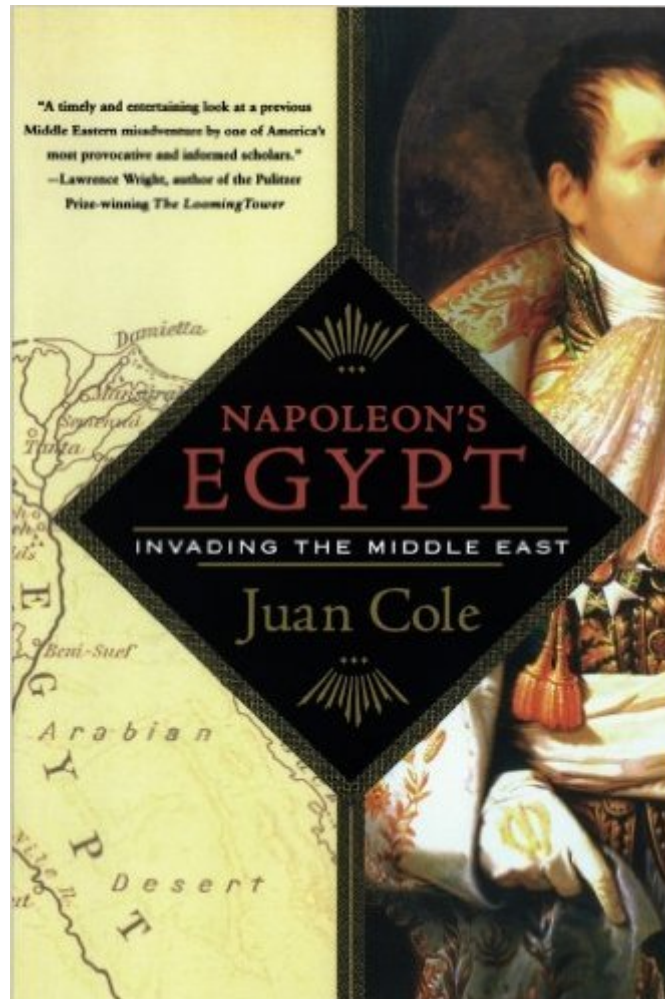


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Napoleon's Egypt: Invading The Middle East



Synopsis

In this vivid and timely history, Juan Cole tells the story of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. Revealing the young general's reasons for leading the expedition against Egypt in 1798 and showcasing his fascinating views of the Orient, Cole delves into the psychology of the military titan and his entourage. He paints a multi-faceted portrait of the daily travails of the soldiers in Napoleon's army, including how they imagined Egypt, how their expectations differed from what they found, and how they grappled with military challenges in a foreign land. Cole ultimately reveals how Napoleon's invasion, the first modern attempt to invade the Arab world, invented and crystallized the rhetoric of liberal imperialism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was difficult to rate. Where it was good, it was very good. Where it was bad, it was very bad. So, I compromised at three stars. At first I almost didn't buy it. The topic was intriguing because I have an interest in the Napoleonic wars. But I looked on the back cover and found five intellectually bankrupt quotes from academic reviewers who were, directly or indirectly, trying to draw parallels between Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Only a politically fevered college sophomore, or an academic desperate to be a star at their next wine and cheese party, could make such an equivalency, moral or otherwise. So, I feared for what might be in the book. I bought it anyway, and was pleasantly surprised by most of it. Cole does an excellent job of taking you through (part of) Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. Using accounts drawn from contemporary journals, he weaves together numerous tales of adventure and misadventure into an

interesting whole. At the same time, he provides genuine insight into the complex clash of two very different cultures. That's the good part. The bad part comes at the end of the book. Try to imagine yourself listening to a detailed account of a football game; then, when the commentator gets to the fourth quarter, he says: "Then they ran a bunch of plays and everyone went home." That is basically what Cole does to the reader. The siege of El Arish, the capture and sack of Jaffa and of Gaza, are handled in THREE SENTENCES! The siege of Acre gets a whole paragraph; but the two-month battle, in which a British Naval officer defeated Napoleon on land (!), is reduced to "[Cezzar Pasha] enjoyed naval backing from the British." Unbelievable!

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