

## **MENOU, JACQUES FRANCOIS 'ABDALLAH**

A French general born in 1750 in Boussay de Loches (Touraine) and died in Venice in 1810. He took part in the French Expedition to Egypt in 1798 and was [military](#) governor of the province of Rosetta until Kléber gave him the command of Cairo. After the [murder](#) of Kléber by a Syrian Muslim, he succeeded him in the supreme command of the French Oriental Army.

From the beginning, Menou had been a burning advocate of Napoleon's religious and colonial policy. [Napoleon](#) had tried to win the sympathies of the Muslim population by systematic [propaganda](#) and [demonstration](#) of his pro-Islamic attitudes. However, Menou's support for Islam soon went beyond mere manifestations of respect. Early in March 1799 he converted to Islam and adopted the first name 'Abdallah.

He also married a *sharifah*, a woman who traced her line of descent back to the prophet Muhammad on both her father's and her mother's side. He then acted in accordance with his religious belief when he became the head of the "Egyptian colony." Menou relied upon the Muslim elite and took advice from the *'ulemas* (Muslim religious leaders). His orders concerning the administration of law and public revenues as well as his proclamations concerning social problems proved his desire to preserve Islamic institutions and even to reform them in accordance with French standards.

Menou's relationship with the [non-Muslim](#) groups of the population was decisively influenced by his experiences as governor of the province of Rosetta. There his attitude toward the Copts in the administration of public revenue as well as the leaders of the Syrian Christians had been permanently strained. This resulted in his unfavorable disposition toward the Egyptian Christians. Whereas his sympathy for the Muslims became ostensible, his antipathy toward the Christian minorities was accentuated by political motives. He viewed them as supporters of despotism, who

exploited the population by fraudulent dealings and only worked for their own profit. Because of this basic attitude, he was anxious to restrict their newly won rights and the influence of all minorities.

After Menou had taken over the supreme command of Egypt, he put the Coptic administration of public revenues especially under pressure. It was his intention to remove the Copts from this and other areas, but he did not succeed in displacing them within a short time. The Syrian Christians lost their customs monopoly, which had been one of the primary pillars of their economic and political power. The Greeks and [Jews](#) living in Egypt were able to replace the Copts and Syrians in Menou's favor. The only native [non-Muslim](#) who found grace in his eyes was the Copt YA'QUB (also called "the General"). Menou publicly [praised](#) him and appointed him *général de brigade*. No Egyptians, either Copt or Muslim, won such confidence of Menou as Ya'qub did.

Under the command of Menou the French occupation army could not resist a combined British-Ottoman attack against Egypt in 1801, which forced him to capitulate.

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## **HARALD MOTZKI**

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