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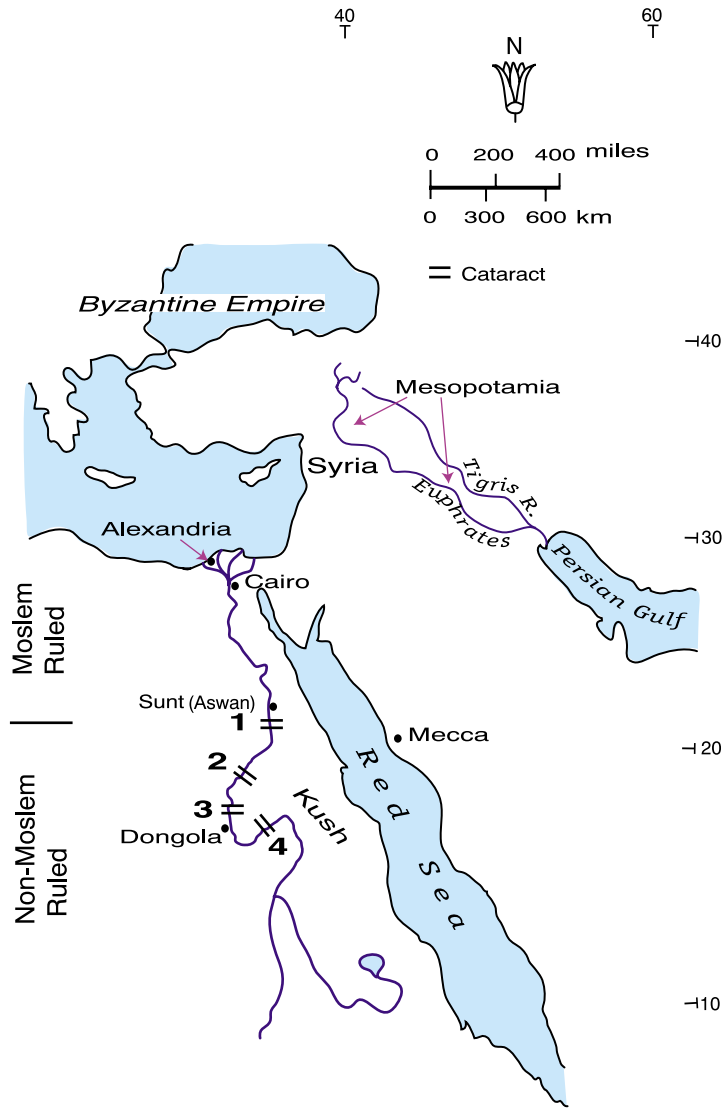
Christians Sell Out Egypt to the Arabs

Christians' Gift to Mohammed

In 627 CE, when Mohammed, the Islam founder, consolidated his power in the Arab Peninsula, and felt himself strong enough to challenge the submission of the rulers of the world to Islam, his new religion, he caused letters to be written to several neighboring rulers, including letters to George, wrongly called the Mukaukas, governor of Alexandria and the Melkite Viceroy of Egypt (621-631); to Chosroes, King of Persia; and to Heraclius, Emperor of the Romans. All contained the same claim of allegiance to Islam and to the Arabian prophet as *Vicegerent of the Most High*.

The Monophysites, who never had any loyalty to Egypt, manifested such disloyalty when the Christian Viceroy of Egypt promised to consider the message, and treated Mohammed's envoy, Hatib, with all honor. The Christian Viceroy sent back with his reply some valuable presents, which included two Christian maidens (Mary and Shirin), the mule Duldul, the ass Nafur, and a bag of money.

Mohammed, who already had nine wives, fell in love with Mary. The Christian Mary became Mohammed's sweetheart and bore him a son. The baby died under suspicious circumstances. Mary died in 636 CE.



Division of Egypt under Moslem Rule

Islam Rises Out of the Rubble

Because of the extensive fighting between the Byzantines and Persians, both victor and vanquished were drained of strength, which provided further motivation for Mohammed and his forces to declare Islamic *jihads* against them. The relatively easy early victories of the Arabs over their powerful neighbors opened the riches of the Middle East to the warriors of Islam.

Syria was occupied by 639 CE, and at the same time Moslem armies were conquering Mesopotamia and Persia. Egypt, because of its wealth, attracted the Arab leaders very early. In December 639 CE, Amr ibn el-As set out to conquer Egypt with a few thousand men. His task was relatively simple, because of the active support of the Christian Monophysites, the so-called *Copts*.

After less than two years of fights and political maneuvering between the Arab invaders and the Byzantines, Cyrus went to meet the Arab commander at Babylon near Cairo, and both signed a treaty on November 8, 641, which called for the total withdrawal of Roman soldiers, imposing a tribute of two dinars a head on all able-bodied males, and a tax on all landowners. The only parties to the treaty were the Moslem Arabs and the Christians, who passed along a country that was not theirs.

Not yet interested in converting the people to Islam, the Moslem Arab conquerors favored the Monophysite Church, using it to assist them in collecting the poll-tax levied on all non-Moslems, and in return, guaranteed the right of the Christian population to continue to practice their religion.

The final defeat of Byzantium in Egypt came when their soldiers evacuated Alexandria, in 642 CE.