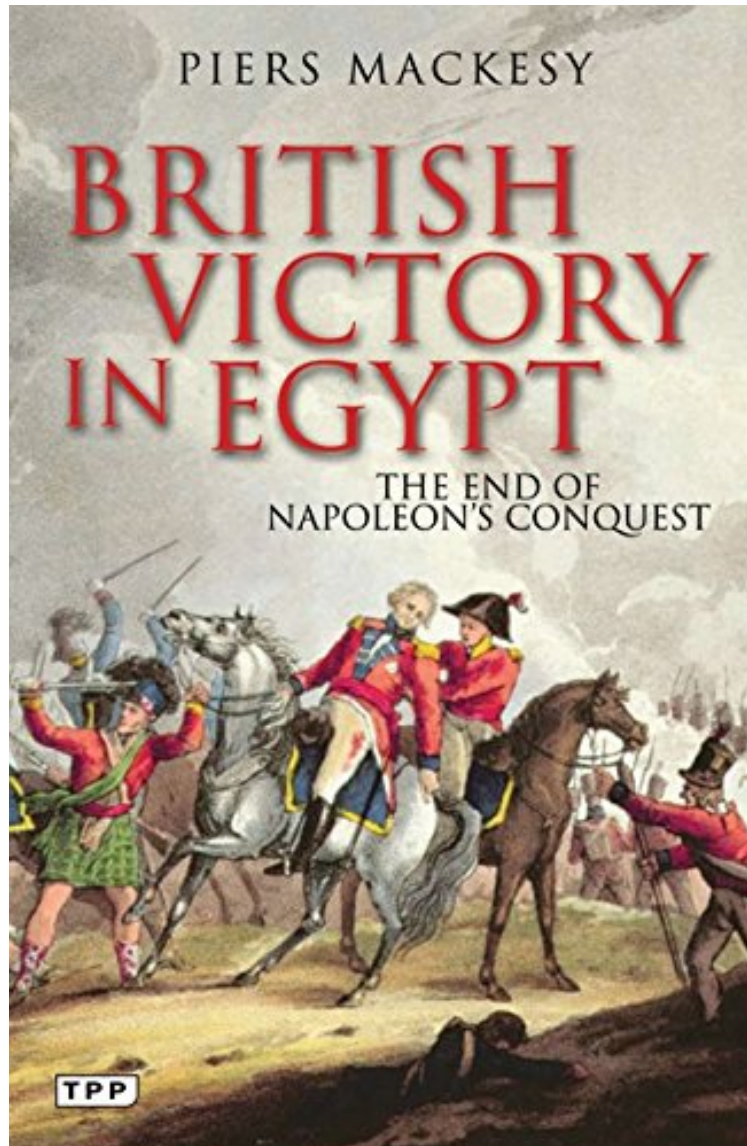


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Piers Mackesy

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Piers Mackesy : British Victory in Egypt: The End of Napoleon's Conquest (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised British Victory in Egypt: The End of Napoleon's Conquest (Tauris Parke Paperbacks):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Meticulous, MasterfulBy Stephen ConstantelosBritish Victory in

Egypt is the triumphant capstone to historian Piers Mackesy's career. Most of his books, apart his widely-acclaimed *War For America* are out of print, but this, the most modest in scope, bears close reading to learn about the realities behind French Revolutionary Era campaigning, especially this invasion, an early case study in amphibious invasion at a time when the British army badly needed something to show for itself, being in a tailspin since the American Revolution: "How harmless an English military force is against an enemy battle array," is the quote that begins the narrative. But Abercromby and the British triumphed over Bonaparte and his devotee, Menou, in the end. This book is not an easy read. The typeface is small, the text riddled with regimental numbers and supply and troop estimates, but there is a gem of a narrative here that repays focused reading. Mackesy certainly has his heroes--Abercromby first of all, and the copious numbers of Scottish officers and troops involved--and his tale is spun mostly from a British point of view, but the Turks and French get a decently fair shake and the issues and uncertainties on both sides are brought to the fore giving a feeling of suspense and just how precarious this campaign was for the British and how weary the highly professional and patriotic (but divided) French were of being in this Napoleonic outpost that served as his threat to Britain's colonial empire. In the course of narrative, battles are detailed, characters sketched, disease and supply are featured, landscapes and maps and lists provide backbone, and the hardships of man, woman, dog, horse, and camel are described. French savants attempt to escape by sea but are denied by the British fleet, hovering over the coast at great risk to greater Mediterranean security. Skirmishes happen, much to the chagrin of certain officers like Moore who deplore senseless risk of life (p. 105). British troops arrive from India, working their way north and west, while Abercromby's troops (later ably led by the less personable Hely-Hutchinson) work their way inland, with the Turks and Mamelukes coming to their aid from the East. The pyramids overlook all, and the story pauses to consider this and the soldiers' mixed reactions to them, some in awe, some seeing them as mere useless vestiges of slave labor (p. 197-8). Strategy and tactics are considered and described in-depth; you feel like you're in the commanders' chairs as the campaign unfolds. I'm not sure if I have the energy to read another of Mackesy's painstaking narratives, but I count having read this book one of the richest historical experiences I've had.

In 1800 the British army's reputation was in tatters, having experienced nothing but failure in wars across the world for forty years; at home, a divided cabinet had to face the problem of Egypt, which had been occupied by Napoleon's Army of the Orient since 1798. The task of ejecting France fell to a disparate band of soldiers led by Sir Ralph Abercromby which, against all the odds, defeated the French army on 21 March 1801, bringing Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign to a definitive and crushing end. Piers Mackesy vividly brings to life the events of the battle, revealing how Abercromby's brilliantly-executed strategy restored the honour of the British army and averted disaster for the Empire. (2017-04-10)

About the Author Piers Mackesy is Emeritus Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, and a Fellow of the British Academy. He is the author of *The War for America*, *Statesmen at War* and *War Without Victory*, among others. He was awarded the Templar Medal for British Victory in Egypt. (2017-04-10)