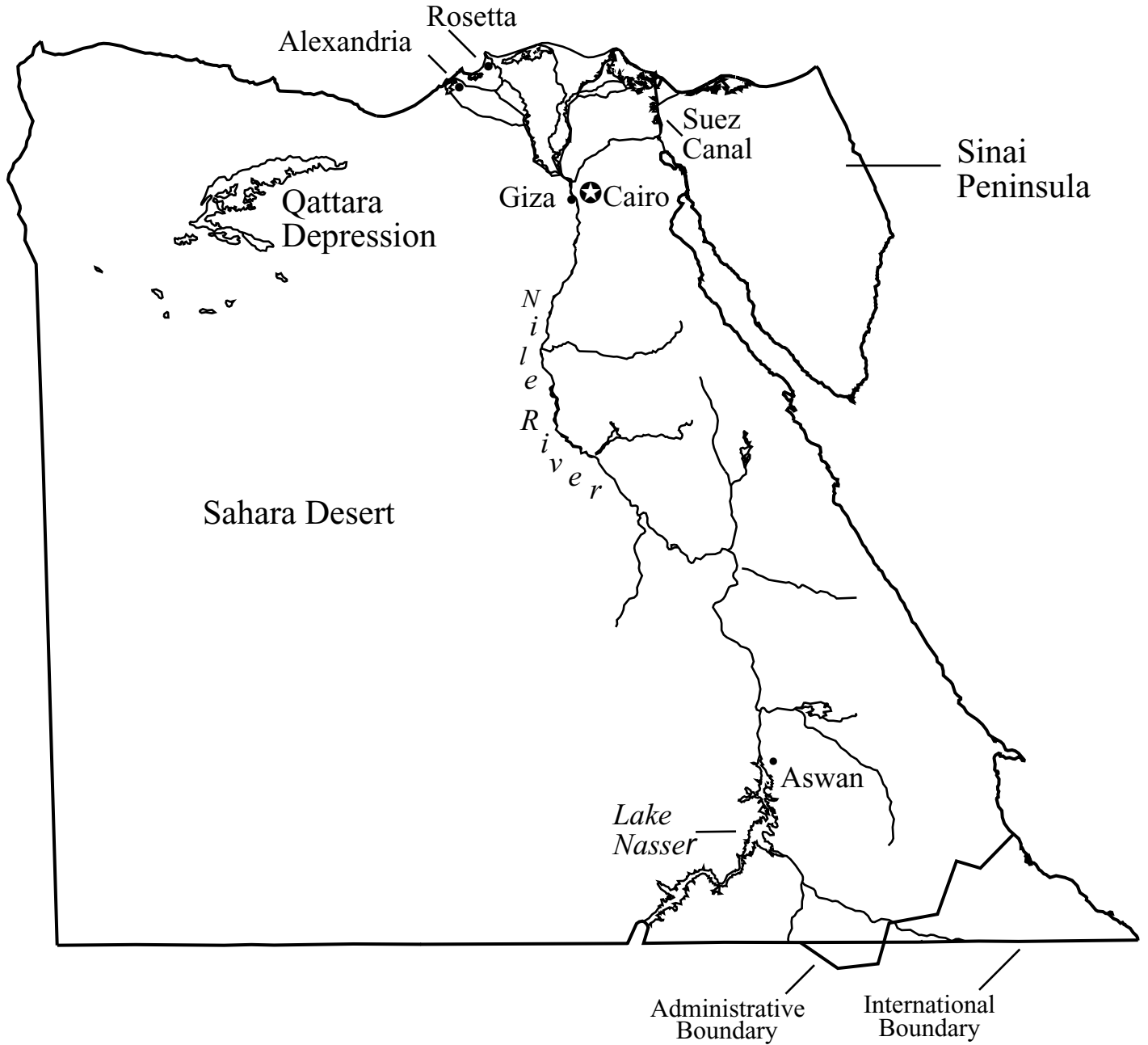


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EGYPT





Egypt

Archaeological records of ancient Egypt testify to a civilization which dates back to 4000 B.C. This ancient society of African people is often referred to as the cradle of western civilization, and indeed Egypt is credited with many inventions and “firsts” that have propelled our world forward. Irrigation, the plow, linen, the twelve-month calendar, and even our first paper are among the many contributions to civilization made by this respected African nation.

Official Name—Arab Republic of Egypt (Jumhriyah Misr al-Arabiya)

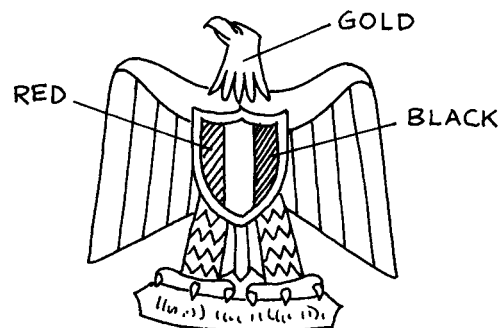
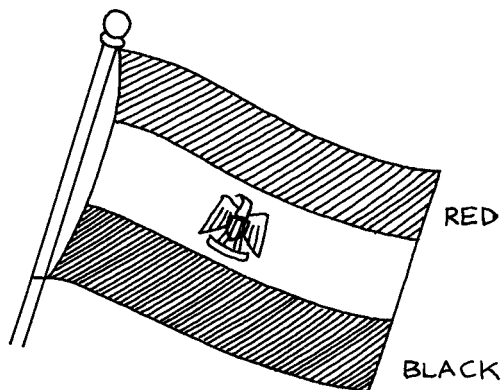
Area—356,667 square miles (923,767.5 square kilometers). Egypt is approximately the same size as Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas combined. Egypt is also similar in size to Nigeria, which claims 356,667 square miles.

Continent—Egypt is located in the northeastern corner of the African continent.

Capital—Cairo is the capital of Egypt, with an estimated population of 6,452,000.

Languages—Arabic is the official language of Egypt. English and French are also spoken.

Flag—The flag of Egypt is divided into three horizontal stripes. The red stripe at the top signifies the determination of the people. The middle white section represents the peaceful revolution which made the country a republic. The black stripe on the bottom is symbolic of the time before Egypt became a republic. Featured in the center of the white stripe is Egypt’s coat of arms. The gold-colored eagle clutching Egypt’s banner in its claws symbolizes a Muslim warrior.



Population

According to the official 1990* estimate, there are 54,139,000 people that make Egypt their home. About 90 percent of the people are native Egyptians and are of eastern Hamitic stock. A tribe of Nubian people is located in southern Egypt, and small numbers of Bedouin nomads, Greek, Italian, Syro-Lebanese, and Jewish people also populate the country.

* Note: 1990 estimate was obtained from the 1992 World Almanac.

Religion

The vast majority of all Egyptians—approximately 94 percent—are followers of the Sunni sect of Islam and are called *Muslims*. Islam means “submission,” and Muslim means “one who submits.” The Islamic faith is divided into two primary sects: the Sunni and the Shia. The division exists because of a difference in opinion about how to select leaders. The Sunni believe leaders should be elected, while the Shiites believe that leaders must be descended from a prophet. The two groups also interpret the Qur’an differently.

The Qur’an is the book of Islamic Scripture—the words of God (*Allah*) revealed to the Prophet Mohammed to instruct others. Mohammed is considered the last and best prophet out of Adam, Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammed. He was able to convince a polytheistic society to worship only one god.

The five pillars of Islam outline the duties of a Muslim: to believe only in Allah, to give to the poor, to fast during the day for the month of Ramadan (*the ninth month*), to make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca during one’s lifetime, and to pray five times a day. Muslims will go to a mosque to pray whenever possible, but it is also common to see people pray while kneeling on prayer rugs on the streets and in shops. While praying, it is important to face in the direction of Mecca. This passage from the Qur’an is repeated:

*Praise be to God, the Lord of the World,
The compassionate, the merciful,
King on the day of reckoning.
Thee only do we worship and to Thee do we cry for help.
Guide Thou us on the straight path,
The path of those to whom Thou has been gracious,
With whom Thou are not angry, and who go not astray.*

The Islamic religion believes Satan can mislead people who, unless they repent, will then suffer in Hell. The faithful will be rewarded in Paradise.