



Napoleon Bonaparte's Occupation of Egypt

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Abstract

The periodization of Islamic history is marked by periods of progress and decline, as well as periods of renewal in the Islamic world, one of which was in Egypt, which began with the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte. The arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte certainly brought about significant changes for Muslims. The purpose of this journal is to explain that the revival of Muslims was marked by Napoleon Bonaparte's ideas and strategies in reforming Muslims in Egypt. The method used in this article is to collect data from books and journals that support the research. The results of this study show that Napoleon Bonaparte's main objectives in Egypt were to block British access to India, control the Mediterranean Sea, and introduce science to Egypt. The influence of Napoleon's expedition in Egypt brought about changes in various fields, including mental attitudes, values, politics, science and culture, as well as industry and trade. The results of this research can be used as information for students to continue to bring about change for the development of Islam.

INTRODUCTION

The historical background of Egypt can be seen when Egypt was under Roman rule in the East with Byzantium as its capital, which marked the beginning of Egypt's rise in the early Islamic century, developing into a city and country that was a destination for everyone (Fatmal et al., 2025; Margianto, 2023). Egypt became very attractive during the Roman rule because it had potential that was traditionally rooted in Egypt.

From an ideological perspective, the dominance of Egyptian-style reform also occurred in changes to Islamic perspectives or ways of thinking. According to Burhanuddin, there were three efforts made by reformers to spur the reformist movement, namely organizing, establishing modern Islamic educational institutions, and publishing magazines and newspapers (Adelia Tamo Ina & Malik Bambang, 2024). According to him, these three things are considered in accordance with the teachings of Islam and the three elements of renewal cannot be separated.

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The modern period in Islamic history, which began in 1800 AD, was marked by the emergence of ideas and movements for renewal (Mahfud, 2020). This era is also known as the Islamic revival, because Muslims, who had previously been frozen and static, became aware and woke up to catch up and overcome their backwardness. In this modern period, Islamic countries that had previously been under the heel of colonialists began to strive for independence and build themselves towards a better future.

These efforts at self-liberation yielded remarkable results in the twentieth century with the independence of Islamic countries one by one, so that by the end of the twentieth century it could be said that there was not a single Islamic country or country with a Muslim majority that was colonized (Muzammil, 2022; Siregar, 2023). Egypt is a place steeped in political and historical significance. How could it not be, when Egypt seems to have been born to always play a role and contribute to the course of Islamic history itself (Saiin et al., 2021). In terms of economy and politics, it has made a significant contribution, especially in the trade sector and the port of Alexandria, which has been a busy port since the Eastern Roman Empire (Firdaus & Roza, 2023). Meanwhile, in terms of the development of Islamic law, Egypt is a region that helped give birth to the form and school of Islamic law, especially with the presence of Imam Syafi'i, whose laws are very familiar to us.

When Napoleon Bonaparte set foot in Egypt in 1798, Egypt was in a very dire state. Politically, the country was divided by two destructive forces: the Mamluk dynasty, which had ruled since the thirteenth century, and the forces supported by the Ottoman government in Istanbul. The influence of Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt brought about changes in various fields, including mentalities, attitudes, values, politics, science and culture, as well as industry and trade (Herman et al., 2024).

METHODS

The data collection technique used in this article is to collect data from books obtained from Google and Ipusnas, articles that support the research, which are collected, selected according to the object of study, and typed in summary form (Engkizar et al., 2024). Data analysis was conducted by collecting literature, reviewing and identifying it, and seeking solutions to existing problems until the final stage of drawing conclusions from all the data obtained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon's original Italian name (1769-1821) was Napileema Bonaparte. Napoleon was the fourth child of Carlo Bonaparte and Letitia Romalio. His father was from Tuscany and immigrated to Corsica in the sixteenth century AD. From the age of nine, Napoleon attended school in France, and like other French children, he received an education that followed French methods and ideas (Karomah, 2019). He received three types of education: at the College de Autun for three months, at a military school for five years, and then at the Paris Military Academy for one year. He ranked forty-two out of fifty-one participants and was subsequently appointed second lieutenant of artillery in the La Fire regiment.

Napoleon's name became famous during the First Coalition War due to his success in leading Francis's army to defeat the British at Toulon in 1793. Two years later, he succeeded in securing the Francis government from the threat of rebels who supported the deposed King Louis XVI. Meanwhile, the war at sea against Britain as part of the Francis revolution continued. The leaders of the French Revolution, who were ambitious to invade mainland England, appointed Napoleon to lead an army to achieve this goal (Nazirah et al., 2024). After conducting a quick inspection, the

French Revolution continued. The leaders of the French Revolution, who were ambitious to invade mainland England, appointed Napoleon to lead an army to achieve this goal.

After conducting a quick inspection in February 1798, Napoleon concluded that military operations would not be possible unless Francis had control of the seas, unless he proposed that Francis, in order to defeat Britain first, should attack Britain's sources of wealth, including by occupying Egypt and threatening its trade routes to India (Hidayatullah et al., 2024). By occupying Egypt, Napoleon predicted that Britain would be provoked into fighting in Egyptian territory, at which point Britain would be easier to defeat. After conducting a quick inspection in February 1798, Napoleon concluded that military operations would not be possible unless Francis had control of the seas. By occupying Egypt, Napoleon predicted that Britain would be provoked into fighting in the Egyptian region, and that would be the moment when Britain could be more easily defeated (Engkizar et al., 2023).

Background to Napoleon Bonaparte's arrival in Egypt

After the completion of the 1789 Revolution, France began to become a major power that faced competition and challenges from Britain. At that time, Britain had increased its interests in India and, in order to sever communications between Britain in the West and India in the East, Napoleon saw that Egypt needed to be placed under French rule (Junaidi & Artikel, 2022; Zayyadi & Faiz, 2020). In addition, France needed new markets for its industrial products. Napoleon himself seemed to have other ulterior motives. Alexander the Great had once ruled over Europe and Asia as far as India, and Napoleon wanted to follow in Alexander's footsteps. The strategic location to rule over a large empire, as he envisioned, was Cairo, not Rome or Paris. These were some of the reasons that drove France and Napoleon to occupy Egypt.

At the time of Napoleon's invasion, Egypt was under the rule of the Mamluks, even though it had been conquered by Sultan Salim in 1517. However, in reality, this region was still part of the Ottoman Empire. But after the sultans' power weakened, Egypt began to break away from Istanbul's rule and became an autonomous region (Haiqal & Amiruddin, 2024; Rosidah et al., n.d.). After the fall of the prestige of the Ottoman sultans, they no longer wanted to submit to Istanbul and even refused to send the taxes they collected by force from the Egyptian people to Istanbul. Sheikh Al-Balad was the title given to their leader, who was effectively the king of Egypt at that time. Because they were harsh and usually only knew Turkish and were not fluent in Arabic, their relationship with the Egyptian people was not very good. Therefore, Napoleon immediately launched an attack on Egypt because he knew that relations between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were poor, even bad (Mona Nopitasari, 2023). Napoleon and his troops took advantage of this situation to quickly occupy Egypt.

On June 2, 1798, Napoleon's expedition landed in Alexandria (Egypt) and defeated the Mamluks, successfully taking control of Cairo (Fauzi, 2017). After Napoleon left, he was replaced by General Kleber, who was defeated in battle against the British. At the same time, the army of Sultan Salim III (Ottoman Turkey) arrived in 1789-1807 AD in order to expel the French from Egypt. One of the Ottoman Turkish soldiers was Muhammad Ali, who later became the governor of Egypt under Ottoman Turkey (Permata et al., 2023).

Harun Nasution described how Napoleon came to Egypt not only with his army, but also with five hundred civilians and five hundred women. Among them were one hundred and sixty-seven experts in various fields of science, who brought two printing presses with Latin, Arabic, and Greek fonts, for the purpose of scientific research, which eventually led to the establishment of a scientific institution called the Institut d'Egypte, consisting of mathematics, natural sciences, political

economy, and literature and art. This institution was open to scholars in particular, with the hope of increasing knowledge about Egypt and initiating direct contact with European civilization, which was new and foreign to them (Engkizar et al., 2022).

The printing equipment brought by Napoleon became the Balaq printing company, which continues to operate today (Subhan, 2021). Meanwhile, the modern equipment at the Institute, such as microscopes, telescopes, and other experimental tools, as well as the French people's dedication to their work, were unfamiliar and astonishing to the Egyptians at that time. The reasons for Napoleon's arrival in Egypt were: i) Egypt was the gateway to the Far East. Whoever controlled it would control the Far East, as Egypt is located between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, ii) industry had developed in Europe and needed markets. The country that controlled the East would control the markets, iii) Napoleon's failure to attack Palestine and Syria caused France to shift its focus to other areas (Supriadi, 2021). Egypt was a strategic area.

New Ideas Produced by the French Revolution

First, a republican system of government in which the head of state is elected for a fixed term, subject to the constitution and can be removed by Parliament. Meanwhile, the system in place at that time was absolute monarchy, in which the king ruled for life and was succeeded by his son, and was not subject to a constitution or parliament, as neither existed (Suliki, 2021). Second, the idea of equality. This meant equal status and participation of the people in government affairs, and the establishment of a state body consisting of Al-Azhar scholars and business leaders from Cairo and other regions (Abrar et al., 2025; Hendra Kholid & Maulida Rahmawati, 2020). Third, the idea of nationality, which states that the French are a nation (nasion) and the Mamluks are foreigners who came to Egypt even though they are Muslim (Patriana et al., 2024). At that time, there were only Muslims and no awareness of differences in nationality and ethnicity.

The influence achieved by French civilians in Egypt

They built irrigation canals in the Nile Valley, doubling agricultural yields. In the field of history, they discovered the famous Rosetta Stone. In the field of government, they introduced the idea of a system of government in which the head of state was elected for a fixed term and was subject to legislation. This was, of course, difficult for the rulers of the time to accept (Alam & Cahyono, 2022). This opened the eyes of Islamic thinkers to make changes, leaving backwardness behind and moving towards modernization in various fields, especially education. The reform efforts were pioneered by Muhammad Ali Pasha, followed by other thinkers (Andriani & Susmihara, 2024; Rinjani & Napu, 2022). Meanwhile, what was happening and developing in Egypt at that time included education that was very doctrinal, with a method of mastering knowledge by memorization without any review or examination of understanding, so that Islamic teachings were simply poured into the heads of students.

Although Napoleon ruled Egypt for only about three years, he left a huge impact on the lives of the Egyptian people. Napoleon Bonaparte ruled Egypt from 1798 AD. This was a new moment in the history of Muslims, especially in Egypt, which led to an awakening of awareness of their weaknesses and backwardness. Napoleon Bonaparte's presence brought not only a strong army, but also scientists with a set of scientific equipment to conduct research (Cici & Banu Irfan, 2022). In addition, according to Ramayulis, Napoleon's expedition to Egypt had several effects, including: i) Napoleon's arrival opened the eyes of the Egyptian people to their backwardness, ii) it made the Egyptian people realize that the assumption that Mamluk culture, science, and military power were the best had been shattered. French science was far superior to the science they had possessed until then, iii) it made the Egyptians realize that the Mamluks were not Egyptians and that the

Egyptians were more powerful in their own country.

CONCLUSION

Napoleon's presence was very significant for the emergence of Western education and teaching patterns, which would gradually change the perceptions and thought patterns of Muslims, and this would certainly give rise to a spirit of study and renewal in Islam. Thus, in its development, the pattern of contemporary Islamic renewal in Egypt has been directed towards the following: First, the renewal of the system of thinking, meaning that Muslims must abandon traditional dogmatic thinking patterns. Second, efforts to build a spirit of collegiality among the ummah, so that they have the opportunity to actualize their teachings, especially through active participation in the political, economic, and legal arenas of the world, because until now, Muslims have been unable to actively participate in world affairs.

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