

'Misr' The Arab Republic of Egypt - Part One

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Up to 150,000 people 'saw in' the new millennium at the Giza Pyramids. The mystical attraction of the pyramids had drawn people from all over the world to celebrate with the music and visual show given by Jean Michel Jarre. The 'Cairo Times' summed the occasion up with the headline 'Night, fog, and lasers' and explained how the pyramids were lost in the smoke of the fireworks that were set off.

Why should people wish to celebrate the eve of the new millennium at Giza? What has the third Christian millennium to do with the pyramids that were built around four millennia ago? Perhaps the answer lies in the dual beliefs of the Pharaohs in an afterlife and of their divine origins. Also Egypt was a centre of early Christianity, of Islam and has had contacts with many parts of the world for centuries.

ANCIENT EGYPT (1)

The development of modern day Egypt began many thousands of years ago and was mainly centred along the River Nile (Nahr an Nil). In the Palaeolithic era (c. 25,000 BC) there were climatic changes which led to desertification. This forced nomads to move to areas along the Nile and settle there in the Neolithic period. They gradually developed agriculture, a written language and religion. Trade grew over great distances and concentrated on selling the surplus crops.

The belief in an afterlife was tied in with the seasonal rise and fall of the River Nile. July and August sees the flood, bringing silt from Ethiopia, and the fall in the water level begins in October, reaching its lowest point in April. This was taken to symbolise the death and re-birth of the land each year with new crops and vegetation. Similar symbolism was seen in the

rising and setting of the sun which led to belief in the god Ra.

In c. 3000 BC the unification of Upper (the Delta) and Lower Egypt came about. This alliance, traditionally held as being under the rule of Menes, also included the combining of their gods, giving a deistic ancestry to the rulers who established their capital at Memphis. From this beginning of the Pharaonic Dynasties a well-structured and sophisticated society developed with a strong central government. There were continual trade contacts with many neighbouring peoples, such as with Nubia, from the 5th. century BC.

The age of pyramid building began in the 3rd. Dynasty and continued for around five hundred years (c. 2630-1540 BC). The first pyramids include the 'step pyramid' at Saqqarah (Sakkara) built by Zoser (3rd. Dynasty), and those built by Snofru and his son, Khufu, at Giza (Al Jizah) in the 4th. Dynasty. This was also a time for further expansion into Libya, Nubia and Palestine. The Pharaohs' pyramids were built as their tombs and were a tangible sign of their belief in the afterlife. This was also portrayed, and the new life recreated, in the designs and texts on the tomb walls - a practice introduced by Unas in the 5th. Dynasty. Such a belief and its portrayal are unique to the Egyptian culture and were later to inspire the 'Book of the Dead'.

The kingdoms and culture continued to develop only to be followed by an extended civil war (c. 2181 BC) for 150 years, and invasion by foreign powers, such as the Ethiopians (Kushites), Hittites, Libyans, Nubians and Philistines. After this time, during the 12th. Dynasty, the central government was re-estab-

lished under a divine kingship. This is known as the 'Middle Kingdom' (c. 1937-1539 BC) but this too ended when the Hyksos (the 'Shepherd Kings'), Semitic nomads, invaded and ruled Egypt from Avaris, in the Delta. The state reverted to the previous divisions of Upper Egypt, ruled from Thebes (present day Luxor), and Lower Egypt, but the overall capital was at Memphis.

The Ahmosis kings, based at Thebes, drove the Hyksos out around 1600 BC, the country was unified by Ahmose (c. 1539-1546 BC) the founder of the 18th. Dynasty. The newly established military state aided Egypt to gain more power and wealth and to expand through the military campaigns of Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425 BC). This

led to regaining control of Nubia, Palestine, Syria, and northern Mesopotamia through a whole series of alliances and treaties. Rulers from various areas and countries governed subsequent Dynasties. For example the 22nd. and 23rd. Dynasties were mainly Libyans; the 24th. were from the Nile Delta, and the 25th. were Nubians and Ethiopians. A great deal of the art from this time still remains, such as the treasures of Tutankhamen (c. 1347-1318 BC), and gives an idea of the heights reached. Rock tombs began to be made for the Pharaohs about 1500 BC. Amenophis I constructed a tomb west of Thebes, a practice which continued for the next 400 years with such buildings as those found in the Valley of the Kings.



Above Picture: Egypt - showing some of the major towns and ancient sites



(1) See the 'Dynasties and Rulers of Ancient Egypt' on pages 16 & 17.



sun god ('Great [sun] Disc'), the state god. Akhenaten built a new capital city and he called it Akhetaten ('The Horizon of the Sun Disc' at present-day Tell al-Amarna). Akhenaten's wife, Queen Nefertiti, shared his beliefs but these did not survive long after his reign when Tutankhamen, Akhenaten's successor, was persuaded by the priests of Karnak to return the cult of Amun to Thebes. As a result the city of Akhetaten fell into ruins.

THE END OF PHARAONIC RULE

The Late Periods (the 1st. c. 1069-525 and the 2nd. c. 404-337) saw the gradual ending of independent Egypt due to the other civilisations that were developing around the Mediterranean and the Near East. The last great pharaonic dynasty was the 26th. founded by Psamtek I (c. 644-610). In the 27th. and 31st. Dynasties Egypt was occupied by the Persians which led to local revolts, helped by the Greeks. Regional power centres developed and led to a state of crises during the 28th. to the 30th. Dynasties which were independent again.

Persian rule in Egypt ended when Alexander the Great defeated them in November, 333 BC. Alexander was welcomed into Egypt the same year and went to Memphis. He founded the city of Alexandria and then moved on to Siwa where he consulted the Oracle at the Temple of Amun. ⁽²⁾ Alexander died in 323 BC and Ptolemy, who was Commander in Egypt, took over as the Satrap (Provincial Governor) of Egypt. Alexander's Empire was divided into three monarchies in 306 BC with Ptolemy keeping his kingdom of Egypt and establishing the line of the 'Ptolemaic Pharaohs' which lasted until Roman times.

The Ptolemaic Dynasty's ethos was Greek and they used the language in Court and throughout the administration. Gradually the language, dress, and religion spread through Egypt and mixed with the local ways to form an Egyptian-

Hellenistic culture. Egypt became the Ptolemaic base to spread their influence in the Near East through trade and exploration. Once again great architectural and cultural developments took place. The Ptolemies founded a university, museum, and library at Alexandria; they made a canal to the Red Sea; built the Pharos lighthouse; and the temples at Edfu and Dendera. Cleopatra was the last of the Ptolemies. Despite being married to both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony she fought to keep Egypt independent from Roman rule. Eventually she could no longer continue after her forces were defeated at Actium in 31 BC. Rather than become part of the Empire she committed suicide in 30 BC and thus began Roman rule in Egypt.

Under the direct control of the Emperor Augustus Egypt became a Province of the Roman Empire. Augustus, and those who ruled later, used the local religion and social structures. In the way of art and building they completed the Temple of Isis on Philae Island (Jazirah Filah), and started portrait painting on the wooden covers on mummies' coffins. The Romans favoured the urban, Hellenized population over the rural Egyptians. Latin replaced Greek as the administrative language and a large military force supported the whole bureaucracy. By 212 Egyptians had gained citizenship of the Empire. Despite any progress that was made once again the country was only used as a granary to supply a foreign power's needs. During this time all the wealth of Egypt was drained to support the Roman Empire, leaving little for the local population.

CHRISTIANITY IN EGYPT

The changes and eventual decline of the Roman Empire were also felt in Egypt. One of the major changes was the expansion of Christianity throughout the Empire during the first century AD. According to tradition, St. Mark brought Christianity to Egypt in 37AD, and the Coptic

Church ⁽³⁾, based on his teachings, was founded in Alexandria (40 AD). From Alexandria it spread into Upper Egypt by the 2nd. century. A period of sporadic persecution began around the Empire in the 3rd. century. The Copts were not exempt from this and an edict of Septimius Severus, in 202, closed the Catechetical School of Alexandria ⁽⁴⁾ and banned conversions to Christianity and Judaism. During Severus' oppression (200-210) there were several martyrs who died for their faith, among them were Basilides (a Roman soldier), Heraclides, Herais, Leonidas and Serenus. After Severus died peace came until the edict of Decius from 249 to 251, which was followed by the two edicts of Valerian, in 257 and 258, which set further persecutions in motion (257-261).

During the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284-305) Egypt was divided into three Provinces. Diocletian saw Christianity as a threat to the Roman religion and started persecuting Christians. This intensified between 303-305 following a decree by Diocletian. Churches were demolished, books burned and many Christians were made slaves. In remembrance of all those who

were killed the Coptic calendar has adopted the year when Diocletian ascended the throne, 284, as its first year ('the era of martyrs'). Maximus also persecuted the Christians (305-313) during his reign. Despite the hardship endured during these persecutions Coptic Christianity was still able to develop much of its distinct theology and practices.

The situation changed greatly with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine I (311-337) and when he made Christianity the Empire's official religion in 312, followed by the freedom of worship the next year. Constantine made Byzantium his capital, in 330, and renamed it Constantinople (Istanbul) from where Egypt was governed.

Monasticism began in Egypt during the latter part of the 3rd. century and was well established by the 4th. century, when it had also developed in Syria and Palestine. St. Pachomius (287-347) was the first to set up a monastery at Tabennisi, which was based on communal living. St. Anthony (c. 251-356), the first monk, had a large community of hermits by c. 305. We learn much of their lives in Egypt from the

⁽²⁾ Amun was the Theban god whom the Greeks equated with Zeus. Amun-Ra was a combination of the Amun and Ra from Memphis. ⁽³⁾ 'Copt' is from the Greek 'Aiguptioi' meaning Egyptian, or the country itself. In the Coptic language the Copts are called 'people of Egypt', implying nationality. It is shortened to 'Gibt' in Egyptian Arabic.

⁽⁴⁾ The Catechetical School in Alexandria is the oldest of its type and now the Theological college attached to it, which was re-established in 1893, has campuses in Alexandria, Cairo, New Jersey, and Los Angeles. Above Picture: Siwa dominated by the remains of the Shali Fortress (13th. century)



writings of the 'Desert Fathers'.⁽⁵⁾ The monks, mainly simple villagers from along the Nile, lived and prayed their monastic life in three main ways: as hermits alone (Lower Egypt); monks and nuns living in community (Upper Egypt); and solitary lives in groups of three and four (Nitria and Scetis).

In 324 the Council of Nicea established the Patriarchate of Alexandria with a jurisdiction over Egypt and Libya. The Nicene Creed was composed by St. Athanasius, who was the Pope of Alexandria from 327 to 373. The Patriarchate helped to develop the early Church and its theology so that by the middle of the 4th. century Egypt was mainly Christian with an estimated 100 Bishops. Their role continued with St. Cyril, Pope of Alexandria, heading the Council of Ephesus (430).

With the collapse of the Roman Empire the Byzantine Empire came to the fore in both political and religious power. Conflict broke out between Alexandria and Constantinople when the two Patriarchates began to rival each other and politics started to creep into the Church. This came to a head when the Council of Chalcedon (451) was called to resolve 'the nature of Christ'. The Coptic Church was accused of believing in monophysitism.⁽⁶⁾ They did not agree with the Council's conclusions and so began the schism between them and the rest of Christendom (Byzantine Church). The Copts evolved even more with their own distinct hierarchy by the sixth century.⁽⁷⁾

After the Chalcedon break their followed persecution of the Coptic Church by the Byzantine. Churches were destroyed and Coptic

Christians were tortured and killed if they did not accept the Byzantine point of view. This continued until the 7th. century and the Copts were almost reduced to being a national church. The Copts carried on appointing their own Patriarchs, despite having ones which were imposed by Byzantium.

THE ARAB CONQUEST⁽⁸⁾

The conquest of Egypt by Amr ibn al As and his army, between 639-41, has left its mark upon the country and the world until today. On the 12th. December, 639, Amr arrived in Egypt with an army of about 4,000 horsemen. They wished to capture the Babylon-in-Egypt (Bab al Yun) fortress, just north of present day Cairo, in order to advance up the Nile to Alexandria. The army was reinforced in June, 640, bringing its number up to between 800 to 12,000. The Arab and Byzantine armies met on the Heliopolis plain where the latter were defeated and retreated back to Babylon. After a six month siege the fortress fell on 9th. April, 641. The Arab army then proceeded to Alexandria which surrendered and a peace treaty was signed in November, 641, giving them control over most of Egypt. Babylon became the Arab capital and was renamed Al Fustat (present Old Cairo). Amr built the Amr ibn al As Mosque there, which is named after him, though it was not finished until 711 after he had died. It still exists today.

The Arab armies did not force those they conquered to become Muslims - Christians and Jews are recognised in the special status of 'People of the Book'. By mutual agreement the majority of Christians - both Byzantines and

Copts - agreed to continue practising their faith by paying a type of 'poll tax' ('Gezya'). The Coptic Patriarch and other religious leaders were allowed to practice and the churches that the Byzantines had taken were returned to the Copts.

Egypt became a Province and for the next 200 years it was ruled by Governors, appointed by the Caliphs, using the local structures that they found. In the 8th. century the Umayyad Dynasty was defeated by the Abbasid and they moved the Caliphate from Damascus to Baghdad. During the Abbasid rule there was less control over Egypt and as it declined, in the 9th. century, local dynasties arose to control the country. Most of the population had become Muslims and many Copts had converted, in order to avoid the 'poll tax'. Slowly the Arabic-Islamic influence grew in the country as other Arab peoples moved into Egypt. The Coptic language remained the language of most of the country until the 10th.-11th. centuries, but gradually Arabic began to take over. The first complete Arabic texts in the Coptic Church began to appear in the 13th. century and Coptic became purely a liturgical language.

In 868 Ahmad ibn Tulun became the Governor of Egypt based at Al Fustat. He initiated autonomy for the country which lasted until the end of the Tulunid Dynasty in 905. He was Egypt's first Turkish ruler. Then, for the next

thirty years, Egypt came under Baghdad's direct control. The Ikhshidid Dynasty began when Muhammad ibn Tughj was made Governor in 935. Both of these Dynasties were orthodox Sunni Muslims and they revitalised the country by reforms and developing the agricultural wealth. They too had a degree of autonomy but this only lasted until the Fatimid⁽⁹⁾ conquest in 969.

THE FATIMIDS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISLAM

The Fatimids came from Morocco (founded c. 909) and ruled Egypt from 970-1171. They wanted to have complete independence from the Baghdad Caliphate. The Fatimids were also the heads of the 'Ismaili Shia' Islam and they challenged the Abbasids, who were Sunni, for the Caliphate itself. Cairo was the Fatimid

⁽⁵⁾ St. Anthony and St. Pachomius were the first Christian monks. Other Coptic 'Desert Fathers' include St. Makarios, St. Moses the Black, St. Mina the Wonderous, and St. Paul. They and their companions practised asceticism in the Egyptian desert and laid the foundations for Christian monasticism. They had many visitors who followed their example and established monasticism, or carried their message, elsewhere. Examples are: St. Basil (Asia Minor) visited c. 357; St. Jerome (translator of the Bible into Latin) visited c. 400; and St. Benedict (6th. century) based the monasteries he founded on the model of St. Pachomius. There have been many ordinary people who visited the 'Desert Fathers' and followed their spirituality - to this day. ⁽⁶⁾ One outcome of the Council of Chalcedon was the Monophysite schism. The Western

Church declared that Christ had two distinct but inseparable natures, divine and human. The Church of Alexandria did not accept this and believed He had only one divine nature (Monophysitism) which united His divinity and humanity. Emphasizing His divinity and denied that He could be an ordinary human being.

⁽⁷⁾ The Patriarch, or the Pope, is Head of the Church and he is recognised world wide. Traditionally the Pope is based in Alexandria and is elected by the Synod, or council, of Bishops and they can also remove him. There are also priests, in a parish structure, and monks and nuns. ⁽⁸⁾ As with all countries during this period of conquest by the Arab-Islam armies, and the subsequent administrative structures which were established, there is no distinction made between the 'religious' and the 'secular'. The development of Islam, therefore, is included as part of the general growth of the country.) For more information on Islam see the 'Modern Islam' further on in the article.

Above Picture: A Coptic Baptism in St. George's Church, Cairo



capital from where they expanded their Empire until, at one time, it covered North Africa and the Red Sea coast, Sicily, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, and the Hijaz (eastern Saudi Arabia). Cairo was developed as an intellectual centre where the doctrines of the Shia faith were developed, especially at the Al-Azhar University (built c. 969) (see the section on 'Contemporary Islam' later in the article).

Egypt's administration and the tax system were reorganised and both agriculture and trade developed. The fleets controlled the eastern Mediterranean, with their major harbours at Alexandria and Tripoli. The Fatimids extended commercial contacts with Europe (especially with Italy's City States), with India and South East Asia. In this manner both trade and the Ismaili faith spread to areas in the East where it exists until today.

The Fatimid Empire began to wane with the Crusades and when they were defeated at Jerusalem in July, 1099. Jerusalem, and most of Palestine, was recaptured by Salah ad Din ibn Ayyub (Saladin), the Kurdish general. In 1168, he went to Egypt when his uncle, Shirkuh, was Wazir (Senior Minister) of the Fatimid Caliphate. Saladin took over power in Egypt, abolished the Fatimid Caliphate and established the Ayyubid Dynasty. He returned Egypt to the control of the Baghdad Caliphate and to Sunni orthodoxy. Saladin started the 'madrasah' system (the Koranic schools attached to mosques) which became the centre of the Sunni revival. It was made the state religion in 1171. From this foundation intellectual movements and social changes ensued along Sunni lines which began to make Cairo the centre of Islamic

orthodoxy, Arab scholarship, literature and culture. This was a key turning point for Islam. Egypt became a major centre for the faith a position which it has held until today, with the Al-Azhar Mosque and University at its heart.

After Saladin's death, in 1193, the Empire was divided in two and controlled by his Ayyubid relatives. The Ayyubid Sultans in Egypt were to the fore as they controlled great wealth, territory and trade with Europe. During the latter part of the Middle Ages the Islam-Arab world began to change and the Abbasid Caliphate weakened under Turkish and Mongol authority. A part of this which had the most influence on Egypt was the gradual movement of the Turks (having left the Eurasian Steppes in the sixth century) into the West and their conversion to Islam after reaching the Middle East. This was especially so with the Mamluks. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Later, in the late tenth century, another movement of Turks took control of the Baghdad Caliphate and also conquered the Byzantine Empire.

When the last Ayyubid Sultan in Egypt died (1250) the Mamluks seized power. They were well established when the Mongols destroyed the Abbasid Caliphate and executed the last Caliph in 1258. The Qutuz (Mamluk Sultan) resisted the Mongols and defeated them at Ayn Jalut in Palestine (1260), but he was assassinated by Baybars I (1260-77), a Bahriyyah, ⁽¹¹⁾ who took over the Sultanate and established rule in Syria. The Sultanate also controlled the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and so took on a key role in organising the annual pilgrimages (hajj) to Mecca. The 14th. century saw Cairo become even more dominant as a centre for the

Muslim world. The Sultanate passed from the Bahriyyah to the Circassians, whom the former had recruited as slave soldiers.

THE OTTOMANS IN EGYPT

The Ottoman Empire was founded by Osman (1280-1324) and from his Amirate it developed in Eastern Europe. They took Constantinople in 1453, renamed it Istanbul and made it their capital. Later, in 1517, Sultan Selim I (1512-20) conquered Egypt and inflicted a heavy defeat on the Mamluk forces at Ar Raydaniyah, near Cairo. Selim I left Khair Bey ⁽¹²⁾ behind and he ruled from the Citadel, in Cairo. Under the Ottomans the Ulama's ⁽¹³⁾ role was developed and their public-political roles as moral leaders came to the fore. The Ottomans also recognised the Copts as a 'Millet' ⁽¹⁴⁾ which helped them keep their identity.

Despite taking over power from the Mamluks the Ottomans were unable to wipe out their influence and interference in Egypt. The Mamluk military revived, the Mamluk Beys gained political power and the struggle between them and the Ottoman rulers continued until the end of the 18th. century when the Ottoman Governor was ousted. Ali Bey al Kabir (1760-66) and his successor, Muhammad Bey Abu adh Dhahab (1772-75) once again consolidated the Mamluk military and political power. Until 1760 the country was effectively divided into two spheres of power: the Mamluk Beylicate (civil admin-

istration with revenues from the rural tax farms) and the Mamluks (the military side financed from the urban tax farms and the customs house). Ali Bey then took over control of the military and the state's revenue, and got rid of the Governor in an attempt to re-establish the Mamluk Empire. He also invaded Syria and further developed trading links with Europe. Ali Bey's successors continued in the same ilk and got rid of the Ottoman to make Egypt more influential in its own right.

Towards the end of the 18th. century Egypt's fortunes were not so good: the Mamluks still had to fight off Ottoman dominance (1786-91); there was famine and plague (1784-92); and a ten year power struggle between the Beys after Muhammad Bey's death and the expulsion of

⁽⁹⁾ Sunni Muslims, from the word 'sunna' meaning orthodox, are one of the two main branches of Islam, the other is the Shia. The Sunni follow the Umayyad line (661AD) from after the 4th. Caliphate. Today Egypt is Sunni and follows the 3 juridical schools - Shafiita, Hanafiita and Malikita. The Fatimid Dynasty got its name from Fatima, Muhammad's daughter and the wife of Ali (656-61), the 4th. Caliph and founder of Shia Islam. The Shia ('Shiat Ali', the Party of Ali) are the smaller of the 2 branches of Islam. They supported Ali's claim to be leader of the Community in the split. There were further divisions due to disputes among the Shia concerning the number of Imans (the majority believe there were

12). The 'Ismaili Shia', of the Fatimid Dynasty, get their name from Imam Muhammad ibn smail, the 7th. Imam.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The Mamluks were paid Turkish slaves in the Arab armies. They were members of elite units and received special training, such as in languages, literature and administration, which could lead to high appointments.

⁽¹¹⁾ The Bahriyyah were an elite corps of the Mamluk army. They name is from Rawdah Island in the River Nile where they had a garrison. ⁽¹²⁾ A Bey was the highest rank in the Mamluk military, or the Governor of a Province in the Ottoman Empire. ⁽¹³⁾ The Ulama, Arabic for Scientists, are Islamic scholars and teachers. They were mainly from the Al Azhar Mosque/University in Cairo and took on a major role in the 18th and 19th. centuries. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Millets were administrative divisions for religious communities, or minorities, which the Ottomans allowed to live under their own law and leadership. The system allowed for religious differences but stopped non-Muslims being fully integration into Muslim life.

Above Picture: the pyramids at Giza

Ali Bey. The latter ended with Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey sharing power until 1798. This left the country in a weakened state and open to the French invasion.

France wanted Egypt for commercial reasons, as a source of grain and raw materials, and strategically to threaten British interests in the North Africa and to block the overland route to India. Napoleon Bonaparte arrived with a French invasion force at Alexandria on the 1st. July, 1798. They took the city and then defeated the Mamluk army at Shubra Khit and Imbabah, entering Cairo on the 25th. July. The French managed to control the country from the Nile Delta in land as far as Cairo, but Upper Egypt remained in the hands of the Bedouins and the Mamluks. The population of Cairo, lead by the Ulama from the Al Azhar mosque, rebelled against the French on the 21st. October.

Britain and the Ottomans joined forces to drive Napoleon from Egypt. Nelson and the British fleet destroyed the French ships at Abu Qir on the 1st. August, 1798. This cut Napoleon and his army off from Europe. The Ottomans had declared war on the 11th. September and in an attempt to delay their forces Napoleon invaded Syria. He failed at Acre, Palestine, and began to retreat on the 20th. May, 1799. Eventually he left Egypt with a small company of men on the 22nd. August. General Jean-Baptiste Klèber was left in charge of the remaining troops. Klèber was assassinated and command went to General Abdullah Jacques Menou, a convert to Islam.

A combined Anglo-Ottoman force accepted the surrender of the French at Cairo on the 18th. June, 1801, and Menou surrendered at Alexandria on the 3rd. September. The last French troops

left Egypt at the end of the year. After the French withdrawal from Egypt an Ottoman military force remained in order to keep control of the country and to stop a revival of the Mamluks, who had established themselves in Upper Egypt. Khusraw Pasha was appointed as the Viceroy.

MUHAMMAD ALI

When the Ottoman forces moved into Egypt (1801) they brought troops from Albania and amongst them was Muhammad Ali (1769-1849), who had risen to the rank of Commander by 1803. Using his political and leadership skills, and despite the opposition from the Ottoman authorities, Muhammad Ali was appointed Governor of Egypt in June, 1805. Ali began to revive Egypt and to build its autonomy.

Muhammad Ali brought Upper Egypt and the Mamluks under his control by March, 1811. He re-initiated the policies of Ali Bey al Kabir to form an independent Egypt and began to build upon the country's agricultural riches with the promotion of crops specifically for export. The surplus income was used to develop irrigation systems, canals, factories and the military. The Government put embargoes on importing cheap British textiles but still Egypt exported the longstaple raw cotton to mills in England and imported the finished products.

Britain worked to maintain the Ottoman Empire as a means of having some influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. This policy continued until the First World War but it was threatened when Muhammad Ali tried to break from the Ottoman Empire by invading Syria in 1831. Several European powers supported the Ottomans and the Egyptian army retreated back to Egypt while Muhammad Ali was forced to accede to British demands. Later

(15) The three tier class structure consisted of the following groups. (1) The 'Turco-Circassian' class who were members of an elite of officers and officials. They owned a fifth of the cultivated land - 'great estates' - and by the 1870s they had developed into a kind of 'landed gentry'. (2) The Egyptian 'notables' or 'village headmen' (Umada) who were appointed by Muhammad Ali as the State's agents in the countryside, in order to reduce the Turco-Circassians' power. They played an important political and economic role. (3) The 'Peasants' who often lost their land because of being in debt to the village headmen or the owners of the 'great estates', mainly due to State taxes. The peasants left the countryside for the towns because of these reasons and also to avoid forced labour (corvée) on State's

he had to agree to the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1838, which opened up Egypt to free trade and led to the decline of the local textile industries. With the Treaty of 1841 Muhammad Ali was only left with Sudan and the hereditary Governorship of Egypt. Despite this he attempted to change the Egyptian economy from a subsistence agricultural one to an industrial one. This largely failed because of the country's weakness and European pressure.

Much of present day Egypt was shaped during this time as its social structure changed and Western ideas were introduced. With the privatisation of land and the various reforms that Muhammad Ali began a new rural three tier social system was established with each part being played off against the other. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Egypt became more involved in the world economy, especially with imports and exports to Europe. In old age Ibrahim, Muhammad Ali's eldest son, took over from him because of ill health. Unfortunately Ibrahim had T.B. and was only in power for six months before he died in Nov-

ember, 1848. Muhammad Ali died in August, 1849.

Under Abbas Hilmi I (1848-54) a railway line was built between Alexandria and Cairo. This helped British communications with India. Said (1854-63) succeeded Abbas. He continued the work of his father, Muhammad Ali, in agriculture, education and irrigation and brought in further land reform (1855 and 1858) and civil changes. Most non-Egyptians will probably remember Said for initiating the Suez Canal. Ferdinand de Lesseps was granted the concession to build the Canal in 1854. It runs from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. The Suez Canal Company was given the land along the Canal as a tax free zone and so enjoyed the benefits of it. Said abolished the special taxes which were levied on Christians (1855) and later they received juridical equality with Muslims (1866).

There had been established towns and cities for hundreds of years and the majority of their people were trades and artisans. Many of the traditional crafts began to decline with the importation of cheaper alternative goods from

public works projects and military conscription. They were exploited by the other two groups who bought up their abandoned land. They also worked as agricultural labourers on the estates of the Turco-Circassian.

Above Picture: The interior of the Muhammed Ali Mosque, The Citadel, Cairo



Europe. By 1900 ⁽¹⁶⁾ the nature of Egypt's urban population was changing with the growth of a working class which was involved in the small industries which were growing up. The peasants moving in from the countryside added to the numbers and to the problems as, often, they were unemployed.

There was also a decline in the middle class, such as the merchants and the Ulama. These two groups were inter-connected through family ties and the fact that some Ulama were also merchants and farmers. When secular education was introduced it led to the further diminishing of the Ulama's influence. The new education system, and opening up the civil service to Egyptians, gave further opportunities and changes in society. The traditional merchant class also declined and became involved with trade within Egypt. The imports (industrial goods) and exports (cotton) to Europe were handled by an increasing number of foreigners who had come into the country. Europeans were also involved in banking and finance. They had a privileged position due to the treaties that had been made with the Ottoman Empire. This meant that they were almost outside of Egyptian law until the introduction of 'mixed courts' in 1876.

Ismail Pasha (1830-95), the grandson of Muhammad Ali, strove to make Egypt into a modern State that was independent from the Ottoman Empire. He tried to increase agricultural productivity with more irrigation projects, canal and railway construction. Though Ismail expanded Egypt's income and exports he was hamstrung by the fact that most of this relied on cotton, the price of which would fluctuate as it was tied to the world market. To continue his development plans, and to cover the debts from the Suez Canal, he was forced to take out loans with European bankers and, in 1875, to sell

his shares in the Suez Canal Company to the British Government for £4m., making them the largest shareholder in the company. During this time Egypt's foreign debt rose from £3m. (1863) to £100m. (1876). This still did not solve the country's financial problems.

COLONIZATION BY STEALTH AND THE DEBT

Ismail asked the British Government's help to sort out Egypt's finances. Despite the country being solvent the European creditors refused to allow the time to service its debts. Ismail suspended the interest payments on the loans in 1875. The creditors began to negotiate new financial arrangements with Ismail. Egypt continued to service the debt and, by 1877, over 60% of its revenue was spent on this. European interference grew and Egypt's sovereignty was limited, to the extent of including Europeans in various Government departments. Opposition to European intervention came from the Assembly of Delegates and from Egyptian army officers.

In April, 1879, Ismail ordered the Assembly to dissolve but the members refused. After various political intrigues Ismail told a meeting of European Consuls about the delicate situation in the country and that the Government rejected the call to declare Egypt bankrupt, but would still honour their financial obligations. The European powers then began to plot Ismail's removal. He would not abdicate so they put pressure on the Ottoman Sultan to dismiss him. This happened in June, 1879, and Ismail's son, Tawfiq, took over. Ismail went into exile in Naples and then Istanbul, where he died in 1895. The European powers and interests gained the upper hand once again and joint control of Egypt's finances was re-established. These events were a catalyst to produce a nationalist movement in the country, made up of people from all parts of society, which became known as the National

Popular Party (NPP)(Al Hizb al Watani al Ahli - 1881).

The European powers became concerned about the situation, especially the British who was worried about the Suez Canal. There was a growth in anti-European feeling and a swing towards more radical elements of the NPP who wanted to get rid of both the Khedive Tawfiq ⁽¹⁷⁾ and European influence. This resulted in the French withdrawing their navy from Alexandria and the British bombarding the city (July, 1882). The city was then occupied by British Marines and the Khedive was installed. As the situation deteriorated Egypt became controlled by two forces: the Khedive, in Alexandria and Colonel Ahmad Urabi ⁽¹⁸⁾ in Cairo and the Provinces. In August a British army of 20,000 men invaded the Suez Canal Zone. A decisive battle was fought at Tall al Kabir on September 13, 1882, and the Urabi forces were defeated and Cairo taken. Urabi was captured and banished to Ceylon. The Khedive was restored and the British occupation of Egypt began.

THE BRITISH IN EGYPT

Egypt now became a part of the British Empire (1882-1956). The intention was to restore Khedive Tawfiq and to support his government, while the real power lay in the hands of the British Agent, Consul General, and British troops. The British wished to protect their interest in Egypt, especially the Suez Canal, and to continue to counteract the French influence in the area. As part of this strategy they began to lessen their support for the Ottoman Empire - their place being taken by Germany. Tawfiq died in 1892 and was succeeded by Abbas.

Between 1883 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914, there were three British Agents and Consuls General in Egypt: Lord Cromer (1883-1907), Sir John Eldon Gorst (1907-11), and Lord Herbert Kitchener (1911-14). Each built up the British interests in different ways - such as through bringing in more British officials to the bureaucracy, and developing irrigation schemes and the railways. There was free trade that was often to the detriment of the local people, in so much as the economy still relied solely on cotton for exports and cheap foreign imports continued to destroy local crafts.

to be continued

Sources - 'The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Egypt' by Bill Manley; 'Egypt: A Country Study', Library of Congress; 'A Brief Review of Modern Egyptian History' by Dr. M. Trabia (University of Nevada Las Vegas, USA); 'The Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia, 1999'; 'Encyclopaedia Britannica'; 'Egypt', Lonely Planet, 1999; 'Egypt', The Rough Guide by Dan Richardson, 1997; 'The Times Atlas of World History'; <http://www.anthro.mankato.msus.edu/prehistory/egypt/>; 'The Coptic Network'; 'The Coptic Encyclopedia', edited by Aziz Sourial Atiya; 'The Catholic Encyclopedia'; 'Zenit'; 'Fides International'; 'World Churches Handbook'; 'A History of Christianity' by Owen Chadwick; 'The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity'.

⁽¹⁶⁾ In 1900 Egypt's population was around 10m.: about 2m. lived in the towns and cities; 10-20% were landless peasants; less than 20% of the privately held and waqf (religiously endowed) land was held by 80% of the population; 1% owned more than 40%. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Khedive is the title of rulers, Viceroy of the Sultan, of Egypt from 1867 to 1914.



⁽¹⁸⁾ Colonel Ahmad Urabi was part of a secret society of Egyptian army officers founded in 1876. Later he became leader in the nationalist movement.



Dynasties and Rulers of Ancient Egypt

(all dates are in years B.C.)

Persian Period II
340-323 B.C.

Dynasty XXXI 340-323
Persian Rulers
332-323 Alexander of Macedon
335-332 Darius III
337-335 Arses
340-337 Artaxerxes III

Late Period II 404-337 B.C.

Dynasty XXX c. 378-337
342-337 Ochus
358-342 Nectanebo II
c. 360-358 Takos
c. 378-360 Nectanebo I

Dynasty XXIX c. 397-378
c. 378 Nepherites II
c. 390 Psammuthis
c. 391-378 Akoris (Hakoris)
c. 397-391 Nepherites I

Dynasty XXVIII c. 404-397
c. 404-397 Amyrtaeus

Persian Period II
340-323 B.C.

Dynasty XXVII 525-404
Persian Achaemenid Dynasty at 'Old Cairo'
c. 423-404 Darius II
c. 464-423 Artaxerxes
c. 485-464 Xerxes
c. 521-485 Darius I
c. 525-521 Cambyses

Late Period I c. 1069-525 B.C.

Dynasty XXVI c. 672-525
Ethiopian Kings - Saite Dynasty at Saïs
Herodotus
c. 526-525 Psamtek III
c. 570-526 Ahmose II
c. 570-526 Amasis
c. 589-570 Apries
c. 595-589 Psamtek II
c. 610-595 Neko II (Necho)
c. 664-610 Psamtek I
c. 672-664 Neko I

Late Period I c. 1069-525 B.C.

Dynasty XXV c. 780-656
Fragmented, Cushite or Napata Dynasty at Napata
c. 664-656 Tantamani
c. 690-664 Taharka
c. 702-690 Shabataka (Shabaka)
c. 716-702 Shabako
c. 747-716 Piyy (Piyy, Piankhy)
c. 760-747 Kashta
c. 780-760 Alara

Dynasty XXIV c. 727-715
Kings at Saïs
c. 720-715 Bakenrenef
c. 727-720 Tefnakht

XXIII c. 818-715
Kings at Leontopolis
c. 720-715 Shoshenk VI
c. 754-720 Iuput II
c. 757-754 Rudamun
c. 764-757 Takelot III
c. 787-759 Osorkon III
c. 793-787 Shoshenk IV
c. 804-803 Iuput I
c. 818-793 Pedubast I

XXII c. 945-715
Bubastite Dynasty, ruled by Libyans at Tanis
c. 730-715 Osorkon IV
c. 767-730 Shoshenk V
c. 773-767 Pimay
c. 825-773 Shoshenk III
c. 850-825 Takelot II
c. 870-860 Harsiese
c. 874-850 Osorkon II
c. 889-874 Takelot I
c. 890-889 Shoshenk II
c. 924-889 Osorkon I
c. 945-924 Shoshenk I (Shoshena)

Dynasty XXI c. 1069-945
At the end Libyans in power
c. 959-945 Har-Psusennes II
c. 978-959 Siamun
c. 984-978 Osorkon (the Elder)
c. 993-984 Amenemipet I
c. 1039-991 Psusennes I
c. 1043-1039 Amenemnesu
c. 1069-1043 Smendes

Intermediate Period I c. 2150-1937 B.C.

Middle Kingdom c. 1937-1759 B.C.

Dynasty XII c. 1937-1759
Reorganisation & re-establishment of rule over Lower Nubia
c. 1763-1759 Queen Sobknefru (Sebeknefru)
c. 1772-1763 Amenemhat IV
c. 1817-1772 Amenemhat III
c. 1836-1817 Senusret III (Sesostris, Senwosret)
c. 1842-1836 Senusret II
c. 1875-1840 Amenemhat II
c. 1917-1872 Senusret I
c. 1937-1908 Amenemhat I

Intermediate Period II c. 1759-1539 B.C.

Dynasty XVII c. 1641-1539
Over 15 Kings at Thebes, reunification
Senakhtenra
Taa
c. 1541-1539 Kamose
c. 1545 Seqenenre

Dynasty XVI c. 1684-1567
Over 32 Kings, dates and details uncertain - 'artificial Egyptian Dynasty'

Dynasty XV c. 1636-1528
Hyksos (Semitic-Asiatics) invasion & Dynasty
6 Kings at Avaris
Khyan
c. 1585-42 Apopis I

Dynasty XIV c. 1641-1606
Over 76 Kings, details uncertain

Dynasty XIII c. 1759-1641
Turbulent time, over 33 Kings at Memphis

Old Kingdom c. 2650-2150 B.C.

Dynasty VI c. 2323-2150
Collapse of authority in Nubia
Weni
c. 2246-2152 Pepi II (Neferekare)
c. 2255-2246 Merenra (Merenre, Mernere)
c. 2289-2255 Pepi I
c. 2323-2291 Teti

Dynasty V c. 2465-2323
Time of the god Ra
c. 2356-2323 Unis (Unas)
c. 2388-2356 Djedkara Izezi
c. 2396-2388 Menkauhor
c. 2465-2325 Neuserre (Nyuserre, Nyuserra)
c. 2419-2416 Neferefra (Raneferef)
c. 2426-2419 Shepseskara
c. 2446-2426 Neferirkara-Kakai
c. 2458-2446 Sahura
c. 2465-2458 Userkaf

Dynasty IV c. 2575-2465
Age of the pyramids, control of Lower Nubia
c. 2472-2465 Shepseskaf
c. 2490-2472 Menkaura (Menkure, Myerinus, Mykernos)
c. 2520-2494 Khaefra (Khefre, Chephren, Souphis)
c. 2528-2520 Djedefra
c. 2551-2528 Khufu (Cheops)
c. 2575-2551 Snofru (Snefru)

Intermediate Period I c. 2150-1937 B.C.

Dynasty X c.2130-2040
Over 18 Kings at Heracleopolis (near Beni Suef)

Dynasty IX c.2160-2130
Achthoes

Dynasty VIII c. 2150-2135
Over 18 Kings, details uncertain

Dynasty VII c.2181-2173

Archaic Period, Early Dynastic Period c. 2900-2650 B.C.

Dynasty II c. 2770-2650
Khasekhem (wy)
Peribsen
Sened
Weneg
Nynetjer
Hetepsekhemwy (Raneb)

Dynasty I c. 2900-2770
The first rulers are semi-mythical. Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt and the development of Administrative Districts
Qaa
Sermerkhet
Anedjib
Den
Djet
Djer
Aha
Narmer
Menes (Mena, Meni, Min)

Old Kingdom c. 2650-2150 B.C.

Dynasty III c. 2650-2575
First pyramids at Saqqara, Civil Service and absolute rule of god-king
c. 2600-2575 Huni
Imhotep
c. 2603-2600 Khaba
c. 2610-2603 Sekhemkhet
c. 2630-2610 Netjerykhet (Djoser, Zoser)
c. 2650-2630 Zanakht

Foot Notes: Many problems arise when dealing with Ancient Egypt such as: some Rulers have several names; different sources are used; the sources are not 100% accurate or comprehensive. The Dynasties, Rulers and dates in this list have been verified with at least two or more sources (see page 15) but generally follow the outline given by Bill Manley in 'The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Egypt' (pages 132-35). If a Ruler has different names or spellings, they appear in brackets. Often letters, such as 'e' for 'a' and 'k' for 'q', are inter-changeable in names. According to some sources the 11th. Dynasty straddles the 'Intermediate Period I' and the 'Middle Kingdom'. Due to all these factors these pages are not definitive, but give an outline of the Dynasties and Rulers.