**International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)**
**ISSN: 2643-9670**
**Vol. 10 Issue 5 May - 2026, Pages: 63-87**

# The Fall Of Bonaparte's Army At Jaffa (1799), A Study Of The Prelude To The Defeat And Withdrawal Of The French Campaign

**Mahmoud Ahmed Darwish**

Professor of Islamic Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, Minia University
prof.mdarwish@gmail.com

***Abstract:*** *The main theme of the research, clearly demonstrates that natural and climatic conditions can defeat the mightiest armies. The French army, who committed the most horrific massacres - without mercy - during the invasion of Egypt, was unable to prevent divine vengeance by confronting an enemy they had no plans to resist. This occurred at a time when Egypt was at its worst political and military juncture. Conflicts were raging between powers, each seeking to extend its control over the country, between Ottoman rule and internal conflict between factions proven to be conspiring against the country and working for either the French or the British, with the goal of extending their rule, even if under foreign influence and French or British occupation. The research reviews the developments that accompanied the spread of the plague epidemic from the arrival of the French campaign in Egypt until the withdrawal of the defeated forces; the spread of the plague among the French forces was a major reason for the defeat and withdrawal of the campaign from Egypt.*

Research Topics: The French invasion of Syria and Palestine, the outbreak of the plague in the French army, the beginning of the withdrawal of French forces after the failure of the campaign.

**Keywords:** The French army, Egypt, the plague epidemic, the French campaign, Syria, Palestine, massacre of Jaffa, the siege of Acre, Napoleon Bonaparte.

**First: Egypt as a Focus of Military Conflict between England and France**

The campaign lasted three years and failed, resulting in the French forces returning home in defeat and shame. It is important to understand the history of relations between Egypt and France, especially since Egypt was under Ottoman rule [2], [3] [4]. Many documents confirm the extent of France's interest in understanding the political, economic, and social conditions in Egypt long before the French campaign [5], [6].

Among its objectives was the French campaign to punish the Mamluks, who had previously contributed to breaking French arrogance. It was also intended to seek another trade route after the British had seized the Cape of Good Hope and restricted French ships from sailing it.

Thus, a French desire arose to counter the growing British influence, with the aim of disrupting British trade routes and eliminating their trading centers in the Red Sea [5], [6], [7].

**1. The French Occupation of Egypt**

On the night between July 1 and 2, 1798, the French arrived in Alexandria, which had suffered from an outbreak of the plague since the beginning of the year. According to most historians, the epidemic spread through the port, coming from Constantinople before moving to Cairo. During the summer of 1798, the epidemic subsided in Alexandria before returning with a more severe wave in the winter, causing large numbers of casualties among both Egyptians and French. On the same day, Bonaparte addressed the Egyptian people. The campaign issued a call for calm and cooperation, and Bonaparte declared that he had converted to Islam and had become a friend and protector of Islam. He then began disseminating a proclamation to the people of Egypt in which he spoke of the reason for his coming to invade their country, which was to liberate Egypt from the tyranny of the Mamluk beys who were ruling Egypt. In his proclamation, he emphasized his respect for Islam and Muslims.

He began the proclamation with the two testimonies of faith, and was careful to demonstrate his own and his soldiers' Islam. He then proceeded to present evidence and proof of the validity of his claim, stating that the French were also sincere Muslims. He said that they had invaded Rome and destroyed the seat of the Pope, who had always urged Christians to fight the Muslims. He also stated that they had gone to Malta and expelled the Knights of St. John, who believed that God was asking them to fight the Muslims. Thus, Bonaparte had seized the richest region in the Ottoman Empire, and according to the war propaganda, he claimed that he was a friend of the Ottoman Sultan. He also claimed that he had come to Egypt only to take revenge on the Mamluks, considering them enemies of the Sultan and enemies of the Egyptian people. This is Bonaparte’s message to the people of Egypt [3].

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. There is no god but God. He has no son and no partner in His kingdom, By the French, built on the foundations of freedom and equality, The great military leader, the commander of the French armies, Bonaparte. All the people of Egypt know that for a long time the Sanjaks who rule Egypt have been dealing with humiliation and contempt towards the French nation. They oppress its merchants with all kinds of harm and aggression. Now the hour of their punishment has come. We have delayed for a long time this group of Mamluks brought from the lands of the Azebka and the

Circassians. They are corrupting the beautiful region, the best of which is not found in the entire globe. As for the Lord of the Worlds, who is capable of everything, He has decreed the end of their state.

O Egyptians, it has been said to you that I have only come to this place with the intention of eliminating your religion. This is a blatant lie, so do not believe it. Tell the slanderers that I have only come to you to secure your right from the hands of the oppressors, and that I worship God Almighty more than the Mamluks, and I respect His Prophet and the Noble Qur'an. Also tell them that all people are equal before God, and that the only thing that distinguishes them from one another is reason, virtues, and knowledge. There is a conflict between reason and virtues among the Mamluks, so what distinguishes them from others that they deserve to own Egypt alone and to have everything best in it, from beautiful concubines, pure horses, and pleasant dwellings? If the Egyptian land is a pledge to the Mamluks, then let them show us the proof that God has written for them. But the Lord of the worlds is compassionate, just, and forbearing.

But with God's help, from now on, no one among the people of Egypt will despair of entering the high positions and of acquiring high ranks, for the scholars, the virtuous, and the wise among them will manage matters, and thus the condition of the entire nation will be improved. Previously, in the Egyptian lands, there were great cities, wide bays, and abundant trade, and nothing removed all of that except the injustice and greed of the Mamluks. O sheikhs, judges, imams, barbarians, and notables of the country, tell your nation that the French are also sincere Muslims, and the proof of that is that they landed in Greater Rome and destroyed there the seat of the Pope, which was always urging the Christians to fight Islam.

Then they headed to the island of Malta and expelled from it the Kovaleri (or Cavalieri)[1], who claimed that God Almighty was asking them to fight the Muslims. Despite that, the French at all times became loyal lovers of His Majesty the Ottoman Sultan and enemies of his enemies, may God perpetuate his rule. However, the Mamluks refused to obey the Sultan, not complying with his command, and they did not obey at all except for their own greed. Blessed, then blessed are the people of Egypt who agree with us without delay, so that their situation improves and their ranks rise. Blessed also are those who sit in their homes, not inclined towards either of the two warring parties. If they get to know us better, they will rush to us with all their hearts. But woe, then woe, to those who rely on the Mamluks in fighting us, so that they will find no way to salvation after that, and no trace of them will remain [8], [9].

Article One: All villages located within a three-hour radius of the locations through which the French army passes must send their own soldiers as agents to the secret so that the aforementioned party may know that they have obeyed and have raised the French flag, which is white, navy, and red.

Article Two: Any village that revolts against the French army shall be burned.

Article Three: Any village that obeys the French army shall also appoint a sanjak to the Ottoman Sultan, our beloved, long-lived one.

Article Four: The sheikhs in every town shall immediately seal all provisions, houses, and properties belonging to the Mamluks, and they shall exert utmost diligence so that not the slightest bit of them is lost. Article Five: It is the duty of sheikhs, scholars, judges and imams to adhere to their duties, and it is the duty of every citizen of the country to remain in his home in peace. Prayers shall also be performed in the mosques as usual, and all Egyptians should thank God Almighty for the end of the Mamluk state, saying in a loud voice: "May God perpetuate the majesty of the Ottoman Sultan." "May God perpetuate the majesty of the French army." "May God curse the Mamluks." "And improve the condition of the Egyptian nation." Liberated in the camp of Alexandria on the 13th of the month of Massidur [3], [10], [11], [12] in the year 1213 of the French Republic, meaning at the end of the month of Muharram of the Hijri year - In letters [13].

Under these difficult circumstances, the French prepared their military campaign against Syria, which began in February 1799. This campaign resulted in the fall of Gaza and Jaffa and the imposition of a stifling siege on Acre beginning on March 19. Amid these military operations, the plague accompanied [14], [15], [16], [17], Napoleon Bonaparte, as the field hospital near Jaffa was filled with the bodies of his soldiers who had died from the disease. Hoping to boost morale and reassure his soldiers, Bonaparte approached and touched the sick, attempting to convince them that the epidemic was not contagious.

During the campaign against Acre, which lasted for about four months, Bonaparte traveled with 13,000 soldiers, thousands of whom died from the plague. Furthermore, the French general attempted to mitigate the severity of the epidemic in Egypt by imposing some of the health measures prevalent in Europe, thereby contributing to a reduction in the number of infections. Amid these circumstances, Bonaparte decided to return home. According to French law, all ships arriving from North Africa and the Middle East were required to pass through either the ports of Marseille or Toulon to undergo quarantine procedures. These quarantines required passengers to remain in designated isolation areas for periods ranging from 18 to 25 days. The quarantine is a place where people, places, or animals that may carry a risk of infection are isolated. The duration of the quarantine depends on the time necessary to provide protection against the risk of the spread of certain diseases. In the context of healthcare, quarantine refers to the various medical procedures used to prevent the spread of infections that may occur in hospitals. There are different forms of quarantine used depending on the type of infection and the factors involved in its spread [18], with the aim of addressing the similarity in the process of spread via airborne particles or droplets, or through contact through the skin, or through contact through body fluids.

France was encouraged to do so by the fact that Thomas Coubert, a prominent Irish Jewish capitalist, had sent a letter to his friend, Pararas, a member of the French Direction, advising the French to occupy the East and benefit from the Jews, whom he described as a reliable element in the East. He also advised him to put the proposal before Napoleon, who met with a number of Jewish figures

who urged him to establish a Jewish homeland in agreement with France in the Lower Egypt region of Egypt, while preserving a wide area extending from Acre to the Dead Sea and from there to the Red Sea.

Proclamation to the army: "Soldiers! You will accomplish an invasion that will have an unpredictable impact on world civilization and trade. You will give the English a profound and sensitive language. Prepare a blow, you beys, who trade exclusively with the English, to benefit and exhaust our merchants with incidents and population. The bullying of the Nile will cease in a few days. The people we will live with together are Muslims, whose first belief is: 'There is no god but God, and Mohamed is the Messenger of God.' Do not contradict them, and treat them as we treated the Jews and the Italians. End, and respect their muftis and imams as they see it." It was practiced on rabbis and bishops. The armies of the Romans defend any religion. You will find customs here different from those of Europe. You must adapt. The first city we will see was founded by Alexander the Great. We will encounter memories at every step that the French must emulate and encourage." June 22, 1798.

Upon his arrival in Alexandria, he delivered a proclamation: The seriousness of his intentions was evident in the fact that, in order to achieve his goals, he allowed himself to be accompanied by scholars from the Arts and Sciences Committee of the National Institute and other experts [17], [19], [20], [21].

**2. The spread of the plague in Egypt during the French campaign**

Plague [22] is a deadly infectious disease caused by the Enter obacteriaceae Yersinia pestis, named after the French-Swiss bacteriologist Alexandre Yersin. Until June 2007, plague was one of three epidemic diseases specifically notifiable to the World Health Organization (the other two being cholera and yellow fever).

Depending on the lung infection or health conditions, plague can be spread through the air, by direct contact, or through undercooked contaminated food or other materials. Symptoms of plague depend on the area where the infection is concentrated in each person: bubonic plague affects the lymph nodes, septicemic plague affects the blood vessels, and pneumonic plague affects the lungs and throat. These can be treated if detected early. Plague remains endemic in some parts of the world [23], [24], [25].

The epidemiological use of the term "plague" is currently applied to bacterial infections that cause swelling of the lymph nodes in the groin caused by the plague germ, although historically the medical use of the term "plague" was applied to epidemic infections in general. Plague is often synonymous with "bubonic plague," but this describes only one of its manifestations. Other names have been used to describe the disease, such as "Black Death" and "Black Death"; the latter is now primarily used by scholars to describe the second, and more devastating, epidemic of the disease. The social environment, like most social conditions during wartime, was conducive to the spread of disease. The pillaging of cities during sieges left little access to clean food and water, and the lack of resources meant poor hygiene. Sanitary conditions were extremely poor for French and Turkish troops and civilians. Although infection rates were not high, mortality rates were high. The increased mortality rate likely resulted from the unsanitary conditions in camps, towns, and even hospitals.

On March 24, 1799, after Egypt was occupied by the French under Napoleon Bonaparte, posters were posted throughout Cairo listing rules set by the French military authorities, declaring the imposition of quarantine [26], The text read: A letter to the people of Cairo, Bulaq, Old Cairo and its environs: You must comply with these orders, uphold them and not disobey them. Whoever disobeys them will incur further vengeance, painful punishment and severe retribution. This is to protect against the disturbance of the Kaaba. Whoever is certain, suspected, imagined or doubted to have done so in any place, house, agency or quarter, you are obligated and required to make a quarantine, and that place must be locked. The sheikh of the neighborhood or market in which this is taking place must immediately inform the French district governor of that district, and this must be done immediately. Whoever has information about the senior district governors or sheikhs of the districts or districts and does not inform the governor of this disease shall be punished as the governor sees fit [27], [28].

The sheikhs of the districts shall be punished with a hundred lashes as retribution for negligence. Whoever is afflicted with this disturbance or if it happens in his house to another member of his family or clan and moves from his house to another, his retribution shall be death, and he has committed the crime against himself because of his moving, and every leader of a religion in a line, if he does not immediately report the catastrophe that occurred in his line, or who died as a result of it, the punishment and retribution of that leader shall be death, and the washer, whether male or female, if he sees that the dead person died as a result of the catastrophe or doubts that he died as a result of it and does not report it before the passage of twenty-four hours, his punishment and retribution shall be death.

These necessary orders require the janissary agha and the French and Islamic rulers of the country to alert the subjects and awaken them to them, for they are hidden matters and whoever disobeys will incur further retaliation from the one in charge. The worried ones must search and investigate this evil cause for the sake of the protection and preservation of the people of the country and to beware of disobedience and peace [29]. These measures, imposed by the French shortly after their occupation of Egypt, represented a radical shift in the way they viewed and dealt with the epidemic. The French viewed the outbreak of plague in Egypt as a serious threat that could lead to the annihilation of their army, and they tightened quarantine measures after realizing the serious role the plague had played in their army's crushing defeat in Palestine [30], [31].

As Al-Jabarti tells us, "The plague that broke out among the army [in front of the walls of Acre], killing fifty or sixty soldiers every day [29][2]," was one of the main reasons Bonaparte cited to his officers to justify his failure to capture Acre after a two-month siege. In 1798, with the beginning of the French campaign to Egypt, the plague spread again. The plague came through some ships coming from Turkey, where the disease was severe during the winter. When the Turkish ships brought their goods to the port of Alexandria,

the plague spread to Rosetta, then Damietta, and from there to Cairo. The disease spread quickly due to contact, friction, and lack of prevention [32].

Al-Jabarti states that the epidemic spread like wildfire through firewood during the mild winter and summer seasons. The disease was facilitated by the fact that Egyptians buried their dead in the middle of villages and cities, and sometimes buried their bodies inside their homes. Al-Jabarti states that this epidemic killed approximately 600 to 120 people per day. This epidemic claimed the lives of approximately 150,000 people in Egypt between 1798 and 1801, the year the French expedition left Egypt.

Despite Napoleon Bonaparte's attempts to bring in European physicians to combat this epidemic and work to discover a cure, they failed, and none of the European physicians were able to find a cure for the plague until the disease gradually subsided with the onset of winter. The plague spread through the Mediterranean, where ships carrying the disease entered the port of Alexandria and claimed the lives of French physicians. Arab scholars considered the plague a disease, but its widespread spread made it an epidemic. However, French scholars during the French campaign in Egypt believed that the plague was an infectious disease.

The campaign then imposed quarantine on everyone without exception. Al-Jabarti mentions in his account of the events of January 29, 1801, that with the outbreak of the plague, the French were alarmed and began establishing quarantine centers (places designated for quarantine and detention for 40 days) and governorates. The quarantine system became effective in monitoring and detaining travelers until the epidemic was declared contained. With the French campaign in Egypt, the plague spread throughout Egypt. The French ordered people not to enter or leave any house containing an infected person. They wanted to impose a quarantine. However, when the French ordered the quarantine, the Egyptians considered it a punishment, and the army commander sent a letter containing the quarantine [33].

Al-Jabarti [34] mentioned in his history that the French began implementing quarantine, burning the clothes and bedding of those infected with the plague and preventing anyone from approaching the dead. This was abhorrent to the people, who began fleeing Egypt to the countryside.

During their presence, the French paid particular attention to health. Among the preventive measures Napoleon imposed on the Egyptians was spreading clothes, belongings, and furniture on roofs for several days, and spraying houses with anti-fungal pesticides, fearing the appearance and spread of the plague [35]. To ensure this, they assigned inspection committees to monitor homes and ensure compliance with the orders. They also built a quarantine center in Bulaq to ensure the safety of arrivals, and established places where arrivals could be detained for a few days.

In early 1799, Napoleon quarreled with the surgeon Boyer, who refused to treat some soldiers who were said to be infected with a contagious disease. Bonaparte said, "He is not worthy of being a physician..."

The surgeon Masklet in Alexandria had a different reaction. Although he suspected an outbreak of infection, he seemed more relaxed, noting in a letter to Larrey that the military and administrative forces were "finally" taking action against this contagious disease, a disease that had initially been largely neglected. One did not want to believe that this was the plague, and was initially convinced that the deaths of some surgeons were not due to the plague but to "some other malignant febrile illness."

Letters from various departments indicated that the recommended precautions were not being strictly followed. As a result, the infection, which in one case was initially confined to a laundry, killing a guard and his assistant, spread from there. In "Hospital No. 2," one count of patients from Camps 4, 61, and 88 included as many as 45 deaths. Physicians believed that sailors, nursing staff, porters (or guards), cooks working in the hospitals but also outside them, and bakery employees were at risk[3], with about four to five men dying a day. Children and young adults were mostly affected, and the elderly rarely. One possibility was suggested that soldiers were careless with tradesmen.

It was also noted that newly admitted patients were most vulnerable, especially those in the "agitation" or "scurvy" stage. In "Hospital No. 3," Surgeon Neale, who had recovered from the plague, initially gave everyone some courage. However, Neil suffered a relapse and later died. Fortunately, the wounded in "Hospital No. 1" had not yet become infected, so Masklet was able to isolate them. This was the first time the French quarantine system had been introduced in Egypt since the French arrived. Following a description of the initial measures against the spread of the plague, a section on legal proceedings followed, which led to the introduction of the Santé Publique newspaper.

**Second: The French Invasion of Syria and Palestine**

In early 1799, the Ottoman Empire declared war on France. Napoleon anticipated a Turkish attack on Egypt and decided to enter Syria (Palestine and Syria) to obstruct any Turkish action against Egypt. Bonaparte personally led 13,000 French troops into Syria and quickly captured coastal cities such as Arish, Gaza, Jaffa, and Haifa from Mamluk, Arab, and Turkish defenders (fig. 1).

Napoleon entered Syria from Egypt, but the plague struck French soldiers in all these towns, as well as Acre, which Napoleon was unable to occupy [1].

fig. 1. French campaign in the Levant

**1. The Siege and massacre of Jaffa**

The siege of Jaffa was a military engagement between the French army under Napoleon Bonaparte and Ottoman forces under Ahmed al-Jazzar. On the 3 of March, 1799, the French laid siege to the city of Jaffa, which was under Ottoman control. It was fought from 3 to 7 March 1799. On the 7 March, French forces managed to capture the city. Having taken control of Alexandria and Cairo and losing control of the territories under Cairo, despite having his ships destroyed, Napoleon Bonaparte was continuing his push on the Ottoman territories in the Middle East. Having recently captured an Ottoman fortress at El Arish, he was looking to cement his foothold in the Levant. In early March, his troops reached Jaffa (modern Tel Aviv) [36].

The city of Jaffa was surrounded by high walls, and extensive fortifications had been constructed by the Ottomans. Ahmed al-Jazzar entrusted its defence to his troops, including 1,200 artillerymen. Napoleon had to win Jaffa before he could advance any further, and the whole expedition's success depended on its capture. The city was one of Greater Syria's main mercantile centers and had a harbour that would provide vital shelter for the French fleet. All the exterior works could be besieged and a breach was feasible. When Bonaparte sent an officer and a trumpeter to Ahmed al-Jazzar to order the surrender of the city, Ahmed decapitated the messengers and ordered a sortie. The sortie was pushed back as early as the evening of the same day. The French managed to destroy one of the towers on the city fortifications, and despite resistance by its defenders, Jaffa was taken.

Napoleon sent messengers to the Ottoman governor of Jaffa, Abdullah Bey, ordering him to surrender. The governor of Jaffa saw the situation as difficult. Despite the city's fortifications, the garrison was small and could not withstand Napoleon's army for long. Furthermore, Ottoman supplies might be delayed, and if the siege continued, the city walls would inevitably collapse, killing everyone inside. Therefore, Napoleon offered to surrender the city in exchange for sparing the lives of the city's residents and soldiers. Napoleon agreed to these terms, and Jaffa surrendered. After its surrender, Napoleon broke his promise to the governor of Jaffa, and French soldiers murdered and raped the city's residents. He also executed the governor of Jaffa.

According to some sources, the French messengers who had brusquely told the city of Napoleon's ultimatum ended up being arrested, tortured, castrated and decapitated and their heads impaled on the city walls. That harsh treatment led Napoleon, when the city fell, to allow his soldiers two days and two nights of slaughter and rape. He also executed the Ottoman governor, Abdallah Bey. Bonaparte no longer wished to honour the promises of his stepson Eugène de Beauharnais for prisoners' lives to be spared and ordered that a large part of the Ottoman prisoners (according to some sources around 2,440, according to other sources 4,100), most of them Albanians, be executed [36] by being shot or stabbed to death with bayonets. Napoleon's eulogists later wrote of that decision: "For, to keep in submission so considerable a number of prisoners, it would have been necessary to detach guards for them, which would have severely diminished his army's numbers; and if he had allowed them to leave free men, it was reasonable to fear that they might swell the ranks of Ahmed al-Jazzar's troops".

Napoleon also allowed hundreds of local citizens to leave the city, hoping that the news they would carry of Jaffa's fall would intimidate the defenders of the other cities in the Eyalet and Syria. This backfired, since their news instead made these defenders fight all the more fiercely.

Meanwhile, a plague epidemic caused by poor hygiene in the French headquarters in Ramla decimated the local population and the French army alike [37]. Overcome in the north of the country by the Ottomans, Napoleon abandoned Palestine. After his departure the British, allied to the Ottomans and commanded by William Sidney Smith, rebuilt Jaffa's city walls. In the years 1800 to 1814, after a new nine-month siege, Jaffa was again taken over by Napoleon's former opponent, Ahmed al-Jazzar, Acre's governor.

The French army was not the first to invade Jaffa, but it was particularly brutal to its inhabitants. Although the French took control of the city within a few hours after the attack began, the soldiers' aggression became wildly out of control. They bayoneted approximately 2,000 Turkish soldiers who were trying to surrender. The soldiers' ferocity then turned to the inhabitants of the town. Men, women, and children were robbed and murdered with wild abandon. The insanity continued for three days, ending when

Napoleon ordered that 3,000 Turkish troops be executed, those who had surrendered believing they would be held as prisoners of war, be executed [1][4].

During the grievous action in Jaffa, the first French soldiers became delirious with severe fevers and headaches. After a few days, hundreds of soldiers had swellings under their arms. Plague had come to Jaffa.

**2. The siege of Acre in 1799**

The siege of Acre of 1799 was an unsuccessful French siege of the Ottoman city of Acre and was the turning point of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and Syria, along with the Battle of the Nile [12], [36], It was Napoleon's third tactical defeat in his career [38], [39], after three years previously being defeated at the Second Battle of Bassano and the Battle of Caldiero during the Italy campaign. As a result of the failed siege, Napoleon Bonaparte retreated two months later and withdrew to Egypt [12], [40], [41].

Acre was a site of significant strategic importance due to its commanding position on the route between Egypt and Syria. Bonaparte wanted to capture it following his invasion of Egypt. He hoped to incite a Syrian rebellion against the Ottomans and threaten British India. After the siege of Jaffa, which was followed by two days and nights of massacre and rape by the French forces, the defenders of the citadel were even more determined to resist the French [42], [43], [44].

The French attempted to lay siege on 20 March using only their infantry. Napoleon believed the city would capitulate quickly to him. In correspondence with one of his subordinate officers he voiced his conviction that a mere two weeks would be necessary to capture the linchpin of his conquest of the Holy Land before marching on to Jerusalem. However, the governor of Acre, Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar, and his forces refused to surrender and held out under a siege for a month and a half [36]. Haim Farhi, al-Jazzar's Jewish adviser and right-hand man, played a key role in the city's defence, directly supervising the battle against the siege. After Napoleon's earlier conquest of Jaffa, rampaging French troops had savagely sacked the conquered city, and thousands of Albanian prisoners of war were massacred on the sea-shore, prior to the French offensive further northwards. These facts were well known to the townspeople and defending troops (many of them Albanians) in Acre, and the prospect of being massacred is likely to have stiffened their resistance.

A Royal Navy flotilla under Commodore Sidney Smith, commanding Tigre, helped to reinforce the Ottoman defences and supplied the city with additional cannon manned by sailors and marines. Smith used his command of the sea to capture the French siege artillery being sent by a flotilla of gunboats from Egypt and to bombard the coastal road from Jaffa [44].

Artillery expert Antoine De Philippeaux transported French artillery pieces to the Acre garrison and supervised the training of the garrison's men to use these cannons against the French army, then, the fleet's artillery expert, redeployed the artillery pieces intercepted by the British against Napoleon's forces. Smith anchored the British ships Tigre and Theseus so their broadsides could assist the Ottoman defense. British gunboats, which were of shallower draft, could come in closer, and together they helped repel repeated French assaults.

On 16 April an Ottoman relief force was fought off at Mount Tabor. By early May, replacement French siege artillery had arrived overland and a breach was forced in the defenses, At the culmination of the assault, the besieging forces managed to make a breach in the walls. However, after suffering many casualties to open this entry-point, Napoleon's soldiers found, on trying to penetrate the city that Farhi and de Phélippeaux had, in the meantime, built a second wall, several feet deeper within the city where al-Jazzar's garden was. Discovery of this new construction convinced Napoleon and his men that the probability of them taking the city was minimal. Moreover, after the assault was again repelled, Ottoman reinforcements from Rhodes were able to land.

Having underestimated the stubborn attitude of the defending forces combined with a British blockade of French supply harbours and harsh weather conditions, Napoleon's forces were left hungry, cold and damp. Plague had struck the French camp as a result of the desperate condition of the men, and had by now led to the deaths of about 2,000 soldiers. Throughout the siege, both Napoleon and Jezzar sought in vain the assistance of the Shihab leader, Bashir—ruler of much of present-day Lebanon. Bashir remained neutral. As things turned out, it was the French which suffered most from the attitude of Bashir, whose intervention on their side might have turned the balance of power in their favour. Finally, after a two-month siege, Napoleon Bonaparte retreated, having failed to breach the city walls, especially after his failure in the final attack on May 10. Napoleon decided to lift the siege on May 21, 1799, and withdrew to Egypt [45].

**Third: The spread of the plague epidemic in the French army**

**1. The beginning of the plague epidemic**

Many factors contributed to the outbreak of plague during the Syrian campaign [46]. The French soldiers had not been exposed to plague before; therefore, they represented a virgin population for the disease to manifest itself (epidemiologists call a virgin population immunologically naive). Additionally, poor water and food supplies, bad hygienic conditions, and dysentery stressed the soldiers. Wild rodents, rats, and fleas were present in the garrisons in Egypt and the towns in Syria, thus a reservoir for the disease existed. An infantry battalion from Damietta, one of the plague-stricken garrisons helped spread the disease by leaving with the advance units for Syria. The physical environment in Syria was especially conducive to plague. The disease typically becomes epidemic in hot, dry conditions. These conditions occurred during the spring and summer of 1799. Dry conditions stress rodents and bring them in even closer contact with humans.

"In the article by Peterson, Robert K. D., take up Plague and the Syrian Campaign 1799 [47], Napoleon's successful campaigns in

Italy convinced the Directory that he should invade France's mortal enemy, England. However, in 1798, England's naval strength was superior and Napoleon knew he could not invade. Therefore, he proposed a much safer, and less career threatening campaign--the invasion of Egypt. In his memoirs, he wrote:

"The principal object of the French expedition to the East was to check the power of the English. The army which was to change the destiny of India, was to march from the Nile. Egypt was to supply the place of Saint-Domingo and the Antilles, and to reconcile the freedom of the blacks with the interests of our manufacturers. The conquest of this province would have produced the ruin of all the English settlements in America and the Peninsula of the Ganges [48]." The storming of Jaffa (now incorporated into Tel-Aviv) was a grisly affair and had experienced centuries of war before Napoleon arrived.

The French forces established their first hospital during their campaign against Palestine in Al-Arish. At that time, it consisted of 200 beds. Another hospital was also established in Gaza with 150 beds which demonstrated in a way that the plague had already started to spread in the French army since the control of Al-Arish. It first began in Gaza before it spread and was officially discovered in Jaffa. Some historians believe that the plague spread among the French soldiers after they looted houses in Jaffa and took Turkish clothing. The next day, the French army command issued orders for every soldier to bring his spoils to the field. All clothes were burned but this procedure came too late. The disease had already reached a certain magnitude. Those with the disease were carefully separated from the rest of the soldiers and were immediately taken to the nearest hospitals.

The French physicians officially announced the presence of the plague in Jaffa and the Armenian Convent, which served as the main hospital for the French forces, was filled with patients. When the disease was diagnosed, the medical staff, nurses and French monks fled. They left the patients. A proposal was presented to burn the house that was inhabited by the sick soldiers. The hospital administrators were given 30,000 pounds to buy food and beds for the patients and the nurses were promised good incentives. Royer, the chief pharmacist who stayed in Gaza, was responsible for sending more lemons from Gaza, which at the time were considered useful for preparing medicine for the disease.

The number of patients with the plague increased, reaching 400 patients being treated in the hospital in Jaffa. The proportion of patients infected also increased rapidly, which increased the spread of the disease. The measures that could be taken were very limited. The medical devices at the time were simple and of limited efficacy. The use of ancient experimental methods, which were used fairly widely otherwise, did not do any. Quarantine in Jaffa was also not possible for military reasons, which led to the wider spread of the disease to the point of 5 - 6 French soldiers dying every day. After taking Haifa, Napoleon laid siege to Acre, a fortified coastal city now part of Israel. Strong Turkish forces, under the Bosnian, Djezzar Pasha, held Acre. Napoleon was at a great disadvantage because he did not control the coastline near Acre; it was controlled by the British Navy. Therefore, the British continually supplied Acre with food, ammunition, and soldiers. Napoleon certainly was not in the best position to conduct proper siege craft. Plague had followed the French army to Haifa, and it was present inside the besieged Acre. At the plague hospital on Mount Carmel, near Haifa, more patients were arriving every day. Napoleon tried to take Acre for two long, bloody months. However, he could not overcome the formidable defenses. A long siege and more plague victims caused morale to sink to a very low level. After a final unsuccessful assault, he decided to return to Egypt.

Napoleon used plague as an excuse for lifting the siege of Acre. He wrote to the Directory:

"The occasion seemed to favour the capture of Acre, but our spies, deserters, and our prisoners all reported that the plague was ravaging the city and that every day more than sixty persons were dying of it...If the soldiers had entered the city...they would have brought back into the camp the germs of that horrible evil, which is more to be feared than all the armies in the world [49]." Napoleon failed to mention that plague was already ravaging his army well before they laid siege to Acre. When it suited his interests, Napoleon did relate to the Directory that "...six months ago plague broke out in Alexandria with very pronounced symptoms. At Damietta it was milder, at Gaza and Jaffa, worse. It has not appeared at Cairo or Suez, nor in Upper Egypt".

On the grueling return to Cairo, more men contracted plague and died on the desert sands. Ships were not available to transport the sick; and the few ships that were available were unequipped for the purpose [1]. Bourienne, Napoleon's chief secretary, recounted the horrible scene: "I have seen...plague-stricken men, or people merely suspected of having the plague, being abandoned in fields...The dying, by the roadside, were saying in a barely audible voice, 'I am only wounded, I haven't got the plague,' and in order to convince those who were marching by they opened their wounds or inflicted fresh ones on themselves. Nobody believed them. People said, 'He's a dead man,' and passed by...To our right was the sea; to our left and behind us, the desert we were creating; ahead of us, the sufferings and privations that awaited us [49]."

When the army reached Jaffa, Napoleon, worried that the Turks would catch his army, consulted with Desgenettes. According to Desgenettes, Napoleon said, "If I were in your place, I should put an end to the sufferings of our plague patients and, at the same time, to the danger they represent for us, by giving them [an overdose of] opium." Desgenettes, however, disagreed, relating to Bonaparte that his duty was to preserve life. Bonaparte stated that his duty was to preserve the army. Napoleon said, "I shall not try to overcome your scruples, but I believe I shall find people who will appreciate my intentions more than you do [50]."

Plague is among the most virulent infectious diseases. Its association with humans is ancient. The disease is caused by the bacterium Yersinia pestis (Lehmann and Naumann). The pathogen is transmitted by fleas, particularly the Oriental rat flea (Xenopsylla cheopis Rothschild), but can also be transmitted from human to human in its pneumonic form (pneumonia).

Plague is primarily a rodent disease. However, under certain conditions, plague can be transmitted to humans, where it is devastating. Fleas that feed on plague-infected rats or other rodent species become infected. Plague bacilli multiply in the flea's intestines, and if

humans come into close contact with infected rats, fleas may attempt to feed on them. During feeding, the plague bacilli are introduced into the victim. In humans, after introduction of the bacteria, the onset of illness typically occurs within three to four days. The disease is characterized by a rapid rise in temperature to about 41°C (104°F). Headache and delirium quickly follow. Swelling or buboes may be noticed on the second day. Buboes are swellings in the lymph nodes. The infection then spreads from the lymph nodes to the bloodstream, then to the liver and spleen. Secondary pneumonia may occur due to the deposition of bacteria in the lung tissue. The patient may die within less than 24 hours. During the Syrian campaign, the mortality rate from plague [1] reached 92%.

Types of plague include: Bubonic plague, bubonic plague, bubonic plague, bubonic plague, or hemorrhagic plague. Bubonic plague is a zoonotic disease spread primarily among small rodents and their carrier fleas. It is one of three types of infections caused by Yersinia plague (formerly known as Pasteurella plague), a member of the Enterobacteriaceae family. Untreated, bubonic plague kills two-thirds of those infected within four days. The term bubonic plague is derived from the Greek word (βουβών), meaning "groin." Swollen lymph nodes often appear under the armpits and groin of a person with bubonic plague. The term "bubonic plague" has often been used synonymously with plague, but bubonic plague refers to a disease in which the parasite enters the skin and travels through the lymphatic vessels, as seen in flea infections [51].

Bubonic plague, along with septicemic and pneumonic plague (the other two types caused by Yersinia plague), is believed to have caused the Black Death, which swept through Europe in the 14th century and killed an estimated 50 million people, or 25%–60% of Europe's population. In the Mediterranean, bubonic plague appears to have occurred in the summer. In northern Europe, however, it most commonly appeared in the fall.

The plague did appear in the Egyptian campaign, but it was very localized, affecting only the small garrisons at Damietta, Rosetta, Abu Qir, and Alexandria. But in Jaffa, the plague threatened the entire French army. On the second day after the capture of Jaffa, 31 soldiers were hospitalized and 14 died. Detroye, a French officer, wrote in his memoirs, "In General Bonne's division, a disease accompanied by bubonic plague has appeared, leading to sudden death. The doctors assure us that it is not the plague." Two days later, he wrote, "It is a violent fever with bears... Many soldiers have succumbed to it and died suddenly. This disease has been mistaken for the plague, and this opinion is so widespread that four men have contracted it. Its symptoms have led to suicide [50]."

French doctors knew from the start that they were dealing with the bubonic plague. However, they didn't want to panic the soldiers, so they assured them that it wasn't an epidemic. This didn't work. The soldiers knew what the frightened tears meant. The plague was a disease feared by all Europeans. Napoleon was particularly afraid of the plague because he realized it could wipe out his entire army. Oddly, Napoleon believed that fear of the plague caused it to spread more rapidly. He is credited with saying, "During the Egyptian campaign, all who were distracted by fear died. The surest protection, the most effective cure, was moral courage... The best way to keep an army safe from disease is this: keep marching and busy. Distraction and fatigue have proven to be the best prevention [52]."

Napoleon was not only a brilliant general, but also a gifted politician. He knew that to counter the soldiers' fear of the plague, he must go to the plague hospital and visit the patients to show his soldiers that he was not afraid of the disease. René-Nicolas Desgenettes, the medical officer of the Egyptian mission, witnessed the visit: "On March 11, 1799, General Bonaparte, followed by his general staff, felt it imperative to visit the hospital. The general walked through the hospital and its annex, spoke to almost all the soldiers who were conscious enough to hear him, and for an hour and a half, with great calm, he occupied himself with the details of administration, While in a small and extremely crowded ward, he helped lift, or rather carried, the hideous body of a soldier whose torn uniform was contaminated by the spontaneous bursting of a massive abscess [53]."

Bonaparte, however, instructed the doctors and officers in Jaffa to take the necessary measures after discovering that soldiers had contracted the plague. He ordered them to send the infected to hospitals and separate them from the rest of their colleagues, although Bonaparte was briefly able to convince them that what had happened was merely a fever associated with the lymph nodes and not the plague.

To convince them to do this, on March 21, 1799, Bonaparte, along with two of his assistants and senior medical officers, Doctors Larry and Desgenettes, visited the sick French soldiers. He toured the hospital and shook hands with them. He stayed there for more than an hour and a half, listening to the patients and speaking to them with words of compassion and encouragement from a place of indescribable emotion. Others helped carry the body of a miserable soldier, dressed in his ragged clothes, as he died of the disease. Bonaparte told the soldiers that what he had done had nothing to do with the plague, which gave them confidence.

They were already convinced that if they contracted the plague, Bonaparte would not dare visit or shake hands with them. It was said that this psychological treatment somehow helped some victims overcome the plague. Bonaparte's visits to his plague-stricken soldiers had a significant positive effect in encouraging the French soldiers, and even some surgeons and nurses who had abandoned the sick, to return. They were ashamed and returned to their duties. It was clear that Bonaparte was working to reassure, boost morale, and encourage his soldiers. This, in the view of some historians [45], demonstrated Bonaparte's "humanity," on the one hand, and the fact that he was a caring commander, on the other.

It is likely that the plague began spreading among the French army in El-Arish and Gaza before the siege and attack on Jaffa, especially since the French presence in Jaffa lasted only a few days. The large number of wounded and dead can only be explained by the earlier presence of the disease in the army.

**2. The first actions against the spread of the plague**

**A. Sanitary measures to prevent plague**

The spread of the plague continued from the end of January 1799, and Larry wrote from Cairo: "I received news from Alexandria, Damietta, and Mansoura that there was, and elsewhere, a malignant fever associated with boils or bumps in the groin and armpit, threatening to spread slowly. This was dangerous not only in Alexandria, where many died of physicians because of the plague, but also in Cairo, where there are between two and three cases of plague. Diseases occurred. One case involved a soldier who was immediately taken to hospital. He had a black pimple on his lip that had developed into a carbuncle. The next day he died. The corpse was quickly removed, his clothes, possessions, and bed-clothes burned, and the room in which he was isolated was fumigated. I just told the chief physician about this incident and my concerns. However, I have taken the step of sending out circulars to all the chief surgeons so that they know how to treat patients with this fever and take precautions against contamination."

Since the causes and treatment of plague were not yet known, the plague was ignored in Egypt at that time and nothing was done about it. Patients were isolated in the hope that the plague would go away on its own. When this disease later reached epidemic proportions, Larry, as head of the health service, became deeply concerned about this "careless" attitude. Napoleon himself initially reacted inexplicably to urging the Commissariat of War Michaux to stay in his house for fear of the plague. Napoleon asked, "Why not fight alongside Pompey's column?" Because there have been no cases of illness there yet- kicked. Only one brigade located in a polluted area was ordered to bathe naked in the sea, wash their clothes thoroughly, and daily clean their feet, hands and face. Compliance with this order was monitored. Dr. Masklet did everything he could to stop the infection. He thought it best to seclude himself with the sick in order to help them; However, he too was affected and died.

Larry was then to follow Napoleon into Syria, leaving the management of the health service in Cairo in the hands of the Surgeon General in Casablanca. Meanwhile Desgennet was in Damietta, where the plague had begun to break out. He also built a hospital there. In Alexandria he had already lost 150 men to the plague. In Damietta, he implemented the preventive measures that were followed at the time. He cleaned the houses, removed the corpses, and burned the patients' uniforms, the latter to the dismay of the army. When the army had to advance into Syria in February 1799, Desgennet accompanied the regiment to meet those arriving from Cairo. At the time of the confrontation at El-A-rych, three other soldiers of his squad died of the plague. The average death toll has now risen to between six and fifteen per day. Suddenly 200 men died within two days, including 58 physicians and surgeons. The people of Egypt were the hardest hit. In the short period of the epidemic, 40 thousand people died. The monks locked themselves in their monasteries and refused to help. The nursing staff deserted and more physicians died. Despite this, Desgennet and Larry were brave. They had to take care of everything themselves. The food was handled with wooden tweezers and the paper was soaked in vinegar. The formal notes were placed between the bayonet and the muzzle of the rifle clamped and thus transmitted. The situation was far worse than could be overlooked, and the most feared were the first to catch the plague. But even the strongest of men became afraid, and the fittest fell victim to the plague. Then the epidemic weakened somewhat, but soon increased again to a degree which was devastating in Saint-Jean-d'Acre (Palestine).

Desgennet initiated a psychological campaign to pacify the men. Unlike Larry, he refused to use the word "plague" and spoke of "humeral fever" or "glandular disease". Napoleon also tried to harden the morals of the patients at the hospital near Jaffa in Syria, spending an hour in the plague patients' room (it is said that he touched an ember while offering aid). To prove that the plague was not contagious, Desgennet inoculated himself twice in Acre with a scalpel, once in the groin and once in the armpit, with the pus of a convalescent plague victim. He even drank what was left of the drink from the plague-stricken cup.

**B. Legislative actions to prevent plague**

At Napoleon's request, on March 22, 1799, Larrey sent a circular to all surgeons. He suggested preparing a report every five days on the number of patients in the cohort and the nature, progression and outcome of the prevalent disease. Then Larry made suggestions for a possible cure. Physicians were divided over infection from the plague. Larry believed that this disease, when it reached a certain level, was contagious. Accordingly, he ordered precautionary measures to be taken. Soldiers must be aware of the motives, but they must not be informed. Your health should be entrusted to surgeons. The most important measures were, above all, hygiene, diet and gymnastics in addition to the prohibition of wearing any clothes of Turkish origin[5].

In addition, the soldiers must realize that sleeping in the holes they have dug in the ground will be unhealthy[6]. Larry found that the pestilence decreased when cold winds came from the north and increased again when they came from the south (the khamseen wind)[7].

To ensure the implementation of precautionary measures, they were enshrined in law. At the beginning of the epidemic, five to six people out of every ten infected with plague died. However, in the subsequent cycle, more than two-thirds can be cured. It is said that this success was chiefly due to the able Chief Physician Desgennet, who personally directed the treatment of patients in the fever department. Larry considered plague vaccination more dangerous than a preventive measure due to not being vaccinated, and considered the aforementioned prophylaxis to be most appropriate. Very impressive all sorts of 'discharges' or 'artificial friction rashes' have been 'cautiously' used as a means of prevention. It was also said that it is useful for those who cannot avoid the source of infection to apply a permanent cautery or plaster over the focus of the disease.

Excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially consumption of meat and dairy products, should be avoided; One should drink plenty of coffee and also an infusion of sage leaves in the morning on an empty stomach, continue to wash the whole body with water and vinegar, change linen and clothes frequently, sleep in dry and well-ventilated places, avoid all excitement, and for any mild symptoms of rash or Plaque, take a slight vomiting and do a thorough enema. For these reasons, one should always carry

a portion of emetic pills in areas where plague was endemic. The great attack by the Turks with the help of the British fleet led to a retreat to Egypt. After further difficulties due to desert crossings and wrong turns, again requiring great courage from the French, they reached Mataria, where they were able to rest for two days. As a precaution against possible infection, the soldiers were ordered to wash their linens and clothes, and to burn any items they could not "clean" in this way. After this it was no longer necessary to impose the quarantine and the troops marched to Cairo. "…they saw their old comrades again with great joy…"[8].

**C. Public Health Service**

The next step against the plague was to find its source and eradicate it. He entrusted this task to an extraordinary committee set up by Napoleon with the help of the Syrian Company. At first, their task was only the general organization of measures to implement the regulations. The committee consisted of the Commander-in-Chief of Cairo, the Major General of the Corps of Engineers, the Major General of the Navy and his assistant, the Chief Medical Officer, and the Chief Surgeon of the Army. The chairmanship was taken by continuous rotation by each member, until all were chair of the committee. Secondary Special Committees were formed on the same basis in Alexandria, Damietta and Rosetta. In this way, infection and spread of the plague must be prevented. So it was possible to take all possible steps for the health care of the Egyptians and the army from the army center in the immediate vicinity of the headquarters (staff). The Extraordinary Commission has been in constant contact with the three Special Commissions, whose activities are closely monitored.

The nucleus of observation was stationed at a point on the Nile to scout the ships or barges going up and down the eastern and western branches of the Nile. From there, under the supervision of health guards, they were taken to the large hospital on Roda Island and placed under the quarantine or observation. The Directors or Inspectors of Health, who were by order of the Extraordinary Commission, placed the persons and things concerned in places isolated from each other but in the same area, depending on the degree of contamination. The people were then housed in reed huts. These huts were arranged in rows apart from each other separated by fences and paths, so that only those concerned could communicate from a distance. Plague patients were taken to the infirmary hospital. The hospital was divided into small cells where the patients were housed. A French physician and an Egyptian assistant surgeon were responsible for the special care of these patients, who were treated according to the degree of their disease. The Chairman of the Extraordinary Commission carefully supervised these institutions. He represented the committee to the extent that he gave orders and was solely responsible for them. He had words. A report on the daily routine in the hospital and the hospital was submitted to the committee every day along with the medical reports and the progression status of the disease.

The Egyptian commissioners were stationed in the main neighborhoods of the city, their task was to visit the homes of their district every day, check their cleanliness, record the exact number of dead, determine the exact cause of death, and commission all that was public. The Health Care Service (Santé Publique) was of interest to report. In the event of a case of plague, the person concerned shall be immediately sequestered and imprisoned, if French hospitalized, if Egyptian, to another secluded place, but in any case under the care and supervision of a French physician.

All travelers, regardless of their origin, were treated in hospital. The committee's observation extended to camps, barracks, and populations across the country. The surgeons of the regiments under the command of the chief surgeon and members of the committee were to visit the soldiers' house every day and report to the committee everything that had happened. Army health officers (chiefs of hospitals) are subject to the same laws. For the French, this form of surveillance seemed so effective that in the end, 150,000 deaths were recorded among the indigenous population of Cairo and Upper Egypt[9].

**3. Painting of Napoleon Bonaparte visiting plague victims in Jaffa** [54], [55].

During the Egyptian campaign all those whose imagination was struck by fear died of it [the bubonic plague]. The surest protection, the most efficacious remedy, was moral courage.-Napoleon Bonaparte [46], [56], [57][10].

pl. 1. Painting of Napoleon Bonaparte visiting plague victims in Jaffa

pl. 2. Illustration from a painting of Napoleon Bonaparte visiting plague victims in Jaffa

pl. 3. Illustration from a painting of Napoleon Bonaparte visiting plague victims in Jaffa

Napoleon Bonaparte visits plague victims in Jaffa
Artist: Antoine Jean Grou
Year: 1804 AD
Materials: oil on canvas
Dimensions: 532cm x 720cm
Location: Louvre Museum in Paris
France/Bridgeman Art Library.
Technical information:
Date of creation of the work: 1804
Type of work: Nonfiction
The current romanticism, the neoclassical movement, orientalism
Materials: Oil paint, Canvas (Painting surface) [58].

Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting Plague Victims in Jaffa
Description: Painting on display at the Louvre Museum, Paris
Dimensions: 118.5 x 164.0 cm
Auguste-Hyacinthe Debay (French), (1804-1865)
Painter: Antoine-Jean Gros (French), (1771-1835)
Year: 1823
Material: Oil on canvas
Provenance: A. Denio Collection - Sylvanus Adams Denio Fund
Inv. No.: 47.1059
Accession Number: 47.1059
On March 21, 1799, 29-year-old Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) felt it incumbent to visit his troops who had contracted bubonic plague when they took the fortress at Jaffa (pls. 1-2-3), Palestine (modern-day Tel-Aviv, Israel), by storm. His goal was to dispel fear about a disease that had caused panic among his troops. René-Nicolas Desgenettes, the chief physician, and his general staff accompanied him. Desgenettes recorded the visit as follows:
The General walked through the hospital and its annex, spoke to almost all the soldiers who were conscious enough to hear him, and, for one hour and a half, with the greatest calm, busied himself with the details of the administration. While in a very small and crowded ward, he helped to lift, or rather to carry, the hideous corpse of a soldier whose torn uniform was soiled by the spontaneous bursting of an enormous abscessed bubo [1].

**A. About the painter Antoine - Jean Grou**

Antoine-Jean Grou (1771-1835), (pl. 4) a French painter born in Paris, who emerged strongly in the late eighteenth century and the

first decades of the nineteenth century, belonged to the neo-classical school, and was distinguished by his paintings of historical subjects, especially those Which depicts the glories of Napoleon Bonaparte, his battles and his conquests. In addition, he is at the forefront of preaching the trend of French Orientalism in the plastic arts, through a handful of works such as "Bonaparte addresses the army before the Battle of the Pyramids"; "The Battle of Nazareth"; "Battle of Abu Qir"; And all this without ever having traveled to the East, or set foot in the sites depicted in his works.

However, he enjoyed a close relationship with Bonaparte, since he painted his painting "The Battle of Arcole" in 1796, which caught the attention of the rising military commander who had just been promoted to the rank of general, and would accompany the French army's invasions in most of its battles inside Europe, especially during the years of the rise Bonaparte to the position of the emperor, after the latter appointed him inspector of publications, and then a commissioner to confiscate spoils that could enrich the Louvre.

In the context of his functions, and within his special relationship with the Emperor, Grou received an official assignment to perpetuate carefully selected examples of the general's exploits, especially when it was necessary to re-polish his military and human image after the setbacks of the Egyptian and Syrian campaigns, and after the British press began to expose him successively for committing war crimes and fleeing from the battlefields, and his return to France to confront the machinations that began to be hatched against him in Paris.

It is remarkable that Grou maintained his neo-classical style, and did not change it until after the fall of Bonaparte, when he moved to clearer realistic touches, such as the paintings “David Playing the Harp in Front of King Saul” (1822) and “Hercules and Diomedes” (1822). 1835), as if his association with the emperor’s paths had, in more than one way, consolidated his stylistic tendencies as well and kept them dependent on the functions required of him in the service of the empire, and therefore he did not change - in terms of form, content, and relationship with the recipient - only after the decline of those functions or the end of most of them. There are data indicating that, in the last years of his life, he realized the decline of his artistic status (compared to his colleagues, such as Pierre-Nerses Guérin, the owner of the painting "Bonaparte pardoning the Cairo rebels", in the year 1808), as well as his social status (given that King Charles The tenth had been given the title of Baron), which may explain his finding drowned in the Seine, near the city of Sèvres, and he left in his hat a note saying that he was "tired of life, betrayed by the last of the faculties that made it bearable."

Be that as it may, Grou, despite his success during the following stages through many paintings, dedicated him as one of the great neoclassics in French art, in contrast to the poles of the romantic current led by Delacroix. He was feeling great misery during the post-Napoleon years, and he believed in him a lot. And he put an end to his life himself in the year 1835, when he was sixty-four years old, by throwing himself into the course of the Seine River after walking the distance from his home in the Issy region, wandering, contributing thinking that his whole life was in vain, as he expressed in a letter he left in the studio and found it Carrying a nice farewell phrase to his wife, before his body was found floating in the river water.

Antoine-Jean Grou was between grief during the last twenty years of his life, particularly since the end of Napoleon. He owes his success to the imperial commander since he became acquainted with Josephine, the latter's wife, in Milan, Italy, where the authorities had entrusted him with the task of making an inventory of the paintings confiscated during the campaign against Italy, and she introduced him to her husband. It will be said that his work on this inventory was his real art school, which complemented what he had learned in his early youth in David's studio. Nevertheless, Grou, who would be awarded the title of Baron by Charles X in 1824, did not fail to develop himself and his work since his teacher, David, was exiled to Brussels, to take his place in working on the implementation of the murals of the Pantheon, but at the same time he plunged into official work to the extent that he was unable to Developing his artistic methods, so that he remained rigid in neoclassicism after this had become old-fashioned and undesirable.

This obviously exacerbated his melancholy. The sense of failure reached a fatal level after the last Salon in which he participated, and none of the three paintings he exhibited there seemed to have won the admiration of the critics, or even of the public, who still remembered well his old paintings, especially the Napoleonic ones. It was also clear that his reference to the dedication of these paintings to the memory of David, who had passed away from our world in 1825, did not add to the paintings any exceptional value.

The neoclassicism was gone without return, leaving the place empty for the romantics, led by Delacroix, who, in turn, was one of David's students, but he knew early on how to part with him, delving into more modern arts. However, this did not prevent Delacroix from speaking during his eulogy of Grou about "the latter's contributions to the renaissance of French art", and specifically about his sincerity in his political positions that he expressed in his art - referring without a doubt, especially to the painting "Bonaparte in Jaffa" in a veiled response to All those who spoke on the occasion of the painter's suicide spoke of "political opportunism" that characterizes that particular painting, pointing out that the painting is almost one of the most "demagogic and opportunistic" paintings painted for the late Emperor".

These words of Delacroix, who was in the French artistic life at the time, were the best compensation for Baron Grou for the disappointments that marked his life for more than twenty years, and led him to that suicide that saddened many of the French.

Grou was a student of the Neo-Classical painter Jacques-Louis David. However, this painting, sometimes also titled Napoleon Visiting the Pest House in Jaffa, is a proto-Romantic painting that points to the later style of Gericault and Delacroix. Grou was trained in David’s studio between 1785-1792, and is most well known for recording Napoleon’s military campaigns, which proved to be ideal subjects for exploring the exotic, violent, and heroic. In this painting, which measures more than 17 feet high and 23 feet wide, Grou depicted a legendary episode from Napoleon’s campaigns in Egypt (1798-1801).

However, his most prominent work, within the context of dedicating the orientalist line in French formation, was his famous painting

"Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims in Jaffa, on March 11, 1799", which is displayed today in the Parisian Louvre Museum, and had been shown for the first time in the Paris exhibition, in September 1804, arousing a wave of admiration even among his rival painters. The painting also raised discussion on issues, and thus problems, the introduction of eastern elements and climates to french painting in general, and to war and military subjects in particular.

**B. Description of the Painting**

The painting (pls. 1-2-3) "Bonaparte Visiting Plague Sufferers in Jaffa [59]" is considered one of the most powerful paintings that immortalized an unusual picture of the French general during his campaign in Egypt and the Near East in general. In contrast to the dozens and perhaps hundreds of paintings that were painted for the French military commander who would turn into an emperor after a while, extolling the highest degrees of pomp and majesty, this painting came to praise a human side in him that contradicts military pomp. Here he does not mount his horse, nor is he crowned in a cathedral, nor does he stand as a preacher as a maker of history telling his soldiers that four thousand years are looking at them and him from the top of the Egyptian pyramids, nor is he addressing the Muslims of the East as one of them, urging them against his English enemies... Rather, he is with all He simply visits a shelter in the Palestinian city of Jaffa, in which a large number of people infected with the plague were placed. He simply talks to them, prays for them to recover, and touches them without fear of infection. Perhaps people loved Napoleon through this painting more than they loved him through any other painting.

Historical blogs tell us that the visit immortalized by the French painter Baron Antoine-Jean Grou (1771-1835), was real by General Bonaparte on the day he moved from Cairo to Jaffa, and therefore there is no doubt that it is a real step that may carry a great deal of demagoguery and may be sincere, but the general did it. On the other hand, the same historical records tell us that the painter Grou was not there. That is, he was not among those who accompanied the French general on the visit, which he photographed about five years after its occurrence, in a painting more than five meters high and seven meters wide. The visit took place in 1799, while the painting was completed in 1804 to be shown at the Parisian Salon, achieving amazing reactions and great success without anyone asking himself whether the young painter, whose age did not exceed thirty-three, depicted it on nature or in his studio. In fact, he photographed it in the Parisian studio, based on details narrated to him by the scientist Saint Simone Danon, who was among the scientific team accompanying Bonaparte on his trip.

Here, Napoleon is shown visiting a convent in Jaffa that had been transformed into a hospital to house French soldiers devastated by the plague. In this officially sanctioned depiction of the Egyptian campaign, Bonaparte is portrayed courageously touching the sore of a plague victim in an effort to quell the fear of contagion. Serving as propaganda for the military leader, this gesture evokes Christ’s power to heal the sick. Debay (pl. 4), a pupil of Antoine-Jean Grou, painted this smaller and brighter copy after his teacher’s enormous painting (now in the Louvre), a work commissioned by Napoleon and exhibited in Paris in 1804, the year Napoleon became Emperor of France.

At the beginning, and in the preliminary sketches that the young painter wrote based on Danon's stories, Bonaparte appears standing at some distance from the injured, talking to them and consoling them. But in the final version, the painter brought him closer to them, and made him extend his hand calmly and lovingly, touching their wounds and injuries, as the kings and saints of France did in ancient times. The truth is that the painter's transfer of that behavior from the French royal history to the lands of the East carried great connotations that can be described today as "ideological claims" as well as demagoguery, but the young painter, who was known for his absolute support for Napoleon, was expressing in his painting a patriotic and human position without a doubt. In him, he was the one who, at the same time, aspired to become an official painter for the imperial court, succeeding his teacher, David, who is known to have spent a large part of his life and a large amount of his artistic talents in perpetuating the image of Napoleon, especially during his Egyptian campaign, field drawing dozens of paintings for him. However, the student Gru certainly surpassed his teacher, David, in the meanings he attached to the painting in question. Perhaps the funny thing about the story is that Grou, who had to stay in the place allocated to his studio in Versailles on the day the painting was shown for the first time and won a legendary success, was unable to leave his bed to attend the occasion because of his severe rheumatism, which prevented him from participating in one of the most glorious moments of his life.

It is a painting from 1804 AD commissioned by Napoleon Bonaparte to Antoine Jean Grou to depict one of the events of the Egyptian campaign. The scene shows Napoleon in a dazzling scene that supposedly took place in Jaffa on the eleventh of March 1799 AD, depicting Major General Bonaparte at the time during his visit to his sick soldiers in the Armenian monastery of St. Nicholas. The work was an attempt to improve Bonaparte's image and quell reports that Napoleon had ordered the administration of lethal doses of opium to fifty plague victims in Jaffa during his retreat from the Syrian expedition.

This painting is part of the French Paintings Collection of the Louvre Museum in France, the painting was displayed on the eighteenth of September 1804 AD in the Paris Salon between declaring Napoleon emperor on the eighteenth of May and his coronation in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on the second of December, and Dominique Vivant Denon - who participated in Bonaparte's mission to Egypt and was director of the Louvre Museum - became an advisor Grous about the painting.

The painting depicts Bonaparte visiting a group of patients with bubonic plague, which had intensified on French soldiers after the siege and invasion of Jaffa. The general, having risen to the rank of first consul and preparing to be crowned as emperor in the Church of Notre Dame, had commissioned the painting to beautify his image and clear his conduct from the outrageous accusations that circulated at the time, not only regarding the liquidation of 3,000 prisoners of the garrison of Jaffa, but also the abandonment of his soldiers and the return to Cairo, then to Paris, and ordered him to poison all the plague-stricken among his soldiers themselves,

especially since the winds in France began to go against his plans.

The scene of Grou's painting takes place in a mosque, and here is the first lie that exposes the tendency to Orientalist fabrication and the crowding of columns, decorations, archways, and minarets. Multiple historical sources record that the French military infirmary that was designated for plague patients was established on Mount Carmel and not in any other location, in addition to being a mosque. The second complementary element to the first lie is Bonaparte appearing as Jesus Christ healing leprosy, or the healing king (Roi thaumaturgique), in another interpretation that recalls the French traditions prevailing in that era, when the general touches the chest of a patient, while the chief physician officer tries to prevent him, Behind him, a third officer puts a handkerchief over his mouth, among other additional suggestions intended to lead the public to believe that Bonaparte is brave and sympathetic to his sick soldiers, and is not afraid of infection.

In the visual perspective, the painting appears to be divided into a luminous middle part that bathes in bright light, which is the area for Bonaparte and his officers to stand. Parts on the starboard, left, and bottom are plunged into darkness, occupied by the plague-stricken and some of the Arabs in charge of their service, who wear Egyptian clothes in a style that will be perpetuated by later orientalist works. In the deep background, through the arcades of the supposed mosque, the walls of Jaffa appear from which smoke rises and the French flag rises on them, as well as part of the Monastery of St. Nicholas of the Armenian Catholic Church, and one of its towers has assumed a shape that suggests a strange minaret looming as if a cross was raised above it. There is no escaping, of course, from the presence of a crouching camel in the near background, because the East cannot be captured in a Western representation and the "ship of the desert" is absent from the scene!

**C. The painting Configuration**

This painting uses compositional elements from Jacques-Louis David's Oath of the Brothers Horace, also in the Louvre; One of these elements is the three arcs of the Oath of the Brothers painting, which represent three different worlds (the three sons taking their oaths at the arc at the left, the father brandishing swords in the middle, and the women grieving at the arc on the right), a principle dealt with in this painting as well. And sometimes people mistakenly think that the place depicted in the painting is a mosque when in fact it is the Armenian Monastery of St. Nicholas whose courtyard can be seen in the background, as we see the walls of Jaffa in a place farther in the background with a cracked tower above which the huge flag of France appears above, and the city is covered with smoke from a fire Or thick smoke from a cannon. At the top left - and under the typical Egyptian horseshoe arch - appears a man in oriental clothes distributing bread with the help of his servant carrying a basket of bread. Behind them appear two black men carrying a stretcher with what appears to be a corpse.

Napoleon appears on the right under the bowstrings and a broken bow in the company of his officers, touching the armpit that one of the patients had shown him, and an Arab physician appears in front of him attending to another patient, while a blind man strives to reach the brigade. The bottom of the painting is occupied by sprawled and exhausted men. The light of the painting and the play of its colors also depict Bonaparte's gesture in the best possible light.

**The mysterious number "32"**

With regard to the interpretation of the painting, the number 32 on the hat of one of the patients raised the question about its significance since time immemorial; Since Grous was 32 at the time of his composition, the shy nude prisoner may have been a concealed self-portrait. Conversely, it could be a reflection of the mobilization of soldiers (the 32$^{nd}$ Brigade unit was one of the French units committed to the Egyptian campaign).

**D. Scene analysis**

The French army seized and plundered Jaffa under the leadership of Bonaparte on the seventh of March 1799 AD, and this was quickly followed by the spread of bubonic plague, which was discovered in January 1799 AD, when it destroyed the army. Then on March 11 Bonaparte visited his sick soldiers and touched them—it was either an act of stupor or suicidal—depending on one's view of the Napoleonic myth or of the horrors of the plague age. The Napoleonic army asked the Armenian priests for help, and they provided them with the treatment that helped heal some of the soldiers. Napoleon personally thanked the Armenian Sheikh and gave him his tent and his sword. The sick man with the blindfold on the right suffers from blindness, as well as the plague, and many Frenchmen have suffered from serious eye problems since the army arrived in Egypt in July 1798 AD due to sand, dust, and intense sunlight**.**

In 1804 AD, there was no doubt that this was described as a bold act of Bonaparte, but the officer behind Bonaparte was trying to stop him from touching the ring; The means of plague transmission were unknown at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the role of fleas in the transmission of infection was not known until Paul Louis Simond found evidence of that in 1898 AD. ) are at the same risk of disease transmission by fleas. The act of the officer on the left covering his mouth and nose is not unjustified, but nevertheless; some cases of bubonic plague can develop into pneumonic plague and have an extremely high rate of transmission from aerosols emitted by patients' coughs.

The medical effort, which can be seen a little farther to the right in the painting, to try to stop the plague has not changed since the Middle Ages; Where an old physician incises the boil so that the pus inside flows out.. This method is actually useless to treat the disease, but it may weaken the patient more. The physician operates on a urticaria under his patient's raised arm as he holds a blood pressure compressor and wipes its blade to prepare for the incision of another urticaria. A physician assistant supports the patient during the procedure. Bodies are sick and weak, and the hero seems less noble because there are ordinary people around him. Idealism and classicism were left in this painting until a specific romantic style appears in it. This means that it is in the form of a painting,

and that is considered modernity, because he had previously only painted the death of noble persons.

On the twenty-third of April 1799 AD, during the siege of Acre, Bonaparte suggested to Desgenets - who is the chief physician of the mission - that he should give patients lethal doses of opium, as a mercy killing .. But Desgenets refused. On the twenty-seventh of May of the same year, Napoleon made a second visit to the plague victims. In the context of the troubadour's style, and especially at the moment when Napoleon was crowned emperor, this incident triggered the imitation of the thaumaturgical royal touch which the French kings performed on patients with scrofula.

**E. The pamphlet accompanying the painting**

In the 1804 exhibition was published under the title "Bonaparte, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the East, at the moment he touched a plague tumor during a visit to Jaffa Hospital." As if it were not enough that the painting conveys a high dose of propaganda, and is completely naked in its declared and implied messages, until it had to include Exposition literature itself is revered. In one of the passages it says the following: "In order to remove the frightful notion of an immediate and incurable contagion, the commander stood before plague tumors, and touched many of them. And so this commander, by this lofty devotion, gave the first example of courage hitherto unequaled, which will have imitators from a distance." As for the reality on the ground, and the general's behavior in the violation of Jaffa specifically during that phase of "high devotion" itself, the majority of historians, and the French among them before others, agreed that it was among the worst, most brutal and bloody throughout history.

For example, Jacques-François Miot writes in "Memoirs for the Service of the History of the Missions in Egypt and Syria" (1814), that recalling the facts of the siege of Jaffa "shakes my hand, which was unable to write all the horrors," and among them is that Bonaparte communicated with The governor of Jaffa, Abd Allah Bey, gave him safety and a promise to preserve the lives of his soldiers if he surrendered, then he broke his promise and ordered the well-known massacre that wiped out 3,000 to 4,000 members of the garrison. In order to provide bullets, orders were issued to use bayonets and white weapons, and those who managed to flee were chased into the sea and harvested by the French guns until the waves turned red. Among these horrors, too, was Bonaparte's ordering René-du-Freich-Dejonet, chief physician in the army, to annihilate 30 sick and disabled French soldiers by injecting them with poisonous doses of tincture of opium; When the officer refused to carry out the order, the general resorted to the chief pharmacist, who complied with the order, and the bodies of the dead soldiers were left lying in the open on Mount Carmel.

Moreover, some French research questions the validity of the visit depicted in Grou's painting, and some even go so far as to completely deny any visit by Bonaparte to a sanatorium or hospital containing plague patients. This is the position of Jean-Philippe Chimot in his research entitled "The Truth About a Lie" [59], which indicates that General Berthier, who was closely associated with the campaign, does not mention anything about the incident of the visit; Such is the case of Burien, the general's personal secretary, who says that the general passed near a quarantine, whacked his horse and galloped off! "Isn't Jaffa Gro a small lie within a grave mistake, or a grave mistake within a coveted entrance to the fires of the Orientalist dream?" Shimo wonders, and adds: "If we slip from describing the usual tinkering within the 'ideological state apparatus', to a more theoretical position, it will be said that patients are sick. The plague [in Grou's painting] is not a metaphor describing a lie, but rather transforming it into an artificial model."

Here, we must not forget the fact that the plague struck the French army in Alexandria and Damietta first, and then intensified during the Syrian campaign, and during the siege of Jaffa in particular, so that historical sources indicated approximately 30 deaths per day; Despite this, Bonaparte, and his medical officers behind him, refused to use the term "epidemic", and contented themselves with talking about a non-infectious "fever", until the spread of the disease worsened and reached a degree that could no longer be denied (in the lower right part of Gro's painting it appears among the infected French officer, physician).

And here is one of the paradoxes of the propaganda dimension in the painting: fabricating the general's courage in touching the boils of the plague, on the one hand, and reassuring French public opinion that the plague is not contagious by touch, on the other hand. Somehow, and in an implicit denunciation of the function of the king's healer by touch, Bonaparte appears in Gru's painting closer to embodying the rationality of the Age of Enlightenment in banishing hoaxes and superstitions regarding the plague, by giving an example and touching the infected body.

Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, a professor of art history at the University of California, argues that Grou's work has a deeper meaning, and a more dangerous job, than just beautifying the emperor's face, which became ugly after the failures of Acre and the news of war crimes. The painting was shown to the French public during a very delicate political phase in the life of France that involved the transition from the consular system to the empire, the announcement of Bonaparte's coronation in the previous spring and then its postponement to December, the ending of the Treaty of Amiens with England, and the escalation of royal conspiracies against Bonaparte. In this sense, Grou's painting was not only glorifying the emperor, but also storming the public space, armed with a special orientalist tool, inciting more dissension within the ranks of the republicans and royalists alike, and granting power additional margins for maneuver between internal and external policies [60].

In the end, Grigsby continues, this is a painting that enjoyed wide popularity because it is related to the emperor and his campaigns in Egypt and Syria, but it is strange that it does not capture a glorious moment or an incident that calls for national pride, such as Bonaparte's victorious battles, for example.

Regardless of the areas of light in which the general and his officers swim, which distinguishes this painting from, or perhaps puts it in conflict with other prominent works witnessed in the Bonapartist era itself, such as Grou's painting himself, "Bonaparte addresses the army before the Battle of the Pyramids" (1810), or Guerin's painting Bonaparte pardons the Cairo rebels. It is no less interesting that, in 1810, Grou's work was chosen for the highest prize for a military painting of the entire Bonapartist Empire, although the

revolutionary climate of that period held a special veneration for the citizen-soldier, and his image was not a victim of the plague (outside France, In Jaffa, and the son of the Arab country offers him bread!) She is the desired happy example! So how if it is for the same painter who presented the French soldier in a revolutionary and honorable republican cuticle, in his painting "The Battle of Nazareth"?

Grigsby quotes a dialogue during the Exhibition of 1804 between Growe and an onlooker:

Are these plague patients from Egypt?

No, they are French.

- Why, then, did they take for themselves the shape and character of Egypt?

Grigsby commented: "In this moody reversal of the Orientalist opposition between the civil man and the barbarian, it is clear that Grou's painting destabilizes the easy assumption associated with the processes of Orientalist painting, a drawing that has always settled on glorifying the West and marginalizing the East, at least implicitly if not explicitly." And the position of the opposite in the painting Grou explains why historians of modern art have largely failed to discuss the painting in terms of the colonial connection between cultures, and have preferred to make general observations about its exotic and oriental character, and its glorification of the personality of Napoleon from the point of view of propaganda.

In fact, the majority of readings in Grou's work did not stop at, and many of them did not notice the tension reflected in its elements between the classic national concepts of identity in terms of the series of representations embodied first by Bonaparte, and his officers around and after him next, and between those concepts that became involved in Conflicting binaries of the colonialist and colonized style, the self and the other, the French and the Arab, down to the immediate factual background in the painting: the healer (whether French or Arab) in front of the plague sufferer (and he is exclusively French this time). It is not a fleeting detail that unique stare of the Arab carrying the basket of bread, and his look behind the back at Bonaparte, and his gigantic body structure and single virility, which contrasts with the figures of the plague-sick French.

In the deep imperialist and geo-political background of the first births of French Orientalism, lurked the idea of forming the “Army of the East” in April 1798, and assigning Bonaparte to lead it, amid great secrecy that was quickly exposed by the massive preparations to start the campaign in Egypt: 50,000 soldiers and officers; 400 warships; 1,000 artillery pieces; 700 hp; 567 vehicles; In addition to a detachment that rarely accompanies the invading armies, consisting of dozens of scholars in history, geography, archeology, religions, applied sciences, mines and metallurgy. It should be recalled here that the French project to invade Egypt had a precedent of great significance, dating back to the year 1672 when the famous German scientist and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz traveled to Paris to meet King Louis XIV and present his pamphlet entitled "Thoughts on Public Safety" to him, in which he proposes that countries reconcile. Europe and stop waging wars with each other, and instead go to the conquest of the Muslim world. The beginning of the project is that the French army will begin to occupy Egypt, so that "France will become the master of the Mediterranean, the cornerstone of the French empire, and the gateway to control of the road to India[61]." In his book "Orientalism" (1978), Edward Said stopped at the close alliance between empire and the sciences of Orientalism within the context of that campaign".

It is known that Saeed's abstracts were limited to written literature and rhetorical material, and he did not discuss other fields of French Orientalism, such as the plastic arts, the subject of these lines, for example. Within the framework of the logical consequences of such contexts, it is difficult to exclude the influences of that era, the orientalist works of Grou, and the Jaffa Plague painting in particular, in the gradual formation of a parallel orientalist current in turn, but it is more focused on the major turns of history and not the great individuals alone, as is the case in the official assignment he received. Eugene Delacroix in 1840 to paint the painting, "The Crusaders' Entry into Constantinople", to be placed in the Museum of the History of France inside the Palace of Versailles.

Thus, the painting "Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims in Jaffa, on March 11, 1799" is more than just a fabricated propaganda "blunder", because it not only served a series of political goals in a very critical phase, but also ended, at the consolidation of an orientalist line that will grow and grow and settle in the formation French, starting from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and reaching artistic peaks witnessed by the likes of Jean-Leon Jerome, Jean-Dominique Anger, and Eugene Fromentan. It is not in vain that the large-scale painting contains elements of beautification and glorification of the general, against a dazzling and attractive orientalist background worthy of unleashing the popular imagination, taking into account a special and decisive requirement: that its theater should not be ordinary or familiar, and that it suggests the mosque alone.

In this option, the classic mixture of: fueling Christian religious extremism in France, harnessing the cultural shock between the mosque and the Armenian monastery, and completing the image that Bonaparte sought to spread immediately after his anchoring on the mainland of Egypt in the summer of 1798 as "the secret Askar al-Kabir", and "Bonaparte is a prince.

"French armies" and "the great Sultan Ali Bonaparte", or who said in the first invasion publication: "More than the Mamluks, I worship God Almighty and respect His Prophet and the Great Qur'an." In focusing on the plague scene in particular, an ingenious and malicious attempt at the same time, with a highly talented pen, and an innovative or unusual orientalist style, to reflect the verse: the fact that epidemics are associated with colonial projects in general, and with the French campaign on Egypt and Syria in particular. In addition to this, there is no harm in the plague appearing as a metaphor of some kind, summing up the evils and sins of the East, and embodying the burdens of civilizing the savages that the emperor bore on his shoulders!

**4. Implications of the Visit and the Painting**

**A. The Impact of the Visit through the Painting**

On March 21, 1799, in a makeshift hospital in Jaffa, Napoleon visited his troops stricken with the bubonic plague. Gros depicts Napoleon attempting to calm the growing panic over the contagion by fearlessly touching the sores of a plague victim. Like earlier neoclassical paintings such as David's Death of Marat, Gros combines Christian iconography, in this case Christ healing the sick, with contemporary subject matter. He also draws on classical antiquity by depicting Napoleon in the same location as the ancient Greek sculpture, the Apollo Belvedere. In this way, he imbues Napoleon with divine qualities while simultaneously portraying him as a military hero. Unlike David, however, Gros uses warm, sensual colors and focuses on the dead and dying who occupy the foreground of the painting. We see a similar approach later in Delacroix's painting Liberty Leading the People (1830).

Napoleon was adept at using art to manipulate his public image. Indeed, he had ordered the killing of prisoners he could not house or feed, and he poisoned his own troops who were dying of the plague during his retreat from Jaffa [62]. Napoleon's visit clearly had its intended effect; there was less fear among the troops, and morale was boosted. Napoleon never contracted the plague, although the same could not be said for many of his other officers, including General Grézieu. Three days after Napoleon's visit to the hospital, he and the main army left to capture Haifa and Acre. General Bonaparte ordered General Grézieu to remain in Jaffa with 150 soldiers and 300 soldiers infected with the plague. Within a day, Grézieu contracted the plague and died [1].

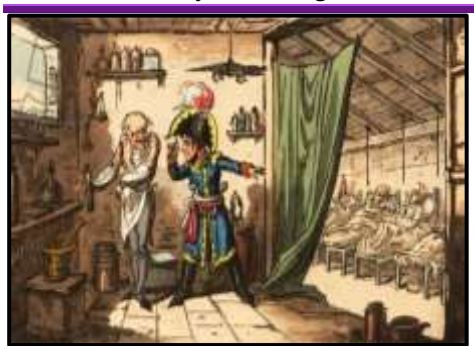
Etienne-Louise Malus, the person in charge of the plague hospital, wrote: "For ten days, I went there diligently and spent every morning in the stench of that cloak, every corner of which was crowded with sick people. It was only on the eleventh day that I noticed symptoms of the plague. This was about the time when the commander-in-chief, Grézieu, died; half the garrison had already been struck by that time. About thirty men died every day, about one man out of twelve survived, the plague was in every house in the town, the Capuchin monks quarantined themselves to avoid infection, and almost all of them died [52]." Amazingly, Malus survived these horrific conditions. French doctors did their best to prevent the spread of the plague. This was difficult because the cause of the plague would not be identified for another 100 years. Prevention techniques developed by Desgenettes and Larrey included changing the layout of the camps, isolating plague victims, and keeping soldiers as clean as possible.

In 1849 during the Second French Republic, Charles-Louis Muller[11] (1815-1892), a student of Grou, apparently used Grou's painting Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken at Jaffa as a model for his heroic painting Pinel Orders the Chains Removed from the Insane at Bicêtre [63] (pl. 5). Oil on canvas, Unlike those of Napoleon Bonaparte, the motives of Philippe Pinel [64][12] and Jean-Baptiste Pussin [65][13] seem unassailable [60], [66].

pl. 4. Pinel orders the removal of chains from the mad at Bicêtre
Charles-Louis Muller
Year: 1849
Oil on canvas
Bibliothèque de l'Académie Nationale de Médecine, Paris

**B. Bonaparte's poisoning of the sick soldiers in Jaffa**

When the army reached Jaffa, Napoleon, worried that the Turks would capture his army, consulted with Degenetes. According to Desgenettes, Napoleon said, "If I were in your place, I should put an end to the suffering of our plague patients and, at the same time, the danger they pose to us, by giving them [an overdose of] opium." However, Degenetes disagreed, regarding Bonaparte as his duty to preserve life. Bonaparte stated that it was his duty to preserve the army. Napoleon said, "I will not try to overcome your scruples, but I think I will find people who will appreciate my intentions more than you."



pl. 5. Napoleon Bonaparte orders the poisoning of plague-stricken French troops after the Siege of Jaffa (March 11, 1799)
Photograph
Egyptian Campaign, 1799
Antoine-Jean Gros
1804
Colored hand-engraving on copperplate
George Cruikshank
Oil on canvas, 5.32 x 7.15 meters
Musée du Louvre

Napoleon was clearly worried about the survival of his army. On May 27, 1799, he ordered that the remaining plague patients at Jaffa be poisoned. According to Bourienne, "Napoleon paced rapidly through the wards, striking the yellow cuffs of his boots with a riding whip...'The Turks will be here in a few hours [he said]. Let all those strong enough to get up come with us; they will be carried on litters and horses'...The complete silence and apathy of the men...announced their imminent end [49]."

What happened next is surrounded in controversy. Napoleon definitely gave orders to poison the 50 or so remaining soldiers. Dr. Desgenettes refused, so Royer, the chief pharmacist, administered the doses of laudanum. There is no record of any of the soldiers dying from the poison, although several claim to have survived the poisoning and the plague (pl. 5). Indeed, the Turks apparently found seven soldiers alive at the hospital when they entered Jaffa. The French soldiers recovered from plague and were cared for by the British navy [1].

Before Bonaparte left Jaffa, there were at least 7 or 8 French soldiers infected with the plague. It was clear that they would not recover and that their presence would spread the infection among the ranks of the French army. Some of the patients thought that the French forces would abandon them and that they would be left to the Turks When the Turks entered Jaffa, the sick would be exposed, according to their expression, the "Dreadful Tortures" inflicted on the prisoners. Many foreign sources recall that Bonaparte requested that there be a "merciful death" for those infected with the plague by giving them doses of opium. After all, his leaders and his physicians realized that they would not recover. This was seen of as a "virtue" and not a "crime." He had to make a decision about giving them a "merciful death" by giving the sick soldiers doses of opium, or letting them die as a result of torture at the hands of the Turks.

Bonaparte's request to kill his infected soldiers with doses of opium became known widely in Europe. Sir Robert Wilson mentioned that the "bloodthirsty monster", meaning Bonaparte, had poisoned 580 of his sick soldiers in Jaffa. The opium was just to relieve itself of the hassle of caring for them. This was a rumor popularized and believed throughout Europe and America.

Bonaparte denied that he had poisoned his soldiers and that if he had done so, his soldiers would have insulted and turned against him. Therefore it can be said that the accusations against Bonaparte were "just propaganda" in order to harm the French and the person of Bonaparte, as said by Sir Sydney Smith. He was the archenemy of Bonaparte who entered Jaffa immediately after leaving the French army. He was not given any hint about Bonaparte poisoning a number of his soldiers. At the same time, Bonaparte affirmed that the patients were his children and that he loved them. He had not committed any manner of crime against the patients and despite all of the defamation against his person, he was not afraid [45]. Bonaparte demonstrated his position on the sick by leaving the sick alive. He ordered 400 - 500 French cavalry soldiers to guard them in Jaffa in order to prevent their torture at the hands of the Ottomans. Most of the patients died before the French forces left for Acre. It was said after that Sidney Smith found that only one or two of these patients were alive but French sources did not mention leaving any of the patients behind. Most probably, the accusations that Bonaparte poisoned the soldiers who had been infected with the plague by giving them large doses of opium are not supported historically. They may have come about in the context of offending France, Bonaparte and the French army in the atmosphere of colonial rivalry present between France and many other European powers.

Other members of his staff also document the visit. One wrote, “This action, which shows a deep political instinct, has produced an excellent effect. Already there is less fear [1].”Still, there were mixed feelings about Bonaparte’s attack at Jaffa, where the men had taken ill. When attacking the walled fortress by storm on March 7 and 8, his troops ran amok and, in their fury, slaughtered soldiers, women, and children, both Christians and Muslims. Moreover, 2500 to 3000 Turkish troops who had surrendered were taken to a beach over the next several days and killed by the French troops. It was claimed that some of those who surrendered had betrayed

an amnesty given them by the French at El Arish in an earlier battle and had re-entered the fighting force. The French insisted that they had no means to manage such a large contingent of prisoners and could not spare the resources to take them to Egypt. Shocked by this event, Citizen Peyrusse wrote home to his mother regarding his shame about the attack. He wrote when taking a city by storm, the looting, burning, and indiscriminate killing was something demanded by the laws of war, and humanity covers these horrors with a veil. But that, two or three days after the attack, when passions have calmed down, one should order, in cold-blooded savagery, the murder of 3000 men who have surrendered to us in good faith! Posterity no doubt will pass judgment on this atrocity, and those who ordered it will find their places among the butchers of humanity [1].

Two days after this visit, Bonaparte ordered that local Christians be forcibly recruited to help care for the plague-stricken and departed with his army, marching north to Acre, Syria, to repel the Ottoman empire, who had declared war on France, Bonaparte had invaded Egypt the previous summer and defeated the ruling Mamelukes outside Cairo at the Battle of the Pyramids. His claim to be a friend of Islam whose goal was to liberate the Egyptians from the oppression of the Mamelukes was not accepted by the local populace, but initially they passively acquiesced to French rule. However, in response to Bonaparte's invasion, the Ottoman Empire declared war on France. Bonaparte's response was to lead 13 000 French troops into Syria (present-day Israel) to prevent the Turks from advancing on Egypt. After capturing El Arish, Gaza, and Jaffa, he expected to be victorious at Acre. However, after a 2-month siege, he failed to defeat the Turks, who were reinforced from the sea by the British and aided in their fortifications and with their artillery by one of his own French military school classmates, a royalist who had left France during the revolution.

**C. Bonaparte's letters from Jaffa and to Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar**

The resistance against the French campaign in Jaffa did not stop. The people of Nablus attacked the French forces present in Jaffa more than once, and killed and wounded many of them. Bonaparte, when in Jaffa, sent two of his most famous messages on March 9th 1799. The first message was addressed to the inhabitants of Palestine and the other to Ahmed Pasha El-Jazzar. In the first message addressed to the sheiks, scholars and other residents of the governorates of Gaza, Ramla and Jaffa, Bonaparte stated that he had come to Palestine only to expel the Mamluks and the army of Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar, who he saw as not entitled to extend his influence to the areas of Jaffa, Ramla, and Gaza. Bonaparte questioned the right that Ahmad Pasha El-Jazzar thought he had when he sent his forces to Al-Arish. This is what pushed him to war. Bonaparte asked the people of Palestine to maintain calm, confirming that those who befriended him would thrive and that those who would fought against him would perish, followed by stating what happened in Jaffa and Gaza.

As for Bonaparte's message to Ahmed Pasha Al-Jazzar on the same day, he said that since his entry into Egypt, he had informed the latter several times that he was not intending to launch a war against him. His sole goal was to expel the Mamluks. The Sultan had not responded to any of the proposals that he had submitted to him and that he hoped to end Ibrahim Bey's presence on the Egyptian border. Instead of doing so, he sent his forces into Gaza and collected a lot of ammunition. He stored it on all fronts which threatened his imminent entry into Egypt. He got the invasion underway after sending 2,000 of his men to Al-Arish Castle [45]. This represented 6 military divisions inside the territory of Egypt which made it obligatory for Bonaparte to start from Cairo and go to war against him. Bonaparte confirmed that the governorates of Gaza, Ramla and Jaffa were under his authority and that he had dealt with the soldiers of Ahmed's Pasha El-Jazzar who placed themselves at his mercy with great generosity. He dealt with those who violated the laws of war and stood against him cruelly, stressing that he would march militarily within "a few days" to Acre.

Bonaparte expressed his desire to be charitable to Ahmed Pasha El-Jazzar and not to offend him as an old man as he was about to die. He stressed that there was no real reason for him to be his enemy because he was an enemy of the Mamluks. In his letter, Bonaparte also confirmed that the provinces governed by Ahmed Pasha El-Jazzar were separated from Egypt by his control of the governorates of Gaza and Ramla. Bonaparte asked Ahmed Pasha El-Jazzar to be a friend again and to be an enemy of the Mamluks and the British. If this was the case, he would be blessed. If he did not respond, he would harm him. Bonaparte asked El-Jazzar to send a response by a man with full powers and for him to present himself to the French army with a white flag. He would order his soldiers to provide safe passage for him. This was paired with confirming that on March 24th 1799, he was going to march his army to Acre. El-Jazzar's reply to his message would need to come at least one day befor. Ahmad Pasha El-Jazzar responded to Bonaparte's message with an oral message saying the following: "I will not write to you, because I am determined not to communicate with you. You can walk to Acre whenever you want. I will be ready for you, and I will bury myself under the rubble of the place, instead of letting it fall in your hands".

Jaffa during Bonaparte's withdrawal from Palestine Bonaparte issued his orders before heading to Acre to organize Jaffa from an administrative standpoint, as he had done in Gaza. However, the implementation of this organization did not take place due to his short stay in the country and the local contradictions, especially from the Muslims who did not adapt to the ideas of the French Republic that Bonaparte tried to impose. They saw in them completely strange ideas and were not ready to implement them [45].

**D. Napoleon's Use of Paintings to Give a Heroic Appearance to his Conquests**

It's true that Bonaparte wasn't the innovator of this type of political propaganda through paintings, but since the early nineteenth century, he was the first in a series of tyrants who saw fit to amuse their subjects with their noble features, visible at every turn. However, there is a significant and fundamental difference here: the paintings depicting Napoleon quickly became enduring works of art. Painted by great artists, they were ultimately exposed as trivial works devoid of art, even if these tyrants themselves, due to their generally poor artistic tastes, considered them to be the ultimate in art. So, for Napoleon, the situation was different. Of the many painters who spent years of their lives depicting the conquering emperor, there were at least two whose works of Napoleon

were among their greatest, perhaps because they truly believed in him and his greatness. Hence, their paintings became true works of art. These two artists are Baron Groux and Jacques-Louis David. While the latter's works are distinguished by their neoclassicism and the brilliance of their compositions and colors, there is at least one work, among Groux's many Napoleonic works, that stands out in itself and bears all the elements of great art. This work is the large painting Groux painted in 1804, depicting a visit made by Napoleon, during his Egyptian and general Eastern campaign, to a plague shelter in the Palestinian city of Jaffa.

At that time, Antoine-Jean Gros was the Emperor's official painter, accompanying him on all his campaigns and conquests, returning with sketches that would quickly become paintings. Indeed, during Bonaparte's campaign in Italy, Gros was tasked by the Emperor with selecting the artworks, collectibles, and antiques that would be plundered and transported to decorate French museums and palaces. Interestingly, Gros did not accompany his master to Egypt, nor did he visit him at any stage of his campaign. Nevertheless, in this painting, he was able to express, more than any other artist, the spirit of Napoleon's presence in the East. The combination of classicism, realism, and romanticism that characterizes this painting would powerfully influence entire generations of French painters, including, in particular, Géricault and Delacroix. Painful and eerie, yet also humane and heroic, is the atmosphere that dominates the painting "Napoleon Visiting the Plague Hospital." This painting was painted by Grou based on what he had been told, the details of its conception, and perhaps also on sketches by minor artists accompanying the campaign. What's important is that those who viewed the painting after its completion were amazed by its realism, whether in terms of the general oriental décor, the atmosphere of death and pain that dominates the hospital, or, finally, Napoleon's own treatment of the scene.

Grou had heard from eyewitnesses how the Emperor had occupied Jaffa, and one of his first visits to the city was to the inn that served as a hospital. Napoleon's initial intention was to visit his wounded soldiers, who had been taken there, but suddenly he found himself surrounded by plague patients and other victims, and he could only stand and pat them, comforting them. Thus, the painter depicts him standing in the center of the painting, both majestic and human, touching a man afflicted with the plague with his finger. It is clear that the painter deliberately placed his master in this position, on the one hand to demonstrate his humanitarianism, but on the other hand to portray the Emperor as a transcendent being, unaffected by disease and germs, and unafraid of contracting any infection. In this painting, then, Antoine-Jean Gros portrayed his humanism through realistic depictions of the figures, and his romanticism through the oriental setting, with its magnificent arches and the mystical colors that fill the background of the painting. These intense, intense colors create an emotional; some might say hellish, impression, given the background's ability to highlight the dominance of disease over the entire space. In the foreground of the painting, we have the patients, and perhaps the dead themselves, starting with the French doctor who occupies the lower left corner of the painting, cradling a dying patient, and continuing to the officer whose wounds have left him blind, groping his way among the dead and wounded, passing by the scattered corpses and officers wearing oriental turbans.

Since Antoine-Jean Gros completed and exhibited this painting, its impact has been profound, both politically and artistically. Politically, it bestowed on Napoleon surprising qualities and characteristics that resonated with the minds and hearts of humanists. Artistically, this monumental painting excited the artists of the era, particularly Gros' own students, who held a banquet for their master, applauding the painting for a long time, and gazing with pride and amazement at a work that now stands before us in the Louvre Museum, no less than 720 cm wide and 532 cm high. Strangely enough, Gros himself, who was born in Paris in 1771 to artist parents and studied painting in Italy before joining Napoleon and becoming his official painter, changed his vocation after the fall of Napoleon in 1815, joining the Bourbons and becoming a romantic painter under their patronage. He even went so far as to depict the Bourbon kings and princes in portraits based on his earlier paintings of Napoleon. In 1824, Charles X granted Gros the title of baron, but the painter's final years were not good. Critics began to ridicule him and his art, and an unhappy late marriage contributed to his further decline, culminating in his suicide by throwing himself into the Seine in 1835.

**Fourth: The Beginning of the Withdrawal of French Forces after the Failure of the Campaign**

**1. The Failure of the Campaign in Syria and Palestine**

The French forces left Jaffa on March 14th 1799 for Acre, which they failed to occupy due to Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar's boldness, the immunity of the walls of Acre, the spread of the plague in abundance among the French forces and the help of the British fleet which prevented supplies from reaching Bonaparte across the Mediterranean from both Egypt and France. After the failure of the French campaign against Acre on May 21st 1799, the French army camp was dismantled. During its withdrawal and return to Egypt from Caesarea to Jaffa, all of the areas previously occupied were set alight. Both the Turks and Arabs attacked the French army and killed a number of them. A number of the French soldiers died because they were sick due to the heat of the air and the inflamed sand. They were unable to keeping up with their comrades so Bonaparte stopped in Jaffa to think about what to do with the patients in the hospitals. That was on May 25th 1799 and Bonaparte remained in Jaffa until May 27th 1799. The next day, May 28th they resumed the walk with what remained of his army to Egypt. After this, the "catastrophic" military campaign against Palestine ended.

On May 17, Bonaparte issued a proclamation that his army would retreat from Acre; his final assault had failed. Plague had accompanied the French from Jaffa and there was plague in Acre, too, but it was not the reason for the failure to take Acre, and plague had not affected the majority of Bonaparte's troops; the reasons for retreat were military, not disease. Still, on May 27 Bonaparte, in reporting his victories to the Directory (the governing body in France), wrote that conditions were favorable to capture Acre but that our spies, deserters, and our prisoners all reported that plague was ravaging the city, If the soldiers had entered the city. they would have brought back into camp the germs of that horrible evil, which is more to be feared than all the armies in the

world [1]. Thus, Bonaparte used the plague as an excuse for his failure at Acre. Before the retreat, Bonaparte remarked to Desgenettes (witnessed by General Berthier) that, to maintain his army, if he were in the physician's position, he would put an end to the suffering of the soldiers who did have plague, and their risk to others, by administering each of them an overdose of opium [1]. He said that this would be his choice if he were severely ill with plague, but the physician responded that his task was to preserve life; he knew that plague was not uniformly fatal. Bonaparte did not seek to overcome Desgenettes's scruples but replied that he believed he could find others who would appreciate his intentions.

On May 24, the army in retreat reached Jaffa and rested there for 4 days before moving on toward Egypt. On May 25 and 27, arrangements were made to transport 1300 wounded soldiers and plague patients ahead on foot, by horse, by litter, or by sea. On May 27, Bonaparte again visited the plague hospital in Jaffa, telling the 50 or so soldiers who remained: "The Turks will be here in a few hours. Let all those strong enough to get up come with us; they will be carried on litters and horses." (He then ordered that any remaining soldiers be poisoned with opium. The laudanum (opium) was obtained from Hadj Mustafa, a Turkish physician from Constantinople who was in Jaffa, and administered to them by Royer, the chief pharmacist. Herold [1] suggests that there is reason to believe that the men were deliberately given an insufficient dose.

Others, according to Dr Desgenettes, threw up the laudanum, recovered from plague, and told what had happened to them. Indeed, there is no evidence that any of these men died from an overdose of opium. When the Turks arrived, at least 7 were alive; they were turned over to the British, who widely circulated the story that Bonaparte had given orders to poison his men. Cartoons by a British cartoonist depicting this episode were widely circulated. In his own account, Bonaparte wrote that laudanum was placed beside the patients before the French evacuated Jaffa so that they could take it voluntarily to avoid falling into the hands of the Turks, who might torture them. Supporters of Bonaparte minimize his involvement in mercy killing; his detractors made a field day of it. Bonaparte, having failed to stop the Turks from advancing beyond Acre, recognized the hopelessness of his venture in Egypt. He was aware of the recent defeat of the French army in Europe, especially in Italy, and he determined to return to France; there was no longer glory for him in Egypt. After one final victory against the Turks at Abukir, Bonaparte slipped away to France, leaving his army behind in Egypt. There he joined forces with dissident members of the Directory; Talleyrand (1754-1838); and his brother Lucien, the head of the national Assembly; and in a coup became First Consul of France in 1799.

The Syrian campaign was over. Napoleon and the remains of his army returned to Cairo. Napoleon sailed to Europe on 24 August 1799 to meet his destiny. Although the figures are incomplete, the archives of the French Ministry of War indicate that French casualties in Syria included at least 1,200 killed in action, 1,000 dead from disease, and 2,500 ill or seriously wounded. In all, 2,000 soldiers may have died from bubonic plague during the entire Egyptian expedition [1].

Although bubonic plague was not a key factor in determining the failure of the French to take all of Syria from the Turks, it was no doubt a contributing factor. Its presence seems to have influenced Napoleon's decision to return to the relatively safe confines of Egypt. Moreover, plague was greatly feared by the officers, soldiers, and physicians and it affected their morale.

During August 1799, Bonaparte left Alexandria with a fleet of five ships, the most important of which was the Muiron. Instead of heading to one of the two quarantine ports, the French general settled in his hometown, Ajaccio, on the island of Corsica. Upon hearing the news of his arrival, the health officials in Ajaccio hesitated between expelling the ships and receiving them, but in the end everyone preferred, after pressure from the official Jean-Baptiste Barbieri, to welcome Bonaparte, who landed in Ajaccio the next day to receive a warm welcome in his hometown. Before shaking hands with those present, the French general took a simple precaution, washing his face and hands with vinegar before meeting the people of his city. Contrary to the health rules in force, which allowed the ports of Toulon and Marseille only to provide licenses for the safety of ships from the plague, the port officials of Ajaccio Bonaparte and his crew granted these licenses, so that the French general would later move towards the Saint-Raphael region in the Var region, where he was received by health officials affiliated with the municipality of Frejus. Just like Ajaccio, Fréjus officials were stunned when they saw Bonaparte and preferred to allow him to cross and accept the licenses offered by Ajaccio, violating the laws passed by France to monitor ships coming from the affected areas.

It is worth noting that over the following months, Bonaparte's violation of quarantine measures caused an uproar in France, with port officials in Toulon and Marseille protesting and trading accusations with the Ministries of the Navy and the Interior. Officials in the municipality of Fréjus also blamed Ajaccio officials, accusing them of breaking the law and issuing dubious licenses to Bonaparte. With the success of the French general's coup in November 1799, the crisis ended without any severe punishment being issued against the officials.

**2. End of the Expedition and Beginning of the British Siege (1801-1807)**

Because of the political situation in France, Napoleon felt compelled to leave Egypt for a short time and hand over power to General Kléber. On August 17, 1801, British forces attacked all French bases and the fleet managed to enter the port of Alexandria. The French signed the surrender on August 31, 1801, on condition that all French be allowed to return home. The shortage of French forces and their condition worsening day by day made the French soldiers in the forward posts and their colleagues in other locations in Alexandria believe that it would be better for them to begin negotiations with the English while they were still far from the fortified French lines and the city walls, and to take advantage of their willingness to make generous terms so that an agreement could be reached with them that would preserve French military honor [67].

The Military Council remained convened for 24 hours at the French Agency near the eastern port to set the conditions of delivery after it settled everyone saw that the situation does not allow the future to defend Alexandria and that the forces besieging her

equivalent to ten times their forces, and the Council authorized Generals Rambo, Freyan, Songe, Sanson and Delgeorge to set the conditions for evacuation to be presented to the Council, and their decision was realistic for the exhaustion of all forces and fresh water within the city, and the spread of diseases among soldiers and Alexandrians alike and the inability of hospitals to accommodate the large numbers of these patients [68]. The military defeat of the French and the outbreak of the plague were a major reason for putting an end to the campaign, as only two thousand French remained fit for combat [47]. The plague spread through arrivals through the Mediterranean, where ships entering the port of Alexandria carried the epidemic that claimed the lives of French physicians [33], [69].

Al-Jabarti [32] mentions in the incidents of January 29, 1801, that "with the beginning of the spread of the plague, the French were disturbed and began to make Karantinat, places designated for quarantine to monitor travelers and keep them for 40 days."

In the year of Bonaparte's coronation as the emperor Napoleon I (December 1804), rumors continued to circulate about the opium poisoning at Jaffa and the brutality of the Egyptian campaign (the killing of prisoners who had surrendered). Bonaparte, an excellent propagandist, invited Antoine-Jean Grou (1771-1835) to document his heroism and dispel the impact of these rumors [70], [71]. They first met in 1796 in Milan, Italy, where the young French painter was working as a portraitist while attempting to recover from the upheavals of the French Revolution. Bonaparte appointed him painter of war campaigns. In 1797, after Bonaparte's victory in Italy, Grou was commissioned to select Italian masterpieces as the spoils of war to enrich the Louvre. He was given the post of inspecteur aux revues, which enabled him to follow the army.

During the revolution, artists had been free to paint as they liked, but Bonaparte established an attractive government patronage. Grou's Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken at Jaffa was the first major painting to emerge from the new patronage [60]. It was the sensation at the Paris Salon in the spring of 1804. More than 5 by 7 meters in size, it depicts an exotic Middle Eastern scene. The French tricolor flag flies in the background over the Jaffa city walls near the citadel. Inside the pest house, Bonaparte and his entourage are brightly lit by the sun as he visits the soldiers. His right glove removed, Bonaparte touches an axillary bubo on a soldier who lifts his arm over his head.

Desgenettes looks on, standing between Bonaparte and the patient. An officer behind Bonaparte holds a handkerchief to his face. A Turkish physician kneels, apparently to lance a bubo. A French physician, ill with plague, slumps down in front of him. To the left, Arab men accompanied by slaves distribute bread to the ill. The sick are nude under blankets or partially clothed. They are in shadow, heads down or looking back toward Bonaparte. Grou's theme is not the healing touch of the king but rather the enlightenment theme of rationality overcoming ignorance. Bonaparte insisted that the plague was not infectious [70], [71], [72].

Thus, Bonaparte ensured that the most enduring image of the Egyptian campaign was the suffering of the French troops and his sympathetic tending to their needs. Seeing this painting led a British observer, John Pinkerton, to doubt the rumors about Bonaparte's ordering poison at Jaffa. Who would have the audacity to call attention to the plague episode if the rumors circulating about Bonaparte were true? Grou was successful in depicting Bonaparte as compassionate rather than ruthless and as risking his life for his troops rather than abandoning them. Grou continued painting portraits that Bonaparte commissioned to emphasize not so much the warrior, but the peacemaker, diplomat, and moral leader. Toward the end of his life, Grou regretted the effect that his mixing art and propaganda had on the art of his period [60]. As he grew older, his creativity waned; at age 64 years, he committed suicide by drowning in the Seine.

**References**

[1] Herold J. C. (1962). Bonaparte in Egypt. New York, NY Harper & Row, pp. 276-277-279-302-307-308. translated by Fouad Andraos, (1986), Cairo, pp. 11-12.
[2] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2017). Rosetta Encyclopedia, 1, History and Military Fortifications, Cairo: Arab Nation Foundation for Printing and Publishing, p. 90.
[3] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2020). The Rakhito writes history, The British Campaign on Rosetta in 1807 in Light of British Archival Documents, Cairo: Arab Nation Foundation for Printing and Publishing, pp. 42-65-104-105.
[4] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. The Rakhito writes history, Great Britain's campaign against Rosetta in 1807, in light of British archives documents, International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR), Vol. 5, Issue 5, May 2021, pp. 1-17.
[5] Shmuel, Moreh (1995). Napoleon in Egypt, Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798. Markus Wiener Publishing, pp. 27-33.
[6] James, T. G. H. (2003). Napoleon and Egyptology: Britain's Debt to French Enterprise, Enlightening the British: Knowledge, Discovery and the Museum in the Eighteenth Century. British Museum Press, p. 151.
[7] Amini, Iradj (1999). Napoleon and Persia: Franco-Persian Relations under the First Empire, Mage, p. 12.
[8] Pawly, R. (2006). Napoleon's Mamelukes. New York: Osprey Publishing, p. 9.
[9] Cole, J. (2007). Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 8–10-31-32-148.
[10] Essam El-Din, Ahmed (1971). The French Revolution, Cairo: The Egyptian General Authority for Authoring and Publishing, p. 80.
[11] El Hennawy, Mohamed Abdel Hamid. Documents of the French Campaign (1798-1801), a source for the modern history of Egypt, the French Campaign against Egypt, p. 5.

[12] Laurens, Henry (1999). La Question de Palestine: L'invention de la terre sainte, 1799-1922. Paris: Fayard, p. 18.
[13] Watson, W. E. (2003). Tricolor and Crescent: France and the Islamic World. Greenwood, pp. 13-14.
[14] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). The plague epidemic destroyed Bonaparte's dreams in the Levant, London: Scholars' Press for Academic Publishing.
[15] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). Die pestepidemie zerstört Bonaparte's träume in der levanter, London: Verlag Unser Wissen.
[16] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). La epidemia de peste destruyó los sueños de Bonaparte en Levant, London: Ediciones Nuestro Conocimiento..
[17] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). L'épidémie de peste détruit les rêves de Bonaparte au Levant, London: Editions Notre Savoir.
[18] Al-Shahabi, Mustafa (2003). Al-Khatib, Ahmad Shafiq (editor). Al-Shahabi Dictionary of Agricultural Sciences Terminology (in Arabic, English, and Latin), 5th ed., Beirut: Maktaba Lebanon Publishers, p. 822.
[19] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). L'epidemia di peste distrusse i sogni di Bonaparte nel levanter, London: Edizioni Sapienza.
[20] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). A epidemia de peste destruiu os sonhos de Bonaparte no Levant, London: Edições Nosso Conhecimento.
[21] Abdel Kadir, Huda Abdel Rahim (2023). Эпидемия чумы разрушила мечты Бонапарта в Леванте, London: Sciencia Scripts.
[22] Jefferson T, Demicheli V, Pratt M (2000). Jefferson T (ed.). "Vaccines for preventing plague". Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 1998 (2):
[23] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Egypt's hidden armies defeat the French and British campaigns, Scholars' Press for Academic Publishing, London: U. K.
[24] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Die Verborgenen Armeen Ägyptens Besiegen die Französischen und Britischen Kampagnen, Verlag Unser Wissen, London: U. K.
[25] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Los Ejércitos Ocultos de Egipto Derrotan las Campañas Francesa y Británica, Ediciones Nuestro Conocimiento, London: U. K.
[26] Nelson CA, & others (July 2021). "Antimicrobial Treatment and Prophylaxis of Plague: Recommendations for Naturally Acquired Infections and Bioterrorism Response" (PDF). MMWR Recomm Rep. 70 (3), pp. 1–27.
[27] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Les Armées Cachées D'egypte Vainquent les Campagnes Française et Britannique, Editions Notre Savoir, London: U. K.
[28] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Gli Eserciti Nascosti Dell'egitto Sconfiggono le Campagne Francesi e Britanniche, Edizioni Sapienza, London: U. K.
[29] Al-Jabarti, Abd al-Rahman (1880), Wonders of the Monuments in Biographies and News, Cairo: Bulaq Edition, 2, p. 409, 3, p. 52-68-225.
[30] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Os Exércitos Ocultos do Egipto Derrotam as Campanhas Francesa e Britânica, Edições Nosso Conhecimento, London: U. K.
[31] Jawhari, Tantawi (2016). Interpretation of Tantawi Jawhari (Al-Jawahir fi Interpretation of the Noble Qur'an), 4, p. 219.
[32] Jawhari, Tantawi (1931). The Interpretation of Tantawi Jawhari, The Jewels in the Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, Mustafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi and Sons, 4, Cairo: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, pp. 1-13.
[33] Abdel Aziz, Laila El Sayed. Diseases and Epidemics and Their Impact on Egyptian Society (1797-1813), MA Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Tanta University, 2016, Kan Historical Journal, Vol. 11, No. 39, March 2018, pp. 167-170.
[34] Al-Jabarti (1958). Al-Jabarti's Diaries: "The Manifestation of Sanctification with the Departure of the French State"; edited by Mohamed Atta, Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref, 1, pp. 83-154.
[35] Mohamed, Omar Jassim (2014). The Absent Eye (Al-Jabarti and the French Campaign in Egypt), Amman - Jordan: Dar Zahran for Publishing and Distribution, pp. 136 ss.
[36] Falk, Avner (2015). Napoleon Against Himself: A Psychobiography. Pitchstone Publishing. p. 185.
[36] Falk, Avner (2015). Napoleon Against Himself: A Psychobiography. Pitchstone Publishing, p. 185.
[37] Ben-Zvi, Yad Yitzhak (1990). Jaffa: A City in Evolution Ruth Kark, Jerusalem, pp. 8–9.
[38] Bodart, Gaston (1908). Militär-historisches Kriegs-Lexikon (1618-1905). Retrieved 6 July 2022, p. 334.
[39] Bonaparte, Napoleon (1955). J. Christopher Herold (ed.). Mind of Napoleon: A Selection of His Written and Spoken Words. New York: Columbia University Press. On Religionsp. p. 49.
[40] Kobler, Franz (1975). Napoleon and the Jews. Jerusalem: Masada Press, p. 51.
[41] Blond, Georges (1997). La Grande Armée. Translated by May, Marshall. New York: Arms and Armor, pp. 48-103-470.
[42] Englund, Steven (2005). Napoleon: A Political Life. Harvard University Press, p. 133.
[43] Rickard, J. (2006). "French Invasion of Egypt, 1798-1801"
[44] Gilbert, Adrian (2022). "Siege of Acre: Facts & Related Content". Encyclopedia Britannica.
[45] The London Gazette. "No. 15149", 18 June 1799. pp. 609–610.

[46] Omar, Yusef Hussain. The French Campaign on Jaffa March 3rd-14th 1799, Al-Aqsa University Journal for Human Sciences, Volume XXVI, Issue 1, January 2022, pp. 312-335.
[47] Peterson, Robert K. D. (1995). The Napoleonic Campaigns and Historical Perception, this article is reprinted and adapted: Insects, disease, and military history: the Napoleonic campaigns and historical perception. American Entomologist, 41, pp. 147-160.
[48] Clair, S. de. [ed.]. 1948. Napoleon's memoirs. Faber & Faber, London.
[49] Paton, A. A. (1870). A History of the Egyptian Revolution, from the period of the mamelukes to the death of Mohammed Ali, London, Vol. 1, pp. 391-392.
[48] Howard, J. E. [ed.]. 1961. Letters and documents of Napoleon, vol. 1. Oxford University Press, New York.
[49] Bourienne, M. de. 1836. Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte. 3 vols. London..
[50] La Jonquiére, C. de. 1899. L'Expédition en Egypte, 1798-1801, 1899-1907, 5 vols. Paris.
[51] Mubarak, Mohamed El-Sawy Mohamed (2003). Dictionary of Scientific Terms in Microbiology and Related Sciences (in Arabic and English), Cairo: Osiris Library, p. 103.
[52] Malus, E.-L. 1892. L'Agenda de Malus. Paris.
[53] Desgenettes, R.-N. 1802. Histoire médicale de l'armée d'Orient. Paris.
[54] Zafran, Eric. Resendez, Sidney (1998), French Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Artists Born Before 1790, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, p. 189.
[55] Wikipedia. Napoleon Bonaparte visits plague victims in Jaffa. (April 3, 2022). Accessed August 17, 2023. https://ar.wikipedia.org/w/index.php
[56] Blanc, Charles (1845). Histoire des Peintres Français au dix-neuvième siècle, Paris, p. 402.
[57] Tripier, J.le Franc (1880). Histoire de la vie et de la Mort du Baron Gros, Paris, p. 217.
[58] https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010062570
[59] Chimot, Jean-Philippe (Printemps 2012). “La vérité sur le mensonge: De Gros à Daumier, Écrire l'histoire, no. 9, pp. 47-56.
[60] Grigsby, D. G. (2002). Gros's Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa, 1804. In: Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France New Haven, Conn Yale University Press. pp. 65-103.
[61] Baghdiantz-McCabe, Ina (2008). Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime, Oxford: Berg, p. 2.
[62] Harris, Beth and Zucker, Steven. "Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Pest House in Jaffa," in Smart history, September 9, 2021, accessed August 19, 2023, https://smarthistory.org/baron-antoine-jean-gros-napoleon-bonaparte-visiting-the-pest-house-in-jaffa/.
[63] Harris, J. C. (2003). Pinel Orders the Chains Removed from the Insane at Bicêtre. Arch Gen Psychiatry, p. 151.
[64] Bethesda, USA: National Library of Medicine, The National Center for Biotechnology Information, May 2003, 60 (5): p. 442.
[65] Gerard, D. L. (1998). Chiarugi and Pinel considered: Soul's brain/person's mind, Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences. Volume 33 Issue 4, pp. 381-403
[66] Weiner, D. B. (1979). The apprenticeship of Philippe Pinel: a new document, “observations of Citizen Pussin on the insane.” The American Journal of Psychiatry, p. 1134
[67] Al-Henawi, Mohamed Abd al-Hamid. Documents of the French Campaign (1798-1801).
[68] Walsn, Thomas (1803). Journal of the late Campaign In Egypte, London, pp. 122-125.
[69] French Campaign Documents. Portfolio without a number, (4/1801 to 31/12/1801), Document No. 483 B6-128 dated 8th fractal year 9. Rousseau, M. F. Kléber et Menou en Egypte dépuis le depart de Bonaparte, Hachette Livre - Bnf., pp. 424-425.
[70] Michalla, Jean (1989). Agypten. Gesundheitsdienst seit dem Feldzug Napoleons Universital zu Koln. http://www.michalla-dr.info/medizingeschichte.html#unt215
[71] O’Brien D. (2006). After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Art, and Propaganda Under Napoleon. University Park, Pa Penn State University Press.
[72] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2025). Ukryte Armie Egiptu Pokonują Kampanie Francuską I Brytyjską, Wydawnictwo Nasza Wiedza, London: U. K.
[73] Grigsby, Darcy Grimaldo (Summer 1995). “Rumor, Contagion, and Colonization in Gros's Plague-Stricken of Jaffa (1804)”, Representations, no. 51, pp. 1-46.

**Notes**

[1] Taken from the Frankish word for knight, they were a Crusader remnant who settled in Malta.

[2] I have kept the linguistic errors in this quote, and have not interfered with them, neither by changing nor correcting them.

[3] They would certainly have been in contact with or near rats because of their function (cellar, storage, grain storage, ships, etc.).

[4] It was originally a Phoenician city and was occupied by Egypt in 1472 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered Jaffa, and the Roman emperor Vespasia destroyed it. During the twelfth century, several battles between the Crusaders and Muslims were fought in and

around the city. When Napoleon invaded Syria, Jaffa was controlled by the Ottoman Empire.

[5] Ban Turkish clothing; Because at that time the plague was supposed to have come from Constantinople.

[6] Perhaps because these pits were frequented by infected rats at night.

[7] Not in the "sick period," that is, when the fifties were blowing. From early March to late May, Khamseen blows as hot, humid winds for 6-12 days.

[8] "...General N. Shef was the first to enter the Bab al-Nasr, and the people rushed through the streets, gathered in great crowds, and escorted him to his palace with shouts of joy. They wished him more ardently than ever, for their country was besieged on all sides by so many enemies."

She was threatened, especially from the Turks, who were not always trusted by this modest, peace-loving people. But the presence of General Bonaparte encouraged them, and from that moment they felt completely safe ... ".

[9] Plague is mainly transmitted by rat fleas, provided the rat is infected with plague. If the lungs are affected, plague (pneumonic plague) can also be transmitted from person to person or from animal to animal via droplet (cough) infection.

[10] This is probably the painting that appeared in the 1835 Gros sale and was bought back by the artist, who exhibited it in 1846 (“Explication des Ouvrages de Peinture,” Rue Saint-Lazare 75, Paris, December 15, 1846), cat. no. 44. See:

[11] Charles Louis Müller (Paris 22 December 1815 – 10 January 1892 Paris), also known as Müller de Paris, was a French painter. He was the pupil of Léon Cogniet, Baron Gros and others in the École des Beaux-Arts.

[12] French physician (1745–1826) Philippe Pinel arrived in Paris in 1778 after completing his medical studies in Toulouse and Montpellier. He became interested in mental illness and was appointed physician to the Hôpitaux de Bicêtre, a general hospital for men outside Paris. Harris, James C. Pinel orders the chains removed from the insane at Bicêtre.

[13] Jean-Baptiste Poussin (1746–1811) was born in Lons-le-Saunier, France. He was a French hospital administrator who, with his wife and colleague Marguerite, established a more humane treatment for patients with mental disorders in 19$^{th}$-century France. They helped physician Philippe Pinel understand and apply their approach, which, along with similar initiatives in other countries, became known as moral therapy. In 1801, Pinel published his Treatise on Madness, which described their work. In 1809, in the second edition of Treatise on Madness, Pinel reported on Poussin's initiative to ban the use of chains.