Muhammad Ali Pasha

(rule . 1805– 1849) , (died . 1849)

He was an adventurer, throughout the years he progressed to be the ruler of Egypt and a formidable challenger to the Ottoman royal house’s monopoly over the right to rule the Ottoman Empire . Born in Kavala in northern Greece ; most historians assume that he was an Albanian because the military unit he commanded when sent to Egypt was made up of Albanian irregular troops . But he may have been a Muslim of Greek or Slavic origin . European visitors to his court reported that he spoke fluent Greek .

When the French forces that were initially commanded by Napoleon Bonaparte , had withdrew from Egypt in 1801, Ottoman Sultan Selim III (rule. 1789–1807) sent an Albanian unit to restore his sovereignty over the country . Muhammad Ali assumed command of the unit in 1803; in 1804 he succeeded in temporarily displacement the remaining Egyptian Mamluk elite out of Cairo . By May 1805, the *Ulema* of Cairo was growing increasingly fearful of the anarchy in the city and complained to the chief judge that the Ottoman governor (Hurşit Pasha) was not doing enough to control his troops .

When he failed to act , the *Ulema* appointed Muhammad Ali viceroy of Egypt . The government in Istanbul later confirmed that appointment. The Ottoman government was further distracted from affairs in Egypt by the coup in Istanbul that deposed Sultan Selim III in 1807. In the absence of direct Ottoman involvement in Egyptian politics , Muhammad Ali secured his position by eliminating his only possible local rivals , the Mamluks. This he accomplished in 1811 when he invited the Mamluks to a feast and then executed them . The few who escaped the massacre left to Upper Egypt , and since then, they no longer offered a threat to Muhammad Ali’s ambitions.