

The **history of Egypt** has been long and wealthy, due to the flow of the [Nile River](#) with its [fertile banks](#) and [delta](#), as well as the accomplishments of [Egypt's](#) native inhabitants and outside influence. Much of Egypt's ancient history was a mystery until the secrets of ancient [Egyptian hieroglyphs](#) were deciphered with the discovery and help of the [Rosetta Stone](#). Among the [Seven Wonders of the Ancient World](#), is the [Great Pyramid of Giza](#). The [Library of Alexandria](#) was the only one of its kind for centuries.

Human settlement in Egypt dates back to at least 40,000 BC with [Aterian](#) tool manufacturing.^{[*[citation needed](#)*]} [Ancient Egyptian](#) civilization coalesced around 3150 BC with the political unification of [Upper and Lower Egypt](#) under the first pharaoh of the [First Dynasty](#), [Narmer](#). Predominately native Egyptian rule lasted until the conquest by the [Achaemenid Empire](#) in the sixth century BC.

In 332 BC, [Macedonian](#) ruler [Alexander the Great](#) conquered Egypt as he toppled the Achaemenids and established the [Hellenistic Ptolemaic Kingdom](#), whose first ruler was one of Alexander's former generals, [Ptolemy I Soter](#). The Ptolemies had to fight native rebellions and were involved in foreign and civil wars that led to the decline of the kingdom and its final annexation by [Rome](#). The death of [Cleopatra](#) ended the nominal independence of Egypt resulting in Egypt becoming one of the provinces of the Roman Empire.^{[*[citation needed](#)*]}

[Roman rule in Egypt](#) (including [Byzantine](#)) lasted from 30 BC to 641 AD, with a brief interlude of control by the [Sasanian Empire](#) between 619–629, known as [Sasanian Egypt](#).^[1] After the [Muslim conquest of Egypt](#), parts of Egypt became provinces of successive [Caliphates](#) and other Muslim dynasties: [Rashidun Caliphate](#) (632–661), [Umayyad Caliphate](#) (661–750), [Abbasid Caliphate](#) (750–909), [Fatimid Caliphate](#) (909–1171), [Ayyubid Sultanate](#) (1171–1260), and the [Mamluk Sultanate](#) (1250–1517). In 1517, [Ottoman](#) sultan [Selim I](#) captured Cairo, absorbing Egypt into the Ottoman Empire.^{[*[citation needed](#)*]}

[Egypt remained entirely Ottoman](#) until 1867, except during [French occupation](#) from 1798 to 1801.^{[*[citation needed](#)*]} Starting in 1867, Egypt became a nominally autonomous [tributary state](#) called the [Khedivate of Egypt](#). However, Khedivate Egypt fell under British control in 1882 following the [Anglo-Egyptian War](#). After the end of [World War I](#) and following the [Egyptian revolution of 1919](#), the [Kingdom of Egypt](#) was established. While a *de jure* independent state, the United Kingdom retained control over foreign affairs, defense, and other matters. British occupation lasted until 1954, with the [Anglo-Egyptian agreement of 1954](#).

The modern Republic of [Egypt](#) was founded in 1953, and with the complete withdrawal of British forces from the [Suez Canal](#) in 1956, it marked the first time in 2300 years that Egypt was both fully independent and ruled by native Egyptians.^{[*[citation needed](#)*]} President [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#) (president from 1956 to 1970) introduced many reforms and created the short-lived [United Arab Republic](#) (with [Syria](#)). His terms also saw the [Six-Day War](#) and the creation of the international [Non-Aligned Movement](#). His successor, [Anwar Sadat](#) (president from 1970 to 1981) changed Egypt's trajectory, departing from many of the political, and economic tenets of Nasserism, re-instituting a multi-party system, and launching the [Infitah](#) economic policy. He led Egypt in the [Yom Kippur War](#) of 1973 to regain Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had occupied since the Six-Day War of 1967. This later led to the [Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty](#).

Recent Egyptian history has been dominated by events following nearly thirty years of rule by former president [Hosni Mubarak](#). The [Egyptian revolution of 2011](#) deposed Mubarak and resulted in the first democratically elected president in Egyptian history, [Mohamed Morsi](#). Unrest after the 2011 revolution and related disputes led to the [2013 Egyptian coup d'état](#).

Prehistory (pre–3100 BC)^{[*[edit](#)*]}

Main articles: [Prehistoric Egypt](#) and [Population history of Egypt](#)

There is evidence of [petroglyphs](#) along the [Nile](#) terraces and in desert oases. In the 10th millennium BC, a culture of [hunter-gatherers](#) and [fishermen](#) was replaced by a [grain-grinding](#) culture. [Climate changes and/or overgrazing around 6000 BC began to desiccate the pastoral lands of Egypt](#), forming the [Sahara](#). Early tribal peoples migrated to the Nile River, where they developed a settled agricultural [economy](#) and more centralized society.^[2]

By about 6000 BC, a [Neolithic](#) culture rooted in the Nile Valley.^[3] During the Neolithic era, several predynastic cultures developed independently in [Upper and Lower Egypt](#). The [Badari culture](#) and the successor [Naqada](#) series are generally regarded as precursors to [dynastic Egypt](#). The earliest known Lower Egyptian site, Merimda, predates the Badarian by about seven hundred years. Contemporaneous Lower Egyptian communities coexisted with their southern counterparts for more than two thousand years, remaining culturally distinct, but maintaining frequent contact through trade. The earliest known evidence of [Egyptian hieroglyphic](#) inscriptions appeared during the predynastic period on Naqada III pottery vessels, dated to about 3200 BC.^[4]

Ancient Egypt (3100–332 BC)[[edit](#)]

Main articles: [Ancient Egypt](#) and [History of ancient Egypt](#)



The [Great Sphinx](#) and the [Pyramids of Giza](#), built during the [Old Kingdom](#).

A unified kingdom was founded 3150 BC by King [Menes](#), leading to a [series of dynasties](#) that ruled Egypt for the next three millennia. [Egyptian culture](#) flourished during this long period and remained distinctively Egyptian in its [religion](#), [arts](#), [language](#) and customs. The [first two ruling dynasties](#) of a unified Egypt set the stage for the [Old Kingdom](#) period (c. 2700–2200 BC), which constructed many [pyramids](#), most notably the [Third Dynasty pyramid of Djoser](#) and the [Fourth Dynasty Giza Pyramids](#).

The [First Intermediate Period](#) ushered in a time of political upheaval for about 150 years.^[5] Stronger Nile floods and stabilization of government, however, brought back renewed prosperity for the country in the [Middle Kingdom](#) c. 2040 BC, reaching a peak during the reign of Pharaoh [Amenemhat III](#). A [second period of disunity](#) heralded the arrival of the first foreign ruling dynasty in Egypt, that of the [Semitic-speaking Hyksos](#). The Hyksos invaders took over much of Lower Egypt around 1650 BC and founded a new capital at [Avaris](#). They were driven out by an Upper Egyptian force led by [Ahmose I](#), who founded the [Eighteenth Dynasty](#) and relocated the capital from [Memphis](#) to [Thebes](#).

The [New Kingdom](#) (c. 1550–1070 BC) began with the Eighteenth Dynasty, marking the rise of Egypt as an [international power](#) that expanded during its greatest extension to an empire as

far south as [Tombos](#) in [Nubia](#), and included parts of the [Levant](#) in the east. This period is noted for some of the most well known [Pharaohs](#), including [Hatshepsut](#), [Thutmose III](#), [Akhenaten](#) and his wife [Nefertiti](#), [Tutankhamun](#) and [Ramesses II](#). The first historically attested expression of [monotheism](#) came during this period as [Atenism](#). Frequent contacts with other nations brought new ideas to the New Kingdom. The country was later invaded and conquered by [Libyans](#), [Nubians](#) and [Assyrians](#), but native Egyptians eventually drove them out and regained control of their country.^[6]

A team led by [Johannes Krause](#) managed the first reliable sequencing of the genomes of 90 mummified individuals in 2017. Whilst not conclusive, because of the non-exhaustive time frame and restricted location that the mummies represent, their study nevertheless showed that these Ancient Egyptians "closely resembled ancient and modern Near Eastern populations, especially those in the Levant, and had almost no DNA from sub-Saharan Africa. What's more, the genetics of the mummies remained remarkably consistent even as different powers—including Nubians, Greeks, and Romans—conquered the empire."^[7]

Non-native rule over Egypt[\[edit\]](#)

Achaemenid rule[\[edit\]](#)



Egyptian soldier of the Achaemenid army, circa 470 BCE. [Xerxes I](#) tomb relief.

In the sixth century BC, the [Achaemenid Empire](#) conquered Egypt.^[citation needed] The entire [Twenty-seventh Dynasty of Egypt](#), from 525 BC to 402 BC, save for [Petubastis III](#), was an entirely [Persian](#)-ruled period, with the Achaemenid kings being granted the title of [pharaoh](#).^[citation needed]

The [Thirtieth Dynasty](#) was the last native ruling dynasty during the Pharaonic epoch.^[citation needed] It [fell to the Persians again](#) in 343 BC after the last native Pharaoh, King [Nectanebo II](#), was defeated in battle.^[citation needed]

Second Achaemenid conquest[\[edit\]](#)

The [Thirty-first Dynasty of Egypt](#), also known as the Second Egyptian [Satrapy](#), was effectively a short-living province of the Achaemenid Empire between 343 BC to 332 BC.^[8]

After an interval of independence, during which three indigenous dynasties reigned (the [28th](#), [29th](#) and [30th dynasty](#)), [Artaxerxes III](#) (358–338 BC) reconquered the Nile valley for a brief second period (343–332 BC), which is called the Thirty-first Dynasty of Egypt, thus starting another period of pharaohs of Persian origin.^[9]

Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt (332 BC–641 AD)[\[edit\]](#)

Main articles: [Ptolemaic Kingdom](#) and [Egypt \(Roman province\)](#)



The [Greek](#) Ptolemaic queen [Cleopatra](#) and her son by [Julius Caesar](#), [Caesarion](#), at the [Dendera Temple complex](#).

The [Ptolemaic Kingdom](#) was a powerful [Hellenistic state](#) extending from southern [Syria](#) in the east, to [Cyrene](#) to the west, and south to the frontier with Nubia. [Alexandria](#) became the capital city and a center of [Greek](#) culture and trade. To gain recognition by the native Egyptian populace, they named themselves as the successors to the Pharaohs. The later Ptolemies took on Egyptian traditions, had themselves portrayed on public monuments in Egyptian style and dress, and participated in Egyptian religious life.^{[10][11]}

The last ruler from the [Ptolemaic dynasty](#) was [Cleopatra](#), who committed suicide following the burial of her lover [Mark Antony](#), who had died in her arms (from a self-inflicted stab wound) after [Augustus](#) had captured Alexandria and her mercenary forces had fled.

The Ptolemies faced rebellions of native Egyptians, often caused by an unwanted regime, and were involved in foreign and civil wars that led to the decline of the kingdom and its annexation by Rome. Nevertheless, [Hellenistic culture](#) continued to thrive in Egypt well after the [Muslim conquest](#). The native Egyptian/Coptic culture continued to exist as well (the Coptic language itself was Egypt's most widely spoken language until at least the 10th century).

Egypt quickly became the Empire's [breadbasket](#) supplying the greater portion of the Empire's grain in addition to flax, papyrus, glass, and many other finished goods. The city of Alexandria became a key trading outpost for the Roman Empire (by some accounts, the most important for a time). Shipping from Egypt regularly reached India and Ethiopia among other international destinations.^[12] It was also a leading (perhaps *the* leading) scientific and

technological center of the Empire. Scholars such as [Ptolemy](#), [Hypatia](#), and [Heron](#) broke new ground in astronomy, mathematics, and other disciplines. Culturally, the city of Alexandria at times rivaled Rome in its importance. ^[13]

Christianity reached Egypt relatively early in the evangelist period of the first century (traditionally credited to [Mark the Evangelist](#)). ^[14] Alexandria, Egypt and Antioch, Syria quickly became the leading centers of Christianity. ^[15] [Diocletian](#)'s reign marked the transition from the [Roman](#) to the [Byzantine](#) era in Egypt, when a great number of Egyptian Christians were persecuted. The [New Testament](#) had by then been translated into Egyptian. After the [Council of Chalcedon](#) in AD 451, a distinct [Egyptian Coptic Church](#) was firmly established. ^[16]

Sassanid Egypt[\[edit\]](#)

[Sasanian Egypt](#) (known in [Middle Persian](#) sources as *Agīptus*) refers to the brief rule of Egypt and parts of [Libya](#) by the [Sasanian Empire](#), which lasted from 619 to 629, ^[citation needed] until the Sasanian rebel [Shahrbaraz](#) made an alliance with the Byzantine emperor [Heraclius](#) and had control over Egypt returned to him. ^[citation needed]

Arab and Ottoman Egypt (641–1882)[\[edit\]](#)

Main articles: [History of Muslim Egypt](#) and [History of Ottoman Egypt](#)



[Selim I](#) (1470–1520), conquered Egypt



The [Hanging Church](#) of Cairo, first built in the 3rd or 4th century, is one of the most famous [Coptic Orthodox](#) churches in Egypt.

The Byzantines were able to regain control of the country after a brief [Persian](#) invasion early in the 7th century, until 639–42, when Egypt was invaded and [conquered by the Arab Islamic Empire](#). The final loss of Egypt was of incalculable significance to the Byzantine Empire, which had relied on Egypt for many agricultural and manufactured goods.

When they defeated the Byzantine Armies in Egypt, the Arabs brought [Sunni Islam](#) to the country. Early in this period, Egyptians began to blend their new faith with their Christian traditions as well as other indigenous beliefs and practices, leading to various [Sufi](#) orders that have flourished to this day.^[14] These earlier rites had survived the period of Coptic Christianity.^[17]

Muslim rulers nominated by the [Islamic Caliphate](#) remained in [control of Egypt](#) for the next six centuries, with [Cairo](#) as the seat of the Caliphate under the [Fatimids](#). With the end of the [Kurdish Ayyubid dynasty](#), the [Mamluks](#), a [Turco-Circassian](#) military caste, took control about AD 1250. By the late 13th century, Egypt linked the Red Sea, India, Malaya, and East Indies.^[18] The Greek and Coptic languages and cultures went into a steep decline in favor of Arabic culture (though Coptic managed to last as a spoken language until the 17th century and remains a liturgical language today). The Mamluks continued to govern the country until the [conquest of Egypt](#) by the [Ottoman Turks](#) in 1517, after which it became a province of the [Ottoman Empire](#). The mid-14th-century [Black Death](#) killed about 40% of the country's population.^[19]

After the 15th century, the Ottoman invasion pushed the Egyptian system into decline. The defensive militarization damaged its civil society and economic institutions.^[18] The weakening of the economic system combined with the effects of plague left Egypt vulnerable to foreign invasion. Portuguese traders took over their trade.^[18] Egypt suffered six famines between 1687 and 1731.^[20] The 1784 [famine](#) cost it roughly one-sixth of its population.^[21]

The brief [French invasion of Egypt](#) led by [Napoleon Bonaparte](#) began in 1798. The expulsion of the French in 1801 by [Ottoman](#), [Mamluk](#), and British forces was followed by four years of anarchy in which Ottomans, Mamluks, and [Albanians](#) — who were nominally in the service of the Ottomans – wrestled for power. Out of this chaos, the commander of the Albanian regiment, [Muhammad Ali](#) ([Kavalali Mehmed Ali Pasha](#)) emerged as a dominant figure and in 1805 was acknowledged by the [Sultan](#) in [Istanbul](#) as his [viceroy](#) in Egypt; the title implied subordination to the Sultan but this was in fact a polite fiction: Ottoman power in Egypt was finished and Muhammad Ali, an ambitious and able leader, established a [dynasty](#) that was to rule Egypt until the revolution of 1952. In later years, the dynasty became a British puppet.^[22]

His primary focus was military: he annexed [Northern Sudan](#) (1820–1824), [Syria](#) (1833), and parts of [Arabia](#) and [Anatolia](#); but in 1841 the European powers, fearful lest he topple the Ottoman Empire itself, forced him to return most of his conquests to the Ottomans, but he kept the Sudan and his title to Egypt was made hereditary. A more lasting result of his military ambition is that it required him to modernize the country. Eager to adopt the military (and therefore industrial) techniques of the great powers, he sent students to the West and invited training missions to Egypt. He built industries, a system of canals for irrigation and transport, and reformed the civil service.^[22]

The introduction in 1820 of long-staple cotton, the Egyptian variety of which became notable, transformed its agriculture into a cash-crop [monoculture](#) before the end of the century. The social effects of this were enormous: land ownership became concentrated and many foreigners arrived, shifting production towards international markets.^[22]

British Protectorate (1882–1953)[\[edit\]](#)

Main articles: [History of Egypt under the British](#) and [History of modern Egypt](#)



Nationalists demonstrating in [Cairo](#), 1919

British indirect rule lasted from 1882, when the British succeeded in defeating the Egyptian Army at [Tel el-Kebir](#) in September and took control of the country, to the [1952 Egyptian revolution](#) which made Egypt a republic and when British advisers were expelled.

Muhammad Ali was succeeded briefly by his son [Ibrahim](#) (in September 1848), then by a grandson [Abbas I](#) (in November 1848), then by [Said](#) (in 1854), and [Isma'il](#) (in 1863). Abbas I was cautious. Said and Ismail were ambitious developers, but they spent beyond their means. The [Suez Canal](#), built in partnership with the French, was completed in 1869. The cost of this and other projects had two effects: it led to enormous debt to European banks, and caused popular discontent because of the onerous taxation it required. In 1875 Ismail was forced to sell Egypt's share in the canal to the British Government. Within three years this led to the imposition of British and French [controllers](#) who sat in the Egyptian cabinet, and, "with the financial power of the bondholders behind them, were the real power in the Government."^[23]

Local dissatisfaction with Ismail and with European intrusion led to the formation of the first nationalist groupings in 1879, with [Ahmad Urabi](#) a prominent figure. In 1882 he became head of a nationalist-dominated ministry committed to democratic reforms including parliamentary control of the budget. Fearing a reduction of their control, Britain and France intervened militarily, bombarding Alexandria and crushing the Egyptian army at the [battle of Tel el-Kebir](#).^[24] They reinstalled Ismail's son [Tewfik](#) as figurehead of a *de facto* British protectorate.^[25]

In 1914, the Protectorate was made official, and the title of the [head of state](#), which in 1867 had changed from *pasha* to *khedive*, was changed again to *sultan*, to repudiate the vestigial [suzerainty](#) of the Ottoman sultan, who was backing the [Central powers](#) in the [First World](#)

War. [Abbas II](#) was deposed as khedive and replaced by his uncle, [Hussein Kamel](#), as sultan.^[26]

In 1906, the [Dinshaway Incident](#) prompted many neutral Egyptians to join the nationalist movement. After the First World War, [Saad Zaghlul](#) and the [Wafd Party](#) led the Egyptian nationalist movement to a majority at the local Legislative Assembly. When the British exiled Zaghlul and his associates to [Malta](#) on 8 March 1919, the country arose in its [first modern revolution](#). The revolt led the [UK government](#) to issue a [unilateral declaration of Egypt's independence](#) on 22 February 1922.^[27]

The [new government](#) drafted and implemented a [constitution](#) in 1923 based on a [parliamentary system](#). Saad Zaghlul was popularly elected as [Prime Minister of Egypt](#) in 1924. In 1936, the [Anglo-Egyptian Treaty](#) was concluded. Continued instability due to remaining British influence and increasing political involvement by the king led to the dissolution of the parliament in a military *coup d'état* known as the [1952 Revolution](#). The [Free Officers Movement](#) forced King [Farouk](#) to abdicate in support of his son [Fuad](#).

British military presence in Egypt lasted until 1954.^[28]

Republican Egypt (since 1953)[\[edit\]](#)

Main articles: [History of the Republic of Egypt](#) and [History of modern Egypt](#)



Celebrating the signing of the Camp David Accords: [Menachem Begin](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Anwar Al Sadat](#).

On 18 June 1953, the [Egyptian Republic](#) was declared, with General [Muhammad Naguib](#) as the first President of the Republic. Naguib was forced to resign in 1954 by [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#) – the real architect of the 1952 movement – and was later put under [house arrest](#).

Reign of Nasser[\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#)

Nasser assumed power as President in June 1956. British forces completed their withdrawal from the occupied Suez Canal Zone on 13 June 1956. He [nationalized](#) the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956, prompting the 1956 [Suez Crisis](#).

In 1958, Egypt and Syria formed a sovereign union known as the [United Arab Republic](#). The union was short-lived, ending in 1961 when [Syria](#) seceded, thus ending the union. During most of its existence, the United Arab Republic was also in a loose [confederation](#) with [North Yemen](#) (formerly the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen) known as the [United Arab States](#).

In the 1967 [Six-Day War](#), Israel invaded and occupied Egypt's [Sinai Peninsula](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#), which Egypt had occupied since the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#). Three years later (1970), President Nasser died and was succeeded by [Anwar Sadat](#).

Reign of Sadat[\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Anwar el-Sadat](#)

Sadat switched Egypt's [Cold War](#) allegiance from the Soviet Union to the United States, expelling Soviet advisors in 1972. He launched the [Infitah](#) economic reform policy, while clamping down on religious and secular opposition.

In 1973, Egypt, along with Syria, launched the [October War](#), a surprise attack against the Israeli forces occupying the Sinai Peninsula and the [Golan Heights](#). It was an attempt to regain part of the Sinai territory that Israel had captured six years earlier. Sadat hoped to seize some territory through military force, and then regain the rest of the peninsula by diplomacy. The conflict sparked an international crisis between the US and the USSR, both of whom intervened. The second UN-mandated ceasefire halted military action. While the war ended with a military stalemate, it presented Sadat with a political victory that later allowed him to regain the Sinai in return for peace with Israel.^[29]

Sadat made a historic visit to Israel in 1977, which led to the 1979 [peace treaty](#) in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Sadat's initiative sparked enormous controversy in the [Arab world](#) and led to Egypt's expulsion from the [Arab League](#), but it was supported by most Egyptians.^[30]^[*dubious* – *discuss*] On 6 October 1981, [Sadat and six diplomats were assassinated](#) while observing a military parade commemorating the eighth anniversary of the October 1973 War. He was succeeded by [Hosni Mubarak](#).