

**Muhammad Ali - Founder of Modern
Egypt - Pt. I**

Lead: When Napoleon Bonaparte in his search for military glory and territorial expansion, invaded Egypt in 1798 he threw the social and political structure of the nation into chaos. Many mark this time as the beginning of modern Egypt.

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: When the French fleet appeared off Alexandria at the end of the eighteenth century, in many ways Egypt was little changed since medieval times. Under the nominal rule of the Ottoman

Empire, actual power in Egypt had been held by the Mamluk clan since the 1200s. Ninety-percent of the population were peasants or *fellahin* who worked huge Mamluk estates and paid tribute in what was little more than a system of feudalism. Since the *fellahin* owed their allegiance to their feudal Mamluk landlords, Egypt lacked a strong central government. When Napoleon defeated the Mamluk armies at the Battle of the Pyramids, the internal social structure of Egypt began to disintegrate.

Napoleon's African ambitions were soon frustrated by Admiral Horatio Nelson and the British fleet who destroyed French naval forces at the so-called Battle of the Nile in September, 1798. His communications with France cut off, Napoleon realized the campaign

was doomed. He abandoned his army and went home to France. The French who remained were faced with attacks by the British, but also by the Ottoman Turks who sent an expeditionary force led by a powerful contingent of Albanian troops. By 1803 both the French and the British had pulled out and a coup in the Ottoman Army left control of Egypt in the hands of the Albanians and their leader Muhammad Ali.

An orphan raised in the home of the Ottoman Governor of Macedonia, after several years as a tobacco trader Muhammad went to Egypt as a part of the expeditionary force to throw out the French. He emerged from the coup as Ottoman viceroy or pasha and slowly began to consolidate his power, ruthlessly eliminating the Mamluks, and creating a

**central government almost from scratch.
Next time: Muhammed Ali, the founder
of modern Egypt.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is
Dan Roberts.**

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Resources

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