The Wall that Stopped Napoleon: Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī's Wall and the Siege of 1799

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Introduction

In the pursuit of reconstructing the past, the written record provides a good, basic primary source to base research on. Further secondary sources, such as history compilations based upon later research also contribute to building a sense of the past. Another angle of reconstructing the past is through archaeology; examining the material record can often reveal more truth than the written and oral records contain about a place. In this paper, I aim to examine both the historical written record and the archaeological record of Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī's wall in the Old City of Akko as it relates to Napoleon Bonaparte's Siege of Akko during 1799, and attempt to compare, to contrast, and to synthesize the history and the archaeology of this very interesting, event which changed the course of world history forever.

In order to accomplish such an ambitious goal, I have pursued a methodology as follows:

1) Create a bibliography of sources, including maps, photographs, and primary and secondary sources.
2) Identify maps chronologically and develop a document of the various maps in order; locate where the primary and secondary sources are held.
3) Examine photographs and determine connections to the remains and the maps.
4) Gather the archaeological sources, including documentation of the wall, and analyze the archaeology of the Wall and the Siege of 1799.
5) Synthesize all of the information and produce analysis of the Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī Wall and the Siege of 1799 by Napoleon.

This methodology provides a solid structure for pursuing my investigation of the wall.

Literature Review

During the course of my research, I have read and examined several sources, both primary sources and secondary sources. Of these sources, I chose to primarily rely on David Chandler's[1] book The Campaigns of Napoleon. I also used J. Christopher Herold's The Mind of Napoleon, Louis Antonie Fauvelet de Bourriene's Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte, Asad J. Rustum's Notes on Akka and its Defences Under Ibrahim Pasha, and Lieut. Col. Alderson's Notes on Acre and some of the Coast Defences of Syria during the course of my research. Other

[1] The following is the obituary of David Chandler, detailing his life and work:
"David Chandler researched and taught military history at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for more than 30 years until 1994. He was an inspiring teacher with an infectious enthusiasm for his subject and few senior officers of today's Army are untouched by his influence. Chandler had the ability to make history come to life — sometimes literally. A keen supporter of military re-enactment societies, he threw himself into historical roles with dramatic vigour. He enjoyed registering the initial surprise when friends and acquaintances encountered him in the guise of Marlborough or Napoleon. His fondness for military drama entered the classroom; few of his students would forget episodes involving the firing of muskets or lobbing of cannonballs. At Sandhurst, he became a legend in his lifetime and the source of numerous anecdotes and stories. He was more than an inspiring teacher, however; he was a military historian of the first rank. One of his most prized possessions was a letter from President de Gaulle congratulating him on his *Campaigns of Napoleon,* while admitting chagrin that only an Englishman had proved capable of explaining the emperor's methods of warfare. This thousand-page treatise, incorporating detailed analyses of the Emperor's principles of campaign, unambiguously clear diagrams of his battles and appendices with detail of the "orders of battle" and organisation of the armies he commanded, is unquestionably Chandler's greatest work, providing students of the Napoleonic period with a veritable goldmine of detail and reasoned argument."
According to
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article495714.ece, last accessed 13 Aug 2010.

sources were also perused but as I will explain in due course, the inaccessibility of a lot of the source material as well as the time constraints prevented me from utilizing these sources.

Even though it is a secondary source, I have selected to base the majority of my research on Chandler's The Campaigns of Napoleon because it presents the entire history of Napoleonic warfare in an accessible and a well thought out manner. It is in a well thought manner owing to the construction of the book. Chandler provides a general background for Napoleon's early life and goes into some depth concerning his education and formative experiences. An interesting choice that Chandler makes is that he places his section investigating the tactics of Napoleon after the first military campaign of note that Napoleon was involved with, the North Italy campaign in 1796 and 1797. Perhaps Chandler might have been better off placing this campaign under "formative experiences" but admittedly this is a minor gripe. In his preface, Chandler explains the aim of his work on Napoleon:

> …it is hoped that this more general study will prove of some interest to readers in Great Britain and the United States, if only as a "curtain raiser" to the more detailed and authoritative military studies now available. (Chandler 1973 [1966]:xxi)

His aim with the book is to provide a stepping-stone into more intensive scholastic research and he certainly provides that. He then goes on to explain his methodology and ultimately, the reflexivity with which he views his work:

> It would require the work of a lifetime to do real justice to so vast a subject and so much has already been written by such a galaxy of distinguished authors over the past 150 years that it may seem that there is little more that can be usefully added to Napoleonic literature. However, the discovery of a considerable number of

> new sources…has thrown more light on the period, leading in some cases to important reappraisals…Whenever possible such "new" material has been incorporated in the chapters that follow, together with the opinions of more recent scholars and soldiers…
>
> This book makes no pretense of providing a comprehensive study of Napoleon and his age…From the start it was decided to restrict the study to a consideration of those campaigns commanded by Napoleon in person…It prove impossible, however, to do justice to Napoleon's showing as a commander without paying some attention to certain peripheral subjects. Space has accordingly been devoted to analyses of his military education and of the various methods he and his contemporaries applied in the field. (1973 [1966]:xxi-xxii).

Chandler utilizes both primary and secondary sources and shows a flair for the dramatic. In order to understand the Siege of Akko, it was important to read the sections "Part Three. Napoleon's Art of War[2]" and "Part Four. Oriental Interlude: The Six Acres of Land[3]".

I would be remiss if I did not mention some independent critiques of Chandler's work. J. R. Western[4] takes a decidedly more positive critique of <u>The Campaigns of Napoleon</u> in his short, half page review:

> The campaign narratives gain greatly in interest and coherence from this spacious treatment. Of great value are the *general chapters* [emphasis added] describing the evolution of the French army and of its tactical and strategic thinking. Napoleon's practice is related to that of his predecessors before and after 1789 and the narrative of the wars traces the development of his methods and

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[2] According to Chandler, "A study of Napoleon's philosophy of war, an analysis of his strategic and battle methods—and the sources of his ideas" (1973 [1966]:viii).
[3] According to Chandler, "The Campaign in Egypt and Syria, May 19, 1798 to October 9, 1799" (1973 [1966]:viii).
[4] According to George O. Kent's review of the book *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J. R. Western 1928-1971, "*This *Festschrift* is dedicated to a brilliant young English historian [J. R. Western] whose main interest was the study of war and its impact on society; hence the title of this volume. In a touching tribute the editor describes the personality and accomplishments of John Randle Western, who studied at Oxford and Edinburgh and taught at Manchester" (Kent 1975:370).

> their continuing alteration in his maturity…Critical comments are intelligent but unprejudiced…The views of other historians are usefully indicated, though without emphasis on the controversies among them. (Western 1968:622)

John R. Elting[5] also points out many of the more successful aspects of the book:

> Chandler has a good, interesting, confidential writing style. With just enough domestic and diplomatic history to form the necessary setting, he describes and analyzes Napoleon's campaigns and battles in considerable detail, reviews the organization and armament of the participating armies, and thoroughly explores the Emperor's concepts of tactics and strategy. This last section, soundly based on Camon's studies, *is one of the best things in the book*. [emphasis added] (Elting 1967:994)

However, John R. Elting is decidedly more negative in his review of book as compared to Western:

> Except for Napoleon's *Correspondance* and a collection of memoirs, Chandler has depended on secondary sources, and little discrimination is apparent. Rapp's sober recollections are mingled with Marbot's tall—and Ségur's still taller—tales. The secondary sources likewise vacillate from Wilkinson's outstanding *The Rise of General Bonaparte* through Petre's variable products to such feckless potboilers as MacDonell's *Napoleon and His Marshals*…To summarize, if one likes to read about the Emperor, he should buy *The Campaigns of Napoleon*; if he is a serious student of Napoleonic warfare, he should get something better. (1967:994-995)

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[5] John R. Elting was a military veteran, serving over 35 years in the United States military and retiring with the commission of Colonel. Following his retirement, he pursued research into military history with a special emphasis on the history of Napoleon's and his campaigns and the American Revolution. According to his obituary, "He was the author, co-author or editor of sixteen books, including The Battles of Saratoga, American Army Life, A Dictionary of Soldier Talk, A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars, Swords Around a Throne and Napoleonic Uniforms…His knowledge was deep, and he gave generously of it, and for many he served as an inspiration." http://www.napoleon-series.org/greenhill/news/announcements/c_elting.html, last accessed 10 Aug 2010.

Taking into account the fallibility of secondary sources and even primary sources, Chandler's work is still a strong elucidation of Napoleonic history and it provides good contextualization of the Siege of Akko in 1799 during Napoleon's march through Palestine on the Syria campaign. Not only is the contextualization good, but also he investigates the conditions upon which the success of the campaign hinged on, and its ultimate failure.

To build a more nuanced view of Napoleon's thought processes, I explored Herold's The Mind of Napoleon. Herold is openly self-critical and reflexive concerning his anthology of quotations and writings of Napoleon. In his preface, Herold explains his methodology to constructing the book and is transparent concerning the audience intended:

> A less inclusive volume would lack balance; if more inclusive, it would defeat one of its chief purposes, which is to hold the interest and stimulate the thought of the intelligent but nonspecialized reader. (1969 [1955]:vi)

Further reflexive comments concern the placement of the quotes or writings in relation to one another in the book:

> The topical organization I chose to adopt requires no justification. Others would have done things differently. Even the decision whether to include a quotation under one heading rather than another is an individual and personal one. (1969 [1955]:vi-vii)

No matter how reflexive and self-critical Herold is, he is still translating from French to English. In any translation, there will be something lost. Sometimes,

the work translates well and only minor discrepancies; in other cases, the phrase isn't so lucky and it loses much of its original value.[6]

To place the analysis of literature and writings from an archaeological point of view, the Post-Processualist would question what frame of mind the translator him or herself was in. Herold even discusses the motives and biases of translators who came before him (1969 [1955]:vi). However, he does not apply the question to himself; rather, he discusses his motives of organization and methodology. A more thorough analysis of Herold's work would provide a greater understanding of the mindset of his translations.

But I digress; in one review of the book the writer criticizes the initial inaccessibility of the book but describes the rewards if the reader is persistent:

> The book under review is something else, for it invites the reader to concentrate not on the deeds, but on the mind, on the recorded thoughts, and on the personality as reflected in those thoughts, of Napoleon Bonaparte. The word concentrate is used advisedly for there is only a very brief introduction by the editor [Herold] before the reader is called upon to make the special effort required to assimilate one compact selection after another, with little anecdotal or descriptive relief. The book should be read in small doses. But the effort is rewarded as there emerges for the attentive reader an even clearer picture of the mind of Napoleon. (McNeil 1956:183)

In Geoffrey Bruun's review of Herold's later work Bonaparte in Egypt, Bruun compares it initially to The Mind of Napoleon with a short review of the book:

> Eight years ago, in *The Mind of Napoleon*, Mr. Herold allowed Napoleon to reveal himself in his own words. The result was an arresting and authentic mosaic, a compilation that did justice to the complex character of a great man (1963:1043)

[6] It is important to note that I, myself, have not done any work translating the text to verify the work. I am relying on the independent reviews of the text.

Regardless of the issues of translation and of the editor's mindset, like with Chandler's book, Herold's work is easily accessible and well thought out, providing a glimpse into the mind of Napoleon without having to know French.

Rustum's work, Alderson's work, and Bourienne's work are all primary source material. Rustum and Alderson provide an explanation and analysis of the wall of Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī, while Bourriene recounts his memories of Napoleon. These three sources aren't worthy of secondary critique here, owing to their primary nature.

Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī Comes to Akko

When the Bedouin sheikh Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī made the city of Akko his capital in the 1740s, he found the city of Akko essentially as it was in 1291, when the last Crusader kingdom fell. He utilized the remains of the Crusader city of Akko to rebuild the city. Not only did he utilize the remains of the layout of the city to rebuild the buildings, he utilized the foundations of the old Crusader walls to build his own wall. Beginning in 1750, Ẓāhir fortified his new capital of Akko, building a wall that was "seven meters high and one meter wide" as well as the construction of an assault tower at the northeast corner of the city (Phillip 2001:26). According to Thomas Phillip, the reason Ẓāhir fortified his city "was to protect against Bedouin bands, [and] sea pirates" (2001:26-27). But who was Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī and why did he make Akko his capital?

Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī was born around the year 1690 in the region of Tiberias, the youngest son of al-'Umar. According to Phillip, "al-'Umar, and

[Ẓāhir's] grandfather, Zaydān, were already *multazims*[7] of Tiberias, a position they were granted by the amirs of the Druze" (2001:31). When al-'Umar died in the early eighteenth century, Ẓāhir's older brother Sa'd took over as head of the clan while Ẓāhir "became the most powerful man since the family transferred all tax-farms into his name because 'they did not want to have a name with the government'" (2001:31). Between his father's death and the mid-1730s, Ẓāhir made quite the name for himself as a man of both considerable courage and considerable business acumen, as a man of justice and of moderation. He and elder brother Sa'd continued the business connections of their father and developed them further, creating a strong trade network which Ẓāhir would bring to Akko, shifting the focus of power away from Damascus and onto Akko, which would last nearly a century.

Yet, there is one more significant reason why Ẓāhir had his wall constructed the way it was. Not only was the wall meant to deter marauders, but also it was meant to serve as deterrence to the Pashas of Damascus, Ẓāhir's rivals. The wall was constructed hastily during the years 1750-51 while the Pasha of Damascus fulfilled his *Hajj* duties. The Hajj duties entailed the Pasha of

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[7] According to Encyclopædia Britannica, "in the Ottoman Empire, taxation system carried out by farming of public revenue. The state auctioned taxation rights to the highest bidder (*mültazim*, plural *mültezim* or *mültazims*), who then collected the state taxes and made payments in fixed installments, keeping a part of the tax revenue for his own use. The *iltizām* system included the farming of land taxes, the farming of urban taxes, the production of certain goods (such as wine, salt, or senna), and the provision of certain services. It began during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (1444–46, 1451–81) and was officially abolished in 1856. Various forms of *iltizām,* however, continued until the end of the empire in the early 20th century, when the system was replaced by methods of taxation that were supervised by public officials." According to http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/283193/iltizam, last accessed 12 Aug 2010.

Damascus to lead the Muslim Pilgrims of the Ottoman Empire to Mecca once they arrived in Damascus along a prescribed path, and to ensure the safety and security of the Pilgrims, and ultimately the success of the pilgrimage. By the time of Ẓāhir's death in 1775, Akko had been resurrected as a city, awaiting the passage of power to a man known as "The Butcher", Aḥmad al-Jezzār Pasha. It would be another twenty-four years before the wall that Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī constructed would endure its finest hour, as the might of Napoleon's Army of the Orient rained down upon the city of Akko.

Napoleon's Dreams of Ruling the World

When recounting the events of the Egypt and Syria campaign in 1798 and 1799, Napoleon offered a glimpse into the idealism and romanticism with which he viewed his expedition into the Orient:

> In Egypt, I found myself freed from the obstacles of an irksome civilization. I was full of dreams. I saw myself founding a religion, marching into Asia, riding an elephant, a turban on my head, and in my hand a new Koran that I would have composed to suit my need. In my undertaking I would have combined the experience of the two worlds, exploiting for my own profit the theater of all history, attacking the power of England in India. . . . The time I spent in Egypt was the most of my life because it was most ideal. (de Rémusat in Chandler, 1973:248).

It is true that Napoleon attempted to improve the lives of the *Fellahin* in Egypt through improved sanitation and the "enlightenment of the West" and free them from their Mamluk rulers but he was clearly deluding himself; his time in Egypt and Syria was fraught with mutinies, epidemics of the Plague and other sundry diseases, and incalculable military failures. Even taking all of these into account,

had Napoleon been able to defeat al-Jezzār Pasha and conquer Akko, this nostalgic dream might yet have become reality.

The specter of Akko never quite faded from Napoleon's mind. As late as 1812, his failure to take Akko was still shaping his dreams and machinations. In a conversation with the Comte de Narbonne on March 5th of 1812, he is reputed to have remarked after the Comte expressed concerns with the feasibility of a Russian Campaign the following:

> …I do not fear that long road which is bordered by deserts and at whose end are victory and peace…After all, that long road is the road to India. Alexander the Great, to reach the Ganges, started from just as distant a point as Moscow. *I have said this to myself ever since Acre* [emphasis added]. (Herold 1969 [1955]:199)

What was it about Akko, this relatively small fortress, which caused Napoleon to lament his failure for many long years? What were the conditions that led to the ruin of Napoleon's blitz through Palestine? How did the fortifications of Akko, namely Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī's wall, ultimately prove to be the place where Napoleon's campaign fell apart?

Before discussing the actual siege of Akko, it is important to discuss several important events and characters leading up to the siege. Without understanding the context under which the events of the spring of 1799 occurred, the significance of the fortifications of Akko would be less understood. Beginning with the French march through Palestine, I will present the human context for understanding this very important moment in history.

When Napoleon set sail for Malta and afterwards, Egypt, he did it under the pretense that the Directory's[8] foreign minister Talleyrand was going to go to Istanbul to hold court with the Ottoman Sultanate in order to secure détente with the Ottoman Porte. What Napoleon didn't know is that Talleyrand never even left France to pursue diplomatic talks with the Sultan. After conquering Egypt in the summer of 1798, Napoleon attempted to pursue securing peace with other powers in the region including al-Jezzār Pasha, the Bey of Tunis, and the Pasha of Damascus. He even sent feelers out to ascertain the likelihood of peace with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire himself. Not only were all these feelers rebuffed time and time again, but the Sultan, after declaring war on the French on September 9th, 1798, "issued a *firman*[9] declaring a Holy War against the French" in October of 1798.

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[8] The Directory (1795–99): The government of France in the difficult years between the Jacobin dictatorship and the Consulate. It was composed of two legislative houses, a Council of Five Hundred and a Council of Ancients, and an executive (elected by the councils) of five Directors. It was dominated by moderates and sought to stabilize the country by overcoming the economic and financial problems at home and ending the war abroad. In 1796 it introduced measures to combat inflation and the monetary crisis, but popular distress increased and opposition grew as the Jacobins reassembled. A conspiracy, led by François Babeuf, was successfully crushed but it persuaded the Directory to seek support from the royalists. In the elections the next year, supported by Napoleon, it decided to resort to force. This second Directory implemented an authoritarian domestic policy ('Directorial Terror'), which for a time established relative stability as financial and fiscal reforms met with some success. By 1798, however, economic difficulties in agriculture and industry led to renewed opposition which, after the defeats abroad in 1799, became a crisis. The Directors, fearing a foreign invasion and a Jacobin coup, turned to Napoleon who took this opportunity to seize power. According to http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O48-DirectoryFrench.html, last accessed 7 Aug 2010.

[9] Firman: "In Turkey and some other Oriental countries, a decree or mandate issued by the sovereign; a royal order or grant; generally given for special objects, as to a traveler to insure him protection and assistance." According to http://www.seslisozluk.com/?word=firman, last accessed 7 Aug 2010. In this case, the firman was the decree of Sultan Selim III.

With these in mind, Napoleon knew that it was only a matter of time before the wrath of the Sultan and his vast and feared armies would be upon him in Egypt. Not only that, the British Navy was successfully blockading all French communications and supplies. Napoleon, never one to sit idly by and await his fate, began his plans in earnest to both strike a blow deep into the heart of Ottoman territory and defeating the Pashas of Palestine and Syria, while returning to Egypt to fend off the might of the Ottoman military.

On February 6th of 1799, the first divisions of Napoleon's army began their march through Palestine. According to Chandler "Bonaparte estimated that his men could cross the 120 miles of desert [from Egypt to Gaza] by February 14" (Chandler 1973 [1966]:235). The plan was to advance quickly up the coast from Egypt to Palestine, whereupon they would begin encountering stiffer and stiffer resistance as they advanced more slowly from Gaza north to Akko and Damascus. This miscalculation was just the first of a series of cascading missteps that ultimately led to the failure of this campaign. When General Jean Baptiste Kléber and General Jean Louis Ebénézer Reynier and the advance guard of the Army of the Orient arrived in El Arish on February 8th, they encountered a fortified garrison "defended by 600 Mamelukes and 1,700 Albanian infantry" (1973 [1966]:235). According to Chandler, due to incomplete reconnaissance, Napoleon was under the impression that there wasn't even a garrison at El Arish and even ordered the construction of a fort by Reynier's men once they arrived at the village. After eleven days of hard fighting, El Arish was finally subdued but

at a great cost to Napoleon. Before El Arish, Napoleon had expected to be in Gaza by February 14th; as a result of El Arish, he was not able to advance on Gaza till after February 19th. As I will expound on later, this eleven-day delay ultimately was one of the main factors leading to the failure of this campaign.

As Chandler points out, the next few weeks saw Napoleon attempting to make up time, which he lost in El Arish:

> On the 23rd [of February], the army passed into Syria, and in the next twenty-four days fought its way over a further 140 miles to Acre. Gaza fell without resistance on the 25th, and the first day of March found the army at El Ramle…Two days later Bonaparte was outside Jaffa, and three days of careful preparations resulted in a successful assault…on March 7. (1973 [1966]:236)

It is at this point where Napoleon makes what is arguably his greatest political blunder during the Syrian Campaign. After the successful capture of Jaffa, Napoleon ordered the execution of the 3,000 Turks who surrendered in Jaffa under the promise that they would be given quarter, and an additional 1,400 prisoners. No doubt, this display of savagery was meant to impress Aḥmad al-Jezzār Pasha into surrendering. How, then, did this cold and brutal attack of Napoleon turn from just morally reprehensible in to his greatest political blunder of the Syrian Campaign?

According to Eliezer Stern, al-Jezzār Pasha was prepared to evacuate Akko and to surrender under the pretense of Napoleon granting al-Jezzār Pasha and his fighters quarter when he received word of what happened to the Turks who surrendered in Jaffa. Because of this, according to Stern, all offers of peace

in exchange for the surrender of Akko were rebuffed by al-Jezzār Pasha and it hardened his and his fighters resolve to defend Akko to almost a fanatical level.[10]

The eleven-day delay in El-Arish afforded the time necessary for Commodore Sir Sidney Smith to arrive in Akko, a full three days before Napoleon and his armies arrived. With Commodore Smith, there was a French Colonel, a former classmate of Napoleon's, named Phélippeaux. When Smith and Phélippeaux arrived in Akko on March 15th, they convinced al-Jezzār Pasha to stay and fight and Phélippeaux was responsible for helping quickly building up the interior defenses of Akko. According to Louis Antonie Fauvelet de Bourriene, when the army finally breached the city on the seventh assault, they discovered even more fortifications and very tight quarters:

> In the assault of the 8th of May more than 200 men penetrated into the town. Victory was already shouted; but the breach having been taken in reverse by the Turks, it was not approached without some degree of hesitation and the 200 men who had entered were not supported. *The streets were barricaded. The cries, the howlings of the women, who ran through the streets, throwing, according to the custom of the country, dust in the air, excited the male inhabitants to a desperate resistance which rendered unavailing this short occupation of the tow by a handful of men, who, finding themselves left without assistance, retreated towards the breach. [emphasis added]* (Bourriene 1895:217)

Obviously, from the perception of the French, the interior fortifications were imposing and very demoralizing to say the least. According to a sketch done by Professor Mordechai Gihon, there was a rear line of defense set up by Colonel Phélippeaux along the backside of the eastern face of the wall and a couple of earth embankments, all of which were set up in the gardens of al-Jezzār Pasha

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[10] Personal communication with Eliezer Stern.

(Gihon in Dichter 1973:151). Not only did Smith and Phélippeaux provide defensive help, but also they convinced al-Jezzār Pasha not to evacuate the city. This allowed the British to constitute an effective blockade, which led to the capture of half of Napoleon's heavy siege guns, compromising the possible success of the siege.

When Napoleon arrived on March 18th, he found the city fully ready for his attack with British support. According to Chandler, "the French found themselves disconcertingly under fire from their own pieces" after the capture of the heavy artillery pieces by the British Navy off of the coast of Carmel on March 18th (Chandler 1973 [1966]:237). The full strength of Akko was a force of 5,000 men with at least 250 artillery pieces of all calibers in addition to the British Naval fleet harassing the flanks of the French and providing additional men and batteries inside the city (1973 [1966]:237). Owing to the loss of the heavy artillery to the British Navy, Napoleon was forced to resort to time-consuming siege warfare, of developing trenches and making a parallel approach closer and closer to the walls.

Yet, Napoleon was not deterred initially; he ordered an assault on his chosen point of attack[11], the assault tower, on Mach 28th, well before the French were even close to being prepared. He naively believed that his quick success at Jaffa would be replicated at Akko but as he was to find out, he was inadequately prepared for such an assault. The ladders the French carried to scale the walls

[11] Napoleon had very few set rules. But one of his most important axioms was the following: "The principles of war are the same as those of a siege. Fire must be concentrated on a single point and as soon as the breach is made the equilibrium is broken and the rest is nothing (Wilkinson in Chandler 1973 [1967]:135).

were far too short for the close to seven-meter high walls of Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī. According to Chandler, "Djezzar Pasha was at hand to rally his followers, sitting in state near the scene of action distributing largesse for every infidel head laid before him" (1973 [1966]:238). This very brutal method of warfare was replicated on both sides of the battlefield.

One of the more interesting moments in the siege occurred four days after March 28th. Napoleon's sappers attempted to blow up the "Damned Tower", as they referred to the assault tower, using a large mine but the mine was no match for the Crusader foundations that Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī built the wall upon.

During the middle of April, Napoleon received word that the first of the Ottoman Empire's pincers was on the move towards Napoleon; the Army of Damascus was converging on Napoleon coming from the East. What occurred between April 8th and April 17th is nothing short of brilliant in the display of solid discipline and tactics. Napoleon sent General Jean-Andoche Junot and a small force of Calvary in order to scout the oncoming forces. Junot and the Calvary defeated a much larger force on April 8th near Tiberias. When word reached Napoleon of this battle he was "Alarmed by the apparent strength of the enemy in the region… [he] ordered General Kléber to march with 1,500 men to Junot's assiastance" (1973 [1967]:239). On the 16th, the combined forces of Junot and Kléber, numbering 2,000, came upon a force of nearly 25,000 Calvary and 10,000 foot soldiers of the Army of Damascus. Outnumbered by odds of seventeen to one, Kléber and Junot decided to spring a surprise attack on the Turks, near

Mount Tabor. The surprise attack failed and the vastly outnumbered forces formed into French squares[12]. For almost the entire day, Kléber and Junot fought off the Turks when Napoleon appeared with reinforcements leading to one of the greatest military successes of his life:

> Toward four in the afternoon ammunition was running desperately low when Bonaparte dramatically appeared on the scene from the north. Learning of his subordinate's danger, the general had led up Bon's division together with a handful of guns, marching overnight from Acre, 25 miles way. He new force moved rapidly to the read of the Turkish host. Two cannon shots discharged at the right psychological moment, followed by a few well directed volleys from Bonaparte's squares, were sufficient to scatter the Turkish horde to the four winds… (1973 [1967]:239).

According to Chandler, the seemingly improbable had occurred:

> When the roll was called it transpired that Kléber had lost only 2 men killed and 60 wounded in a 10-hour action against 25,000 horsemen…Seldom has the superiority of disciplined infantry formed in square over disorganized mass cavalry attacks been more convincingly demonstrated. (1973 [1967]:239).

Losing only 2 men killed and 60 wounded with odds of seventeen to one is absolutely remarkable.

Unfortunately for Napoleon, this was to be his finest hour in Palestine and Syria. Upon his return to Akko, Napoleon's siege was no closer to success than before and the plague continued to take its toll on the army, with "270 new cases, and every day a number of fresh corpses were carried from the rough hutments on Richard Coeur de Lion's Mount for hasty burial" (1973 [1967]:240). Not only that, but General Louis-Marie-Joseph Maximilian Caffarelli was mortally wounded and died in the end of April. His death struck right at the heart of

[12] Artillery at the four corners of the square, with infantry surrounding the Calvary on all sides.

Napoleon for not only was Caffarelli a beloved officer but he was one of the men in charge of the development of the siege trenches. Hope was briefly restored to the men on the last day of April when the heavy artillery, which Napoleon had waited for since the middle of March, arrived in Akko.

Upon receipt of the artillery, Napoleon commenced bombardment and finally effected a breach in the walls. On May 8th, a force of 200 grenadiers penetrated into Akko only to discover the interior fortifications set up and realized that no reinforcements were coming in order to effectively conquer the town. After retreating from the breach, Napoleon made one last desperate attempt to conquer al-Jezzār Pasha's forces and take the city of Akko on May 10th. Like the previous seven, the assault failed and in the process, Napoleon lost his aide-de-camp Crosier and General Louis-André Bon to mortal wounds. On the 21st of May, Napoleon raised the siege and returned with due haste to Egypt.

What does Archaeology tell us about the Wall and the Siege of 1799?

Archaeology can so often open a window into the past that the written record is often lacking. Archaeology can also reveal hidden histories, of those whose stories aren't told. One of the best examples of this is the African Burial Ground in New York City. Michael Blakey's work at the Burial Ground helped to reveal a history that had been suppressed, the history of slavery in the Northern United States. In preserving and unwrapping these hidden histories, as Thomas C. Patterson notes in his book *Toward the Social History of Archaeology*, "Bruce Trigger (1989:410) warns, it [archaeology] must begin with seeing the past as it was, not as we wish it might have been" (Patterson 2002:144). With this in

mind, I aim to apply the ideas of American Historical Archaeology to my analysis of the archaeology of the Siege of 1799 by Napoleon.

The Siege of 1799 is a very well documented event in Napoleonic history. The tactics of Napoleon against the formidable duo of Sir Sidney Smith and Aḥmad al-Jezzār Pasha are well documented in primary source material and secondary source material and vice versa. In this case, what can archaeology tell us about an event that is apparently very well documented in the annals of history?

In the case of the siege of 1799, right now, it can only reveal limited information because the archaeology and documentation simply has not been done. There have been several documentation attempts of the wall, including Rustum's work, Alderson's work, the British Mandatory Antiquities Authority (in 1942), and work done by the Israel Antiquities Authority in the past 15 years. To date, there has been only one article published concerning the archaeology of 1799, with Ariel Berman's article on the siege trenches of Napoleon. There has been another article published concerning the archaeology of part of the wall by Adam Druks in 1984 called "Akko, Fortifications" and also work done by Danny Syon and Eliezer Stern on the wall and in the Gardens area. Yet, even with the lack of hard data, it is possible to begin investigating what connections lie between the archaeology and the history.

Both Col. Alderson's work and Asad Rustum's work provide historical background, some maps, and some documentation of the walls of Akko in general. Unfortunately, beyond the recounting of the story of Napoleon, the

books offer precious little to understanding the archaeology of the Siege. However, Berman's article "Excavation of the Courthouse Site at 'Akko: A Siege-Trench of Bonaparte's Army in Areas TB and TC" offers the first and only real archaeological insight in to the Siege of 1799. The remains of note include the following:

> Four skeletal remains; 25 buttons comprising 4 distinct types; textile remains; lead bullets; cannon and mortar shrapnel; clay tobacco pipes; and lastly, flints. (Berman 1997)

The four skeletal remains were very inconclusive to the research of Berman. Soldier "A", according to Berman, states, "The missing cranium alludes to decapitation, though this could not be corroborated due to the lack of the cervical vertebrae" (1997:93). Soldier's "B", "C", and "D" contained no clear forensic evidence as to their fate but Berman postulates that it could be due to an artillery hit, as suggested by the presence of "a large shell fragment …near the four"(1997:94). Of the 25 buttons uncovered, 4 distinct typologies could be ascertained:

1) The *passe-partot.*
2) Brigade number.
3) Civilian-patriotic.
4) Plain.

The most interesting conclusion suggested by Berman is that the mixing and matching of different buttons, specifically, brigade numbers, could be due to "a shortage of supplies, with men using whatever was available" (1997:97). This claim is certainly supported by the written record, as the British blockade was tremendously successful in preventing the large scale moving of French supplies. The usage of buttons, mixing brigades, clearly suggests the soldiers were doing

repairs to their uniforms in field with whatever buttons they could salvage. A small note about the textile remains: according to Berman, the origins of the cloth could lie in the West according to the spin direction (1997:98). The textiles were found in conjunction with several buttons.

The lead bullet remains suggest the facts of war: one side was shooting at the other and vice versa. Heavier French bullets were found as well as others that were slightly less heavy and those could be Turkish bullets. Berman also records the presence of the cannon and mortar shrapnel and their relationship to skeletal remains as well as surface. The clay tobacco pipes found at the site are of indeterminate nature; according to Berman "They were possibly smoked in the trenches, but could also have fallen into the trench with later debris" (1997:99). The flint discovered corresponds to standard military issue flint for flintlock rifles.

Berman makes the connection in his conclusion of the location of the trench in relationship to the walls:

> Measurements and comparison to contemporary siege plans show with a high degree of probability that the excavated portion of the trench is part of one of the front-line siege trenches (*première parallèle*) close to the center of events (*attaque principale*) during the siege. (1997:99)

By connecting the spatial relationship, Berman provides a more thorough understanding of his conclusions for the artifacts. The presence of possible Turkish bullets, for example, would indicate the comparative close location to the walls themselves.

In addition to the above work, it is very interesting to note the work that has been done archaeologically by Druks, Syon, and Stern. According to Danny Syon, Druks did not uncover any artifacts dating to the Siege of 1799 nor to the development of the wall.[13] In addition, Syon explained his work on the wall in two separate field seasons; the results of these seasons revealed a lot of Crusader remains and then Ottoman remains from post-1840[14]. It is not unreasonable to therefore conclude and agree with Syon's assessment that whatever archaeology may have existed along the wall pertaining to the Siege of 1799 by Napoleon was almost certainly destroyed in the explosion of the ammunition depot.

Concluding Thoughts

This very interesting period in Akko's history is a story that is not told nor understood all too well in the region of Akko. In fact, it is a story that should be told for it changed the course of world history forever. If Napoleon defeats al-Jezzār Pasha and Commodore Smith in Akko, Napoleon just might have had his empire stretching from Paris to Istanbul and from Istanbul to India. Of course, Napoleon, defeated in his attempts to conquer the East, abandoned his men in Egypt, taking advantage of the opportunity to return to France as a hero and to take control of the government.

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[13] Personal communication with Danny Syon.

[14] In 1840, on the 4th of November, the British navy bombarded the city during a siege by the Ottoman Empire on Muhammed Ali Pasha's forces. A lucky shot struck the ammunition depot inside of the old city of Akko in the 'Khan of the Donkeys' and exploded, destroying a large portion of the Eastern wall of Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī.

In the course of this project, I set out very ambitious goals for ten weeks of research. I originally envisioned including documentation of the wall and including short narratives presenting the story of Akko during the siege of 1799 from differing perspectives. Unfortunately, ten weeks is not nearly enough time to even begin scratching the surface on documentation. In lieu of this, I have provided a framework of pursuing further work. As I have discovered, the potential archaeological work to be done would likely be found in siege trenches and on Tel Akko. Certainly, a general survey of the walls must be undertaken to truly begin to understand their construction and their history. Additionally, work to conserve the extant remains should be undertaken, especially in the areas of the "Damned Tower" and the "Great Breach". Considerable growth covers the remains and lots of trash dominates the area surrounding the walls in the moat.

For the future, there are several possibilities: most importantly, survey the walls and develop a deeper understanding of their nature and their history; commercially speaking, a tour incorporating the new city of Akko and the old city of Akko that visits at least four main sites of the Siege of 1799. The sites are Tel Napoleon, Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī's gate, the "Damned Tower", and the tomb of General Caffarelli. The reasons for this tour are twofold: 1) it incorporates the New City of Akko and the Old City of Akko, furthering the connection between the two parts of the city; 2) it creates understanding of spatiality. To begin imagining how Napoleon pictured Akko, it is important to understand spatiality. What could help greatly is developing better and more

informative signage that incorporates maps and pictures. More importantly, by incorporating the New City into the tour with the Old City, it opens up the minds of the tourist to the fact that Akko isn't just a Crusader capital with impressive extant remains but that there is a whole other city beyond the walls of Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī and of Aḥmad al-Jezzār Pasha.

In any case, the story of Ẓāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī and of Aḥmad al-Jezzār Pasha, of Napoleon and of Commodore Smith, is one that is worth telling and exploring in further depth. In no way is my work an end product; rather it is just the beginning of understanding, of trying to contextualize the events of 1799 in relationship to the historical record and the archaeological record, and of breathing life into one of the most fascinating epochs in history, the story of the Butcher, of the dashing English Naval hero, of the man who dreamt of ruling an empire greater than that of Alexander the Great's, and of the wall which changed the course of history forever.

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