spectacular furnishings of King Tutankhamun's tomb, including a gold sarcophagus and canopic jars with his viscera). We visited a modern international school,

the Oasis Ecole Internationale, where our Young Rangers (the younger children) met with their Egyptian pen-pals to plant trees of friendship, exchange gifts, work together on a maintenance project, and paint a modernistic mural to promote multicultural understanding.

Sinai – St. Catherine’s Monastery

On our third day in Egypt, we flew to the southern Sinai Peninsula to pay a brief visit to the renowned St. Catherine’s Monastery. St. Catherine was a Coptic Christian martyr from Alexandria who died in the 5th century. The Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Emperor Justinian created the Orthodox Christian monastery in her honor in the 6th century. The site is near Mount Sinai, the mountain where Moses is believed to have received the Ten Commandments and observed the burning bush. The monastery is now an Orthodox Christian pilgrimage site, open to tourism only during the mornings. In addition to its religious significance, St. Catherine’s Monastery has the world’s second largest collection of historic Christian books (topped only by the Vatican in Rome) and an impressive collection of Orthodox Christian icons (religious paintings).

Upper Egypt – Luxor

We then flew to Luxor and boarded the *Nile Adventurer* for four days of Nile River cruising. Once called Wast by the ancient Egyptians and Thebes by the Hellenistic Greek rulers of Egypt, Luxor was the capital of Dynastic Egypt during its peak period of wealth and power, the New Kingdom (16th-11th centuries BCE). In Luxor, we visited the fabled Temple of Karnak, which has the world’s largest collection of hypostyles (134 enormous columns), and the beautiful Temple of Luxor (at night under a full moon), which Ramesses II refurbished to glorify himself with massive statues and wonderful hieroglyphic inscriptions. On the west bank

of the Nile, in the Valley of the Kings, we saw the spectacular underground tombs of four kings (Ramesses IV, VI, and IX and Tutankhamun), the magnificent Temple of Hatshepsut, and the Colossi of Memnon.

Upper Egypt – Esna, Edfu, and Kom Ombo

Aboard the luxurious *Nile Adventurer*, we sailed south from Luxor to observe three temples that were built in the Hellenistic (4th-1st centuries BCE) and Roman (1st century BCE-4th century CE) periods, after the fall of Dynastic Egypt. In Esna, we visited the Temple of Khnum, the ancient Egyptians' ram god who was the creator of man and the soul, which features 24 hypostyle columns. In Edfu, we saw the massive Temple of Horus, the falcon god, probably the best-preserved temple in Egypt with an intact Holy of Holies at its center. Further south, the double Temple of Kom Ombo is dedicated both to the crocodile god, Sobek, and to the falcon god, Horus. During those two relaxing days of sailing, we enjoyed the boat's sundeck and swimming pool between meals, lectures, discussions, and parties.

Nubia – Aswan and Abu Simbel

The first cataract on the Nile River, at Aswan, marks the division between Egypt and Nubia, the African state to the south that was the source of much of dynastic Egypt's gold. Aswan is also the site of the High Aswan Dam, built by the USSR in the 1960s to control flooding and provide hydropower and irrigation water. In Aswan, we visited the High Dam, the quarries where the ancient Egyptians obtained red granite (for Menkaura's Giza pyramid), and the stunning Hellenistic Temple of Philae on the island of Agilka. We also enjoyed a sail on a traditional Nile felucca boat. We flew southward across Lake Nasser to pay a visit to the remarkable 13th-century BCE Temples of Ramesses II and Nefertari in Abu Simbel. In 1968, those two magnificent

structures were relocated to higher ground by UNESCO at a cost of \$40 million before Lake Nasser submerged them

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A Cruise in the Mediterranean
Silversea Cruises
October 6-24, 2006
Ship-based, Aboard the *Silver Whisper*

Alexandria, Egypt

Near the end of the first cruise, the *Silver Whisper* docked for a day in Alexandria. Alexandria was by far the finest of the 34 cities that Alexander the Great of Macedonia started and named for himself in the 320s BC, as he was defeating the Achaemenid Persian Empire and claiming its former territories. For the next three centuries, Alexandria was the most exciting city in the world. It was the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, the leading entrepôt, grain exporting port, and artisanal center in the Mediterranean, and an intellectual hotbed and site of the Mouseion – a library and research center that housed the world’s leading doctor (Galen), physicist (Archimedes), geographer (Claudius Ptolemy), and mathematician (Euclid). Alexandria maintained its leadership position when Egypt was under Roman rule (30 BCE-395 CE), but began to slide under Byzantine rule (395-641) and declined markedly when Egypt was ruled by Islamic caliphates and the Ottoman Empire (641-1805).

Today, Alexandria is the crowded home of 6 million residents, and very little of its past glory is easily observable. Sandra and I hired a taxi and driver and took our own tour of parts of the city. We first went to former Roman Alexandria and visited Pompey’s Pillar (actually constructed and dedicated to Emperor Diocletian in the late 3rd century) and the catacombs of Kom al-Shuqafah (which

date to the 2nd century CE and feature a mélange of decorative styles representing fused religions). We then visited the new Library of Alexandria, finished five years ago and sited only 200 yards east of the original Ptolemaic Mouseion (which burned when Julius Caesar invaded Egypt in 48 BCE). The new library is an architectural jewel, containing 11 sky-lighted stories that can house 2,000 readers. We enjoyed an exhibition of sketches and photographs depicting changes in Alexandria between the 15th and 19th centuries.

Port Said and the Suez Canal, Egypt

Port Said is the northern terminus of the Suez Canal. Named after Muhammad Said Pasha, the ruler of Egypt who gave Ferdinand de Lesseps the Suez Canal concession in 1854, the port arose in the 1860s. French engineers, the four Dussaud brothers, constructed two jetties that then were the longest in the world (2 miles and 1.5 miles) to create a 550-acre harbor. The city gained international fame in 1956 when Israel, Great Britain, and France invaded Egypt after Gamel Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal (partly in response for American refusal to fund the High Aswan Dam). Angry Egyptians in Port Said then destroyed a 35-foot high statue of de Lesseps, the French entrepreneur. Port Said served as the last port of call on our first cruise and the point of origination for our second cruise. Sandra and I spent an hour touring the nondescript city by horse and buggy. Port Said apparently aspires to become a beach-led, tourist resort, but it has a very long way to go.

At 3 the following morning, we began our transit of the Suez Canal. The canal is 100 miles long and takes about ten hours to cross. We were doing beautifully on a gorgeous morning and had gone about two-thirds of the way by 10 AM. But then Egyptian bureaucracy slowed us down. Only 16 ships (including the *Silver Whisper*) were making the southbound trip whereas 37 ships were transiting south-to-north, and in parts the Suez Canal is a one-way

street. Hence, all 16 ships in our convoy were halted for a six-hour rest in the middle of the Bitter Lakes. We finally got back underway at 4 PM and finished our transit after 7 PM, not seeing the southern terminus of Suez because of darkness. Last year, 18,000 ships transited the canal and paid a total of \$3.5 billion to the Egyptian Government. The Suez Canal has no locks and flows through a desertic region, but the transit was fascinating.

Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

Sharm el-Sheikh is a surprising place – a garish destination tourist resort located at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Tourists, mostly from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, go there to gamble, sit on the endless beaches, snorkel and dive among the fabulous marine life of the Red Sea, and make a side trip to St. Catherine’s Monastery, created in the 6th century by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and now an Orthodox Christian pilgrimage site near the mountain where Moses is believed to have received the Ten Commandments. When Israel occupied the Sinai (1967-1982), Israeli entrepreneurs began to develop some modest tourist facilities at Sharm el-Sheikh. President Mubarak of Egypt later made the development of Sharm el-Sheikh a priority, and somehow it worked. The town now looks like a cross between Las Vegas of 1950 (many of the biggest international hotel chains have properties there) and Kuta Beach, Bali (countless restaurants, bars, and dive shops dot the beaches). Sandra and I went into Sharm el-Sheikh on the first shuttle bus from the dock, quickly looked around and concluded that this charmless town was not for us, and took the first shuttle bus back to the ship. It was our shortest shore excursion ever.

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