

EDITED BY
SELENA DALY, MARTINA SALVANTE, VANDA WILCOX

LANDSCAPES OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR



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Selena Daly · Martina Salvante
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Editors

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Landscapes of War: A Fertile Terrain for First World War Scholarship

Selena Daly, Martina Salvante and Vanda Wilcox

Perhaps the most famous of all English-language First World War poems begins with a powerful evocation of landscape: ‘In Flanders Fields the poppies blow / Between the crosses, row on row’. John McCrae’s 1915 reflection on a comrade’s death, which became instantly popular upon its first publication, gave rise to the enduring use of the poppy as a symbol which resonates across the nations of the former British Empire as an emblem of the Great War.¹ It is a symbol that is profoundly embedded in landscape: beyond its evocative blood-red colour and innate fragility, resonant of life and death in war, the flower is rooted in the soil in which the war dead are interred. Without this inextricable tie to the earth and the battlefields upon which it blooms and where men died, it would lose its resonance. The overwhelmingly popular artwork by

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Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, installed at the Tower of London in 2014 and subsequently sent to tour the United Kingdom, made this link explicit. Entitled *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, the installation consisted of 888,246 red ceramic poppies, each symbolising a British or colonial soldier killed in the war (Fig. 1.1). They flowed in a seemingly unstoppable tide across the ground, like a spreading pool of blood on the earth.

Landscape is also front and centre of another important strand of contemporary commemorative and educational practice: battlefield tourism, which has replaced what for earlier generations was most accurately termed battlefield pilgrimage. A visit to the physical location of events is often conceived as intrinsic to gaining a deeper understanding of their nature. This is unarguably true from the perspective of military history: to understand the course of a battle requires a solid understanding of the terrain and its morphology. For many visitors, however, it would appear



Fig. 1.1 Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, 9 August 2014. Wikipedia CC BY 3.0. (Art by Paul Cummins and Tom Piper) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_Swept_Lands_and_Seas_of_Red#/media/File:Blood_Swept_Lands_And_Seas_Of_Red_9_Aug_2014.JPG)

to be more of an emotional need than a historical one. The opportunity to walk imaginatively in the shoes of the men who fought a hundred years ago draws many thousands each year to the former Western Front, to Gallipoli, and to the mountains of the Italo-Austrian frontline.² The centrality of landscape to memory has been highlighted recently by the joint Franco-Belgian project *Paysages et sites de mémoire de la Grande Guerre*, which is endeavouring to secure World Heritage Site status for the entire landscape of cemeteries and funeral monuments from the Swiss border to the North Sea, as embodied in eighty key French locations and a further twenty-five in Belgium.³

Beyond the formal processes of commemoration and memory which battlefield visits and memorial sites represent, landscape is profoundly embedded into the cultural imaginary of the conflict. In Italy, the conflict on the Austro-Italian Front has been often described as the ‘white war’ (*guerra bianca*). The colour here immediately evokes the snow in the Alps, where the fighting took place.⁴ The uniqueness of this operational environment is also conveyed by referring to its spatial verticality.⁵ The Alps and Dolomites were significantly scarred, and their images profoundly changed, by these violent human interactions that also lived on in the memories of servicemen after the war.⁶ More recently, the melting glaciers of these mountain chains and ridges have revealed many material traces, such as human remains and shells, of that protracted coexistence.⁷ Significantly, the image of the ‘white war’ is popularly used as a synecdoche for the whole theatre, including the plains and low-lands where snow did not fall, demonstrating the power of landscape to shape popular perceptions of the war. Likewise, as Daniel Todman has noted, the ‘dead landscape’ of mud ‘form[s] a visual shorthand for the British experience in th[e] war’.⁸

Of course, the First World War also unfolded in landscapes far removed from Flemish mud or Alpine glaciers. In the ancient forests of the Vosges or Augustów, in Egypt’s Western Desert, in the Cameroonian jungle, on the lower slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro or in the rocky deserts and swampy alluvial plains of Mesopotamia, soldiers’ experiences were shaped by the landscapes they inhabited and by their ideas and expectations of them. The fighting would serve in turn to reshape these landscapes, sometimes permanently. The landscapes of war also include spaces beyond those used for military purposes, such as home-front landscapes in cities and towns at varying distances from the battlefields, and even across oceans from the actual fighting. On these home fronts, the many

demands of industry and agriculture placed societies in a new relationship with landscapes, whether through the quest for new raw materials or the need to find substitutes for products no longer easily available. Cityscapes were transformed by new economic, political and social uses of public and private space. Once the war had ended, its physical scars and environmental damage were enduring legacies; the landscape was also the locus of commemoration, with different national narratives about the war reflected in the various strategies adopted for the creation of permanent memorials both on the former battlefields and at home. Not all of these are equally prominent in popular memories or understanding of the war; some have become wholly forgotten, while others remain emblematic, even stereotyped.

Yet despite the centrality of landscape to the experience of the war and its prominence in many popular understandings of the war, it has only become the subject of scholarly attention relatively recently. It is an inherently interdisciplinary topic, existing as it does as the nexus between the material world and human interpretation, and the research which has been published in the field reflects this. Art history, the study of visual representations, architectural history and the study of memorials have offered one important set of approaches, but in recent years environmental history, battlefield archaeology and medical humanities have also opened up new ways to think about war and the physical spaces in which it occurs. As a consequence, in recent years there has been growing scholarly interest in ‘landscapes of war’, and indeed it was selected as the theme for the Society for Military History conference in 2018.⁹

This book aims both to showcase some of the diverse and fruitful ways in which landscape is currently being analysed, or used as a lens for analysis of the First World War more generally, and to open up lines for further research in relation to other conflicts. It seeks to suggest the value of dialogue between multiple methodologies and objects of enquiry, whilst also reflecting the emphasis that the ‘global turn’ has placed on a more geographically diverse approach to the Great War. This volume should thus prove useful not only to historians of that conflict, but to anyone interested in the history of human interactions with landscape. But before considering the ways in which the First World War might be better understood through this lens, it is worth first examining what we mean by landscape, and specifically by a ‘landscape of war’.

DEFINING LANDSCAPES OF WAR

Firstly, a landscape is limited in space, and must have some kind of boundaries; we cannot speak of ‘the earth’s landscape’ but rather of many landscapes. Consequently, landscape is an inherently anthropocentric idea, requiring human interactions, at the very least from a viewer or viewpoint, since it is not delimited by any inherent geographical feature but instead defined by the person (or people) who is observing, describing or representing it. It is human categorisation and interpretation which distinguish one landscape from another, though that process of definition might be based on many different criteria, such as agricultural usage, political or administrative boundaries, customs and tradition, or visual features.

Moreover, the concept brackets the geomorphology of a designated area together with human interventions into, and interpretations of, its features. Thus, landscape is not *only* mountains, plains, beaches, forests or deserts, but also the physical modifications made to them by successive generations of humans, and the cultural beliefs and practices which are embedded in and projected onto the terrain. Since a landscape includes both man-made physical features such as buildings, roads, farms, ditches or quarries, and cultural features such as sacred sites, landmarks, burial places or holiday locations, it is intrinsically mutable and transient, since both types of human modification inevitably change over time.

Simon Schama’s 1995 book, *Landscape and Memory*, offers a densely argued proposition of landscape as a cultural creation, endowed with complex and mutable meanings by successive societies. Through investigating the three key elements of wood, water and rock, he showed that it is not merely human use or modification of landscape which invests it with meaning, but rather numerous acts of interpretation, belief and myth-making.¹⁰ This position echoes the 1992 decision by UNESCO to include ‘cultural landscapes’ in the World Heritage Convention (in addition to ‘natural heritage’ such as forests or marine environments). UNESCO defines cultural landscapes as the ‘combined works of nature and of man’ (Article 1 of the Convention) and describes three distinct types: landscapes planned and defined entirely by man (which in the context of war studies might include city streets, trenches, memorial gardens and parks); organically evolved landscapes, where man-made elements have developed in response to natural features (battlefields, olive groves, oil wells); and associative cultural landscapes, where even without any

man-made features, the natural landscape holds powerful meaning (symbolic natural borders like the Rhine, or the Alps and Dolomites).¹¹ While UNESCO's categories cannot confine or contain landscapes of war, they can illustrate the rich complexity of definitions which may be required.

Landscape, then, is limited and defined in both space and time; it is the setting within which any human activity, including war, is contained. The features it acquires during and after a conflict are significant for many aspects of the study of war: for instance, the barbed wire and trench networks are features of First World War combat which can be analysed through the lens of tactical and operational military history. However, they are also part of the man-made landscape of war, with implications not only for fighting but for the environmental, geographical and economic dimension of conflict, as well as being cultural symbols that profoundly shape the legacies and memory of war. Landscape is thus both a material reality with which military and economic historians must engage, and a socially and culturally mediated space in which war is experienced, represented and remembered.

LANDSCAPES OF THE GREAT WAR

It is perhaps easier to consider the landscapes of the Great War as aesthetic objects than as a matter for analysis and interpretation. Certainly, photographic and pictorial approaches to the topic have proliferated.¹² But recent scholarship has begun to consider the landscapes of the Great War as an object of study in their own right, drawing on a huge diversity of possible approaches to the topic.¹³ Both prior to, and as a result of, its centenary, the historiography of the First World War has increasingly embraced a transnational methodology and a reconceptualisation of the war in time and space which emphasises its global features.¹⁴ In many ways the study of landscape demands just such an approach, and like other recent works in this area, the present volume therefore looks beyond the Western Front and the 1914–1918 period in its understanding of the war. Showcasing several methodological and theoretical approaches as well as highlighting the range of topics that landscape can serve to illuminate, the book is divided into four thematic sections: Environment and Climate at War; Urban and Industrial Landscapes Transformed; Cross-Cultural Encounters with Landscapes; and Legacies of the First World War in Landscapes.

Environmental history has been particularly successful at straddling landscape's challenging divide between the material and the cultural, and since 2000 it has made an important contribution to the study of war and warfare. In 2004, a landmark publication edited by Richard Tucker and Edmund P. Russell, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare*, opened up a number of lines of enquiry, exploring the natural landscape as a source of essential economic resources, a determining factor in combat and a potential victim of military destruction.¹⁵ Notably, while the volume considered settings as diverse as early-modern colonial India, Finland, the American Civil War and the Pacific theatre of the Second World War, the jacket image depicted an instantly recognisable scene from the Western Front of the First World War: a water-logged mudscape, with soldiers crossing a devastated wood on duckboards. It is this conflict that offers what today is seen as the archetypal landscape of war. Environmental history's focus on the *interaction* of humanity with the natural world—seeing the environment itself as an element independently worthy of study—offers important insights for the study of the First World War, in which the sheer volume of material available about the political, diplomatic, military and economic aspects of the conflict might easily overwhelm considerations about the physical spaces in which the war took place. With a growing number of specialists and graduate students working in the field, environmental analyses of the First World War look to be increasingly important, offering understandings of landscape rooted in ecology, sustainability and resource extraction.¹⁶ For instance, while it is commonplace to observe that it was a war of *matériel*, characterised by the action of machines including tanks, planes and trucks, rarely have historians fully engaged with the consequences of this fact for the petroleum industry. As Brian Black demonstrates in his chapter here, the war generated unprecedented demands for petroleum products and was a transformational moment in what he calls the 'culture of oil', marking its emergence as an essential resource for national security purposes. A rather different energy source, olive oil, along with other olive-derived commodities, offers a new angle to examine the impact of the war on the Palestinian landscape and economy. Jeffrey Reger uses the methodologies of environmental history to consider deforestation and famine under Ottoman rule, enhancing our understanding of civilian experiences in the Middle East and offering a useful model of how to analyse a specific landscape.

Environment and climate were also hugely significant for the conduct of military operations, as many military studies have emphasised—F. Spencer Chapman’s classic Second World War memoir *The Jungle is Neutral* (1949) serves perfectly to illustrate this point. Geology and environment determine terrain, an important element in any analysis of battle.¹⁷ Here, Isadore Pascal Ndjock Nyobe illustrates the practical and psychological impact of the environment in the generally neglected context of Cameroon, where the landscape was a vital protagonist in the war between Germany, France and Britain.

While agricultural and industrial landscapes were mobilised for war, so too were cityscapes; all three were spaces for living and working, for supporting or resisting the war, for political and cultural activism, for sickness and dying. Urban history can offer unexpectedly valuable perspectives on the First World War, as the two-volume comparative study, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919* edited by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (1997 and 2007), amply demonstrated.¹⁸ The urban experience generally, and cityscapes in particular, provide valuable ways to re-evaluate the impact of the war away from the front, including the very different experiences of city dwellers in the United States.¹⁹ Ross Wilson explores how the public spaces of American city streets became a landscape of war, in which citizens could be both mobilised and controlled. Sandra Camarda’s chapter analyses the very different urban landscape of Luxembourg, where the city was directly engaged in the war (as an occupied space targeted by aerial bombing) and where industrial landscapes were closely linked to national self-presentation: the cityscape became a space in which questions of identity and nationhood could be renegotiated. Both chapters demonstrate how economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of the conflict intersect within the changing landscapes of cities at war.

If to study landscapes of war means to analyse city dwellers, oil manufacturers and olive farmers, it must also, of course, entail the study of armies and their members, who interact with their environment in a vast range of ways. As well as performing technical military analyses, officers and men also viewed landscapes through scientific, cultural and psychological lenses, as the three chapters in the book’s third section make clear. The German army was keen to research the Ottoman landscape from a military and scientific perspective, to serve both wartime and post-war purposes. Geographical and geological features (mainly water

and oil) were important, as were scholarly interests such as archaeological remains. Oliver Stein's chapter illustrates that this landscape was a rich and fruitful object of study for the German military and its 'scientists in uniform'. Very different projections were made onto the Middle Eastern landscape by the protagonist of Samraghni Bonnerjee's chapter, Bengali doctor Kalyan Mukherji, who served with the Indian Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia. Bonnerjee argues that his encounter with that unfamiliar landscape was shaped by his deep-seated cultural expectations about the region; the literary landscape of his imagining was quite unlike the landscape of war he would discover there. Cross-cultural encounters of the type described by Stein and Bonnerjee have become an important strand in the current drive towards exploring transnational dimensions of the First World War.²⁰ Beyond the meetings of individuals however, the encounter with landscape was also a significant and often challenging experience. This was not only an intellectual or cultural meeting but a physical one, as Jessica Meyer highlights in her analysis of British stretcher bearers on the Western Front and in Egypt, whose daily tasks were directly shaped by the landscape in which they worked. Meyer uses this encounter to explore the relationship between landscape and masculine identities; in this case, the physical features of the terrain—both natural and man-made—interacted with the human uses of space and understandings of its meaning in a complex, multilayered relationship.

Cultural history has also engaged with the theme of landscape as an enduring element in the legacies of war. One foundational text for First World War memory studies is Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995), which examined the importance of physical spaces, such as cemeteries, in cultural readings of the war.²¹ Landscape is at the centre of many approaches to memory, whether literally (battlefield pilgrimage and tourism, monument building) or figuratively (the cultural history of mud, trenches, poppies and so on).²² Related disciplines such as architecture, art history and historical geography also have much to offer here: the recently published collection *Commemorative Spaces of the First World War. Historical Geographies at the Centenary* suggests a range of approaches, including cartography, 'ecologies' and the changing uses of space, to explore facets of war commemoration and memory which are deeply rooted in landscape.²³ In the last section of this volume, Aaron Cohen focuses on space, both physical and imaginary, in his investigation of Russian memorials to the war. Given the political

climate after the war, a conventional memorial landscape was impossible, meaning that an alternative relationship between the material and the emotional was required. By way of complete contrast, as Tim Godden shows, the British and Commonwealth commemoration on the Western Front was deeply embedded in the physical landscape. His study of the architecture and layout of cemeteries there reveals that wartime landscape features were carefully preserved and even deliberately emphasised. These two chapters show that there is no one memorial landscape of the Great War, but that, on the contrary, political, social and ideological differences profoundly inform the possibilities of using and interpreting landscapes.

A final approach to landscapes of war which has become particularly significant in recent years is that of conflict archaeology, now the subject of dedicated research centres and publication series and an area of considerable interest to the general public. Drawing on traditional archaeological practices and methods as well as on insights from the study of material culture, both battlefield archaeology more narrowly and conflict archaeology somewhat more broadly have much to offer to the study of the First World War.²⁴ Nicholas Saunders has been one of the most prominent scholars in this field since its inception, and here his contribution—which concludes the collection—highlights not only the usefulness and appeal of the archaeological approach but also argues convincingly for the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of war.

War, as a human activity, cannot be fully understood through any single approach. Military history has long learned to draw on social and cultural history, and war studies has increasingly come to incorporate a great range of approaches from disability history to memory studies, with attention devoted to topics ranging from economics to emotions. Amid the greatly enriched understanding of conflict that comes with this breadth, we risk a dispersal of focus; this volume's thematic approach suggests one way in which diverse experiences can be linked together, while also speaking to wider trends in transnational history, especially in its focus on cross-cultural encounters. At the same time, a return to the specificity of physical space, bodily experiences and material culture serves to anchor these ideas concretely, as is fitting given the fundamental nature of war. We hope that readers will come away convinced of the usefulness of landscape as a means of thinking about war and excited by the new connections and insights which it opens up.

NOTES

1. See Nicholas J. Saunders, *The Poppy: A History of Conflict, Loss, Remembrance, and Redemption* (London: Oneworld, 2014).
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5. Diego Leoni, *La guerra verticale: uomini, animali e macchine sul fronte di montagna, 1915–1918* (Turin: Einaudi, 2015).
6. The way those mountains were transformed into national symbols is analysed in Marco Armiero, *A Rugged Nation: Mountains and the Making of Modern Italy: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: White Horse, 2011). Mountaineering and nationhood are also examined in Tait Keller, *Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria, 1860–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016) and Alessandro Pastore, *Alpinismo e storia d’Italia: dall’Unità alla Resistenza* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).
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9. See “Call for Papers: ‘Landscapes of War and Peace’, 85th Annual Meeting of the Society for Military History,” The Society for Military History, <http://www.smh-hq.org/2018/2018/2018cfp.html>, accessed 24 November 2017.
10. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).
11. “Cultural Landscapes,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>, accessed 25 August 2017.

12. An excellent example is Simon Doughty, *Silent Landscape: Battlefields of the Western Front One Hundred Years On* (Solihull: Helion & Co., 2016).
13. Such themes as poetry, theatre, nursing and sexuality are explored in Angela K. Smith and Krista Cowman, eds., *Landscapes and Voices of the Great War* (London: Routledge, 2017). Another important example of interdisciplinary work is Antonio Sagona et al., eds., *Anzac Battlefield: A Gallipoli Landscape of War and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), which employs cartography, archaeology, memory studies and more.
14. Heather Jones, "As the Centenary Approaches: The Regeneration of First World War Historiography," *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 3 (2013): 857–78; Alan Kramer, "Recent Historiography of the First World War—Part I," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 1 (2014): 5–27; Kramer, "Recent Historiography of the First World War—Part II," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 2 (2014): 155–74; and Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
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PART I

Environment, Climate and Weather at War



CHAPTER 2

Making Oil Essential: Emerging Patterns of Petroleum Culture in the United States During the Era of the Great War

Brian Black

As a commodity, ‘black gold’ reached the first decade and a half of the twentieth century in a most precarious situation. While massive discoveries of petroleum suddenly compounded the world’s supply (particularly in the United States, with the 1901 Spindle Top strike in Texas), various innovations left petroleum with only scant utility. Certainly, personal transportation offered a remarkably rich area of potential global growth; however, the competitive market for powering trucks and cars in the first decade of the 1900s made the internal combustion engine powered by gasoline (ICE) a most unlikely suitor, particularly due to the complex system of processing and delivery that it required. Across a spectrum of compounding uses, the tipping point to alter petroleum’s status was the Great War. Of the many transitions that the First World War marked for human civilisation, its role as the gateway to an energy-intensive life might be the most far-reaching. At a time when we knew little about the implications of burning fossil fuels on the environment and climate, the

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use of petroleum products on the battlefield altered basic expectations of time and space and its expanded use was considered essential to progress. Indeed, particularly in the US this vision of progress would re-make the entire consumer landscape to conform to the use of petroleum for personal transportation of various sorts.

‘It was a war’, writes historian Daniel Yergin of the First World War, ‘that was fought between men and machines. And these machines were powered by oil’.¹ The transformation of petroleum during this era begins with it serving as the new fashion for powering the *matériel* of war. In fact, it was just eleven days after the British Parliament voted to shift its navy to utilise petroleum that Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated at Sarajevo. From planes to tanks, the warfare that unfolded would see the strategy and process of battle firmly entwined with the burning of petroleum to release motive power that might be employed for reasons of war.

Providing proper context to the First World War requires that historians consider the resource-based narrative approach that is informed by environmental history. Of these resources that were transformed by the Great War, energy—and particularly petroleum, which had exploded onto the global illumination market in the last four decades of the nineteenth century—presents a most revealing narrative. A proper accounting of the war’s context must enumerate these applications of the flexible fuel, petroleum, for the war effort; however, this proves to be only a small part of the story of crude’s emerging importance in this era. A variety of global economic and regional political and social factors converged on the Great War era to catapult the moderately valuable commodity of petroleum to new standards of value, systemisation, and competition for access. Indeed, by the end of the conflict, petroleum had become a commodity of global significance—one that even merited the term ‘essential’. And, of course, developed nations therefore needed to consider its accessibility as a matter of national security. In the form of colonisation or through the activities of government-supported, transnational corporations, access to crude from all over the world became both a requirement for, and a predictor of, global power.

This chapter analyses this grand shift through a systems-level environmental history of the change in petroleum’s image, conception, and cultural and economic value as a commodity during this seminal era and emphasises the US as the nation that experienced this alteration most acutely.

Indeed, factoring in related global patterns of trade from 1914–1919, changes in the ‘culture of oil’ during the First World War defined the critical role that it would play in the entire twentieth century. These details establish the Great War’s role in helping to make the ensuing century one predicated on inexpensive energy derived from crude, which also assured a commensurate level of economic growth and environmental degradation.

POWERING THE MODERN WORLD

In *The Origins of the Modern World*, Robert Marks joins other scholars in describing the global human of the 1910s and 20s as going through a ‘great departure’ from previous modes of living. He writes that the First World War ‘shook the imperialist order to its foundations and had major consequences for the shape of the twentieth century’.² The combination of both rapid industrial and population growth in the twentieth century redefined humans’ relationship to their environment and clearly separated them from the rhythms and constraints of the ‘biological old regime’.³ This energy transition moves from foundational shifts, such as the technology to create synthetic fertiliser for both agriculture and military use in explosives, to also revolutionising personal transportation.

In the case of energy use, we see new technologies of the era provide a shrinking of time and space as well as an intensification of human impacts and potentialities. In *Something New Under the Sun*, John McNeill writes that worldwide energy harvest increased by about five times in the nineteenth century and sixteen times in the twentieth. The Great War sits at a defining precipice of this shift in our species. From deforestation and mining to the expansion of automobile use and the internal combustion engine, we find that the First World War era played a formative role. Indeed, as a divider between nineteenth- and twentieth-century ways of life, the Great War demarks an entirely new scale and scope to energy use and development. As scholars re-orient the human story to better reflect these modal distinctions in the way that people live, the First World War also becomes the gateway event to the high-energy existence that has recently been used to define the ‘Anthropocene’.

In this geological epoch, as McNeill and others argue, the human condition becomes one of ‘perpetual disturbance’ to Earth’s natural rhythms and balance. At the core of this existence, McNeill writes:

In environmental history, the twentieth century qualifies as a peculiar century because of the screeching acceleration of so many processes that bring ecological change. [...] We have probably deployed more energy since 1900 than in all of human history before 1900.⁴

McNeill followed this exhortation recently with *The Great Acceleration*, a book that extends the argument made by him and others for the use of the term ‘Anthropocene’ by tracing humans’ impact to a primary culprit: abundant, poorly managed energy.⁵ Through his work and that of others, energy has become the primary mechanism for defining a geological epoch overwhelmingly shaped by human life. In addition to the fashion to which energy is applied, McNeill also distinguishes the period of acceleration through the adoption of fossil fuels by a few societies that will begin to industrialise—to develop—at an entirely different rate.

The importance of energy to this process is picked up by Marks when he described the world after 1500 in this fashion:

Societies that can mobilize sources of energy for industry, consumption and armies are strong and powerful and use that power to ensure flows of energy from other parts of the world to themselves. Such power, like deposits of coal, oil, and natural gas, is distributed unevenly in the world, accentuating global differences in wealth and poverty: today, the consumer societies, with about 20 percent of the world’s population, use about two-thirds of all the energy produced, nearly all of which comes from fossil fuels.⁶

Each of these scholars points to the adoption of a fossil fuel regime as a defining characteristic that swings nations into a new world order during the twentieth century. One of this global order’s primary characteristics is the formation of a ‘gap’ that separates the developed from the less developed nations. In the paradigm employed by Marks and others, fossil-fuelled industrialisation contributes to the ‘great reversal’ in the world order and then to the ‘great acceleration’ that creates a basic gap between rich and poor nations. The gap that Marks discusses is primarily an economic one, of course; however, when we begin to break the larger economy of knowledge into each of their material components, we find there are also gaps in knowledge.

The energy transition of the Great War era only succeeded because of the advancement of additional technologies that enhanced the impact of

new sources of power. Historian Christopher Jones discusses the multiplying effects of such related or ancillary technologies as ‘intensification’ which took the shift to mineral-based sources begun in the nineteenth century and formalised and broadened its application.⁷ With such new energy systems in mind, the summary impact of the Great War on petroleum usage emerges as many layered and complex, but altogether transformative. The foundation for this transition, however, was set just prior to the conflict and did not involve a revolution in personal transportation. Instead, similar to the innovation of gunpowder centuries prior, new technology revolutionised the composition of military might and warfare.

BRITAIN CONNECTS OIL WITH NATIONAL SECURITY

Emerging from petroleum’s initial commercial development in Pennsylvania during the 1860s, subsequent decades brought international scale and increased supply, but delivered few new uses. A unique petroleum culture then took shape that expanded production and availability largely in advance of new applications for the raw energy that it would provide. Such a moment, partly created by technical and corporate innovation and partly by new roles for the nation-state and ideas of individual autonomy, ushered in a revolutionary assortment of new uses for crude.

Although the popularity of kerosene had jettisoned petroleum’s value in the nineteenth century, illumination appeared a fleeting application of crude by the late 1800s when tinkers and scientists in Europe and the United States began extensive application of electricity for a variety of purposes. Most important, American inventor Thomas Edison joined with others to make electricity derived from coal or other means the most likely illuminant of the future. By the 1890s, therefore, the primary use of petroleum was becoming lubrication and manufacturing. Ironically, at this same moment, there was an intensification in international efforts to develop and acquire petroleum. In the first decade of the twentieth century, therefore, resourceful political leaders sought ways to make petroleum useful, and even integral, in ways that extended beyond lubrication. In both the US and Great Britain, the energy transition was openly maneuvered and manipulated by the political and military establishment. As early as 1910, petroleum emerged as a strategic tool for

ensuring global power. The first application for petroleum in this regard was ensuring naval supremacy for these powers.

Politically, the British effort at naval conversion was led by young Winston Churchill, who began as a member of Parliament and by 1910 had become the President of the Board of Trade. Although he did not begin on the side of naval expansion, the early 1910s brought Churchill a clear education on the advantages of oil (speed capabilities, flexibility of storage and supply, permitted refuelling at sea, etc.). He later wrote:

As a coal ship used up her coal, increasingly large numbers of men had to be taken, if necessary from the guns, to shovel the coal from remote and inconvenient bunkers to bunkers nearer to the furnaces or to the furnaces themselves, thus weakening the fighting efficiency of the ship perhaps at the most critical moment in the battle. [...] The use of oil made it possible in every type of vessel to have more gun-power and more speed for less size or less cost.⁸

By 1912, the policies had been put in place and as Churchill recorded, in the world's greatest Navy, 'the supreme ships of the Navy, on which our life depended, were fed by oil and could only be fed by oil'.⁹ Churchill and Britain's military strategists emphasised the great benefits for their naval superiority; however, their decision also marked a defining moment in a new era of the culture of petroleum. By association, committing their fleet to petroleum—which was unavailable in their nation—meant that a consistent and reliable supply of petroleum had just become one of the most important commodities on Earth wherever it occurred. Nations' security depended on it. Also, by association, any nation wishing to compete with Britain had to follow suit.

At the highest levels, US leaders debated the implications of converting their military, particularly the navy, to petroleum. Their conversations had begun in the late 1800s but took on greater urgency as British reconversion altered global affairs. The US had one significant strategic advantage in the area of naval conversion: in the early 1900s, American oil fields produced approximately one-third of the world's oil. Indeed, the US approached all such strategic decisions from the basic realisation that it was the only nation in the world that could power its military with petroleum and largely be able to supply it from its own reserves—it possessed energy autonomy, which would later become known as energy independence. Although this was an obvious advantage over

other nations, the American situation also required a new type of relationship between business and government. Given such critical importance, petroleum's supply demanded federal oversight or management. In times of an over-abundance of supply, this control was often referred to as 'conservation'.¹⁰

In the end, though, it was Churchill who seems to have most clearly formed the necessary new vision of the twentieth-century world when he proclaimed to the House of Commons on 17 June 1914:

This afternoon we have to deal, not with the policy of building oil-driven ships or of using oil as an ancillary fuel in coal-driven ships. [...] Look out upon the wide expanse of the oil regions of the world. Two gigantic corporations—one in either hemisphere—stand out predominantly. In the New World there is the Standard Oil. [...] In the Old World the great combination of the Shell and the Royal Dutch. [...]

For many years, it has been the policy of the Foreign Office, the Admiralty, and the Indian Government to preserve the independent British oil interests of the Persian oil-field, to help that field to develop as well as we could and, above all, to prevent it being swallowed by [others...].

[Over...] the last two or three years, in consequence of these new uses which have been found for this oil [...] there is a world shortage of an article which the world has only lately begun to see is required for certain special purposes. That is the reason why prices have gone up, and not because [of] evilly-disposed gentlemen of the Hebraic persuasion.¹¹

Therefore, on the eve of the First World War, the status of crude had been altered dramatically and its new importance would be pressed on a global stage almost immediately.

PRICE, STRATIGRAPHY AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

In Great Britain, when Churchill committed the Royal Navy to petroleum in 1913, he forever compromised the nation's energy autonomy: Britain had neither domestic sources of oil nor existing supplies in its colonies. Anglo-Persian/BP, with its access to oil in Central Asia (particularly Persia, the future Iran), quickly became the most sensible option to ensure Britain's energy future. By 1914, large capital expenditures, such as pipeline construction, had left Anglo-Persian/BP in deep debt and near bankruptcy. To convince Parliament to help the company, Churchill argued: 'If we cannot get oil, we cannot get corn, we cannot get cotton

and we cannot get a thousand and one commodities necessary for the preservation of the economic energies of Great Britain'.¹² Parliament approved his plan to purchase a 51% stake in BP for £2.2 million in June 1914. Maintaining and developing oil supplies soon became a critical portion of the British colonial efforts.

The global use of petroleum grew by 50% during the First World War, which exacerbated the difficulty of managing the global supply. These difficulties grew more acute in 1919, following the destabilisation of one of the world's significant producing regions, Russia. The United States, however, still dominated oil production in 1919: producing 1 million barrels or approximately 70% of the global output. But the culture of oil was changing.

One reason for what experts referred to as an 'oil glut' was an increased understanding of oil geophysics, which began with the US Geological Survey in 1908 and industrial publications such as the *Oil & Gas Journal*, which first appeared in 1902. Particularly in the United States, the changing culture of petroleum moved serious science into the petroleum industry. Primarily, new understanding allowed regulation and control to begin to reign in the rule of capture that had held that oilfields were fair game to any wildcatter. Perceiving the unity of oilfields—meaning the connectivity of underground wells—was substantiated by theories, including the 'Anticline Theory', which demonstrated the underground occurrence of natural gas, oil, and water and tied them to surface features such as domes, and sub-surface mapping, an approach which grew into stratigraphy after the First World War.¹³ Using stratigraphic features of geology, drilling exploratory fields became much less a leap of faith and much more a technical, scientific certainty administered by corporate managers. This also contributed to the development of secondary recovery, which involved flushing out existing wells with natural gas to acquire previously inaccessible reserves.¹⁴ 'Big Oil' was able to acquire the oil that it pursued at a higher rate than ever before.

In addition, chemical science applied to refining led to the breakthrough of thermal cracking that was introduced in 1913 by William Burton and allowed crude to be systematically separated into a variety of products. Most importantly, gasoline acquired from each barrel of crude grew from 15% of American production in 1900 to 39% in 1929.¹⁵ In the emerging era of Big Oil that followed the 1911 breakup of Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust, corporate entities such as Shell and

BP integrated each of these new sciences to gain a mixed profile while others specialised: for instance, Texaco, Chevron, and Gulf specialised in locating and harvesting crude while Exxon focused on refining.¹⁶

As gasoline emerged as a primary output, through gas stations, each corporation also gained a public face through which it interacted with consumers. Overall, writes industry veteran Leonardo Maugeri, ‘This transformation of the industry into its modern shape involved a vast process of mergers and acquisitions, favored by its growing capital intensity. [...] Mergers and acquisitions proved a quicker and more profitable way to achieve integration, scale, and market presence than building them step-by-step’.¹⁷

CONFLICT AND INNOVATION IN THE GREAT WAR

The catalyst for many of these changes in petroleum culture was conflict on a global scale. In determining humans’ transportation future, for example, the explanation is clear-cut: the First World War relied on the use of vehicles and the electric-powered alternatives that were succeeding in many portions of the consumer market could not fulfil the flexibility required for warfare. During the war, the manufacture of automobiles for civilian uses was virtually halted as the industry was mobilised to produce vehicles, motors, and other war *matériel* for the armed forces. The role of automobiles for use in the war effort emerged immediately when a fleet of Parisian taxicabs was used to bring troop reinforcements forward during the Battle of the Marne in 1914.¹⁸

It is estimated that 125,000 Ford Model Ts were used by the Allies on the battlefields of the Great War. In addition, truck production was doubled. Even though the American auto and truck industry was required to make other products as well (shells, guns, etc.), increased vehicle needs actually allowed the industry to increase production during the war. Historian David Kirsch notes that in France, Britain, Germany, and later Russia, truck purchasers received up to \$1,200 from the government for the purchase of an approved vehicle—which stipulated ICE-powered vehicles over the electric alternatives. US manufacturers established designs for a standard war truck in 1916–1917 and consequently began exporting vehicles to the front. As Kirsch writes: ‘The dramatic role of motor trucks in the conduct of the Great War reinforced and accelerated the standardization of the commercial peacetime truck. [...] By 1919

electric trucks accounted for less than 1 percent of the total number of commercial vehicles produced in the United States, down from 11 percent in 1909'.¹⁹

Mobility on the US home front was influenced in basic ways by the needs of the war. For instance, in the United States, the strain on the nation's railroads fuelled the military to emphasise long-distance trucking and to call for the roads that these routes made necessary. In addition, most trucks for the war effort were manufactured in the Midwest and needed to be brought to the eastern seaboard for shipment abroad. From 1917–1918, it is estimated that 18,000 ICE-powered trucks made this trip. In the United States, these trips, which were driven by necessity, demonstrated that such vehicles could be used reliably for interstate shipping, in lieu of railroads. Federal funds had begun to develop such roads in 1912, which primarily focused on rural access for the US Postal system. In 1916, the Federal Aid Road Act focused federal funds on roads that would help farmers to get their products out of rural areas with more ease and flexibility.²⁰

Following the war, commercial trucking in the United States became a dramatic example of technological selection, with consumers selecting the ICE-powered vehicle over the electric alternative. The dominant form of commercial transport within urban areas remained horse-power; however, electric-powered trucks seemed a superior alternative for short-haul delivery systems. After the First World War, though, explains Kirsch, standard practices within the industry, including the use of long-haul trucking over railroad, forced the 'appropriate sphere of the electric truck [to grow...] smaller and smaller'.²¹ Although proponents of electrics pushed for separate spheres of transportation with separate technologies, business owners could not support hybrid fleets. In making their decision for ICE-powered trucks, businesses accepted a cost-benefit scenario that allowed them to succeed across the board, even if another technology (electric power) made more sense for short-hauling. It was these decisions, fed by cheap fuel prices and government-sponsored infrastructure, that helped to determine the future patterns in human mobility.

During the war, having a domestic abundance of crude to manage put the United States in a powerful position, no matter what regulatory choices it made. For other developed nations who did not possess petroleum, their growing reliance dictated new patterns of trade and diplomacy. Before the supply was required by the navy, however, it was proven

indispensable on the battlefield. The energy transition that stemmed from Britain's commitment to petroleum had obvious influence on battlefield strategy, first in the Great War and then in the Second World War. Less noted by historians, petroleum's importance in matters of national security and diplomacy frames the grander patterns of this era, tying together each war and also the interregnum that separates them.

Although neither conflict grew entirely from disagreements associated with petroleum supply, new systems of negotiation and need had emerged that would eventually be referred to as 'geo-politics' to include concepts such as spheres of influence and trade, which were dictated by location as well as specific resources that were needed. Conflict was increasingly less focused on border disputes and more often emphasised important resources such as energy and particularly the fickle supplies of petroleum that occurred in very limited locations.

With this context in mind, when Britain set out to create its petroleum-powered navy during the spring of 1914, Europe seemed more peaceful than it had for years. Just eleven days after Parliament approved Churchill's bill about petroleum, though, as noted above, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary took place. Russia's army mobilised on 30 July, Germany declared war on it on 1 August, and British hostilities against Germany began three days later, on 4 August 1914.

When the war broke out, military strategy was organised around horses and other animal participants. With one horse on the field for every three men, such primitive modes dominated the fighting in this 'transitional conflict'. Throughout the war, the energy transition took place from horse-power to gas-powered trucks and tanks and, of course, to oil-burning ships and airplanes. Innovations put new technologies into immediate action on the battlefields of the war. It was the British, for instance, who set out to overcome the stalemate of trench warfare by devising an armoured vehicle that was powered by the internal combustion engine. Once again, Churchill is given credit for bringing the project—under its code name 'tank'—to reality when other British politicians wished to continue with existing practices. Although the tank was first used in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme, its decisive use arrived in August 1918 when, at the Battle of Amiens, a squadron of nearly 500 British tanks broke through the German line. In addition, the British Expeditionary Force that went to France in 1914 was supported by a

fleet of 827 motor cars and 15 motorcycles; by war's end, the British army included 56,000 trucks, 23,000 motorcars, and 34,000 motorcycles.²² These gas-powered vehicles certainly offered superior flexibility on the battlefield; however, their impact on land-based strategy would not be fully felt due to the continued prevalence of other methods of fighting.

In the air and sea, the strategic change was more obvious. By 1915, Britain had built 250 planes. In this era of the Red Baron and others, primitive airplanes often required that the pilot pack his own sidearm and use it for firing at his opponent. More often, though, the flying devices could be used for delivering explosives in episodes of tactical bombing. German pilots applied this new strategy to severe bombing of England with zeppelins and later with aircraft. Over the course of the war, the use of aircraft expanded remarkably: Britain had 55,000 planes; France, 68,000; Italy, 20,000; the United States, 15,000; and Germany, 48,000.²³ The disagreement over using petroleum at sea helped to exacerbate existing conflict leading up to the war. Ironically, the use of petroleum in ships led to what Yergin calls a 'stalemate' in the use of ships during the war, with only one major naval battle (the Battle of Jutland in 1916).²⁴ However, part of the explanation for this is the great chasm that separated Britain's emerging petroleum-powered shipping fleet from the entirely coal-burning one of Germany. It made little strategic sense for Germany to confront the British Navy; therefore, it used the tactic of submarine warfare. These early submarines ran primarily as diesel-powered ships on the surface, which were capable of briefly diving for attacks while they ran on battery power.

With these new uses, wartime petroleum supplies became a critical strategic military issue. Royal Dutch/Shell provided the war effort with much of its supply of crude. In addition, Britain expanded even more deeply in the Middle East. In particular, Britain had quickly come to depend on the Abadan refinery site in Persia and when Turkey came into the war in 1915 as a partner with Germany, British soldiers defended it from Turkish invasion. In addition, British soldiers pushed in to take control of Basra and eventually Baghdad. These defensive efforts allowed British fuel to continue to come from the Abadan refinery. Oil production in Persia grew during the war from 1,600 barrels per day (bpd) to 18,000 bpd. Of course, the growth and stability of the supply grew from Britain's Anglo-Persian corporation, which by the end of the war

had purchased the British Petroleum distribution company from the Crown. In order to move the supply where it was needed, the company quickly became a pioneer in the tanker business. By 1917, for just the reasons listed above, oil tankers had become one of the German submarine fleet's favourite targets. Late that year, the loss of tankers had become so extreme that British leaders worried that the war effort would be stymied.

When the Allies took renewed measures to prosecute the war in 1918, petroleum was a weapon on everyone's mind. The Inter-Allied Petroleum Conference was created to pool, coordinate and control all oil supplies and tanker travel.²⁵ The entry of the United States into the war made this organisation necessary because it had been supplying such a large portion of the Allied effort. As the producer of nearly 70% of the world's oil supply, the United States' greatest weapon in the fighting of the First World War may have been crude. President Woodrow Wilson appointed the nation's first energy czar whose responsibility was to work in close quarters with leaders of the American companies. These policies began more than a century of close relations between the US government and oil executives—Big Oil. As a result of this cooperative relationship, when domestic prices for crude rose during the war, the czar made an appeal for 'gasolineless Sundays' and other voluntary conservation measures.

On the battlefield, the Allies also designed their strategy to disrupt even the limited supply of petroleum to the other side. Although Germany was heavily dependent on Romanian oilfields, the small nation refused to join it in the war effort. Finally, in 1916, Romania declared war against Germany. As a result, German troops advanced on the oilfields and stored reserves. With Romania's limited ability to rebuff Germany's advances, Britain moved forward on its own approach to the problem: to destroy the Romanian industry so that it could be of no assistance to their opponent. By the end of 1916, British explosives had been used to relegate the entire Romanian industry—fields, reserves, and other apparatus—to waste. The destruction was total. Germany, however, took back the Romanian fields and by 1918 had restored approximately 80% of the oil supply. In addition, Germany had made significant movement toward acquiring the Baku supply after the Russian Revolution of 1917. More rapidly, though, their own ally Turkey advanced on the valuable resource, which was suddenly unguarded. By mid-1918, British forces

responded to Baku's cries for help and arrived to defend the fields from the Germans, with instructions to destroy them if their defence became untenable.

Yergin writes that the denial of Baku's supply at this juncture proved 'a decisive blow for Germany'.²⁶ At the meeting of the Inter-Allied Petroleum Conference immediately after the Armistice had been signed, the lead speaker declared: 'The Allied cause had floated to victory upon a wave of oil'. A later speaker from France offered that just as oil had been the blood of war, now it must 'be the blood of the peace'.²⁷ This realisation defined most human lives during the coming decades as petroleum became a critical domestic commodity.

More importantly, though, as a strategic commodity, petroleum would never leave centre stage. As Woodrow Wilson led world leaders to think cooperatively of a League of Nations, British forces secured their control over Mesopotamian oil by taking Mosul. In addition, ensuing agreements secured British dominance over the area now known as the Middle East. Their interest fuelled further exploration by oil companies and by petroleum geologists. By the 1920s, the findings established a red line spanning the nations reaching from Turkey to Oman that held the largest supply of petroleum on Earth. Following the lessons of the First World War, the exploitation of these reserves defined energy supplies and global relations for the rest of the twentieth century.

Growing out of the imperatives established in the Great War, by 1928, the need to manage the world's oil supplies took more official form as the 'Red Line Agreement'. In this agreement, Royal Dutch/Shell, Anglo-Persian, an 'American Group' (five private companies), and French interests agreed only to work within this region in cooperation with the Turkish Petroleum Company, which was led by Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, an Armenian entrepreneur who was responsible for the finding. Members of the group were given a 23.75% share in the consortium and asked to subscribe to a self-denying ordinance that prohibited them from engaging in independent oil development within the designated region.²⁸ Until the post-colonial era after the Second World War brought these nations' independence, this agreement divided up the region's oil supply among the world's great powers. Simultaneously, new attention worldwide created new markets and uses for the growing supply of petroleum. Nowhere was this more evident than in the United States.

CONCLUSION: THE MILITARY-PETROLEUM COMPLEX DEFINES THE ANTHROPOCENE

On 7 July 1919, a group of US military members dedicated Zero Milestone just south of the White House lawn in Washington, DC. The next morning, they helped to define the domestic future of the nation that they served. Instead of an exploratory rocket or deep-sea submarine, these explorers set out in forty-two trucks, five passenger cars, and an assortment of motorcycles, ambulances, tank trucks mobile field kitchens, mobile repair shops, and Signal Corps searchlight trucks. During the first three days of driving, they managed just over five miles per hour. This was most troubling because of their goal: to explore the condition of American roads by driving across the United States.²⁹

Leading this exploratory party was US Army captain Dwight D. Eisenhower. Although he played a critical role in many portions of twentieth-century US history, his passion for roads might have carried the most significant impact on the domestic front. This trek, literally and figuratively, caught the nation and the young soldier at a significant crossroads as the paths forward began to emerge. Returning from the First World War, Eisenhower was entertaining the idea of leaving the military and accepting a civilian job. His decision to remain proved pivotal for the United States. By the end of the first half of the century, the American roadscape would have helped to re-make the nation and the lives of its occupants. For Eisenhower, though, roadways represented not only domestic development but also national security. In fact, by the end of the First World War, transportation powered by the ICE was an integral portion of the strategies for growth in most developing nations and roads represented one of the pathways for ‘intensification’.

In Eisenhower’s view, the poor state of American roads was holding the United States back from prosperity. Over his party’s first two days of driving, Eisenhower termed its progress as ‘not too good’ and as slow ‘as even the slowest troop train’. The roads they travelled were ‘average to non-existent’. He continued:

In some places, the heavy trucks broke through the surface of the road and we had to tow them out one by one, with the caterpillar tractor. Some days when we had counted on sixty or seventy or a hundred miles, we could do three or four.³⁰

Eisenhower's party completed its frontier trek and arrived in San Francisco on 6 September 1919.

Similar to Lewis and Clark and the builders of the transcontinental railroad, the effort by Eisenhower and the group of American military members proved to be a pivotal national moment. The significance of their 'one step for mankind', though, culminated with neither a golden spike nor an American flag; instead, they extended an awareness that had been initiated by Churchill in his demand for oil to be used to power Britain's navy: in developed nations, future development would occur on the back of fossil fuels and particularly petroleum.

In this moment, we see the emergence of a new, post-Great-War world based on the integration of a radically new technology. In typically understated language, Eisenhower's recollection misdirects listeners from the dramatic shift that lay below the surface of the obvious. 'The old convoy', he explained, 'had started me thinking about good, two lane highways'.³¹ The emphasis on roads, and particularly on Eisenhower's Interstate system, was transformative for the United States; however, Eisenhower was overlooking the fundamental shift in which he participated. The imperative was clear: whether through road-building initiatives or through international diplomacy, the use of petroleum by his nation and others was now a reliance that carried with it implications for national stability and security.

As the post-war world took shape, political revolutions, such as that in Russia, or massive economic growth, such as that in the United States, became embroiled with each nation's access to petroleum. The reliance of the military on petroleum set the tone for humans' twentieth-century commitment to crude. Unlike any other resource, petroleum received its own administrative infrastructure at the highest levels of government once it served as the lifeblood of military infrastructure in the First World War. This change after the war was more obvious in the United States than in any other nation. Historian David S. Painter writes: 'The result was a public-private partnership in oil that achieved US political, strategic, and economic goals, accommodated the desires of the various private interests, conformed to United States ideological precepts, and palliated congressional critics'.³² Out of the marriage of security and petroleum, twentieth-century America received a less noticeable but even more critical rationale for ensuring a stable—or even increased—supply of crude. Similar to a species' awareness of its most basic and essential relationship with a food source, political leaders by 1920 included petroleum supplies on the shortest list of critical priorities, essential to the

security and future of the United States. Negotiations between nations now had to factor in this key logic and rationale, giving rise to one of the basic components of the concept of ‘Geopolitics’.

Seen through the entire scale of human history, petroleum’s road to essentialness in human life begins neither in its ability to propel the Model T nor to create plastics that made everyday life simpler. The imperative to maintain petroleum supplies begins with its necessity for each nation’s defence, which emerged just prior to the First World War and then became the norm through the experience of combat during the conflict. Although petroleum usage eventually made consumers’ lives simpler in numerous ways, its use by the military fell into a different category entirely. If the supply was insufficient, the nation’s most basic protections would be compromised.

In 1919, Eisenhower and his team may have thought that they were only determining the need for roadways. In fact, they were declaring a political commitment by the United States. Similar to Britain’s commitment to power its Navy with crude in 1914, the US created a standard of living that defined a new epoch in human life. This high-energy existence that relied on ample supplies of crude and massive domestic reserves enabled the US to seize new global leadership while nations such as Britain leveraged the model of colonialism. In fact, domestic supplies functioned almost as a crutch, while the United States expanded its economy until 1950. From that year forward, the US became an oil importer in order to support the standard of use formed after the First World War, which placed it on a more equal footing with other developed nations.

Viewed in this context of energy history, Eisenhower’s convoy foreshadowed major changes for the nation while extending the experiences of the First World War with energy. Coming out of the Great War, the availability of oil supplies became a predictor of national security and economic expansion.

NOTES

1. Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 104–8. See also Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller* (New York: Random House, 1998), 168.
2. Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 162.

3. Marks, 104.
4. John R. McNeil, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: Norton, 2001), 39.
5. McNeil and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene Since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
6. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 200.
7. Christopher F. Jones, *Routes of Power: Energy and Modern America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 144–45, 196–97.
8. Winston Churchill, *The World in Crisis, 1911–1918* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 74–75.
9. Churchill, 76.
10. John Ise, *The United States Oil Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1926), 200.
11. Churchill, House of Commons, 17 June 1914, quoted in Brian Black, *Crude Reality: Petroleum in World History* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 63–64.
12. Churchill, House of Commons, 17 June 1914, quoted in Leonardo Maugeri, *The Age of Oil: The Mythology, History, and Future of the World's Most Controversial Resource* (New York: Praeger, 2006), 24.
13. Black, *Crude Reality*, 210.
14. Maugeri, *The Age of Oil*, 41–42.
15. Maugeri, *The Age of Oil*, 43.
16. Chernow, *Titan*, 170.
17. Maugeri, *The Age of Oil*, 45.
18. Rudi Volti, *Cars and Culture: The Life Story of a Technology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 44.
19. David Kirsch, *The Electric Vehicle and the Burden of History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 162–64.
20. Volti, *Cars and Culture*, 46.
21. Kirsch, *The Electric Vehicle*, 165.
22. Yergin, *The Prize*, 170–72.
23. Yergin, 172.
24. Yergin, 156.
25. Yergin, 177.
26. David Painter, *Oil and the American Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 183.
27. Painter, 183.
28. Painter writes: ‘Red Line Agreement was to ensure that the development of the region’s oil took place in a cooperative, rather than a competitive manner’. Painter, 5. The organisation changed its name in 1929 to the

Iraq Petroleum Company. Each organisation was a British corporation with its legal provisions enforceable in British courts.

29. Yergin, *The Prize*, 207–8.
30. Yergin, 207–8.
31. Yergin, 207–8.
32. Painter, *Oil and the American Century*, 1.



“Lamps Never Before Dim Are Being
Extinguished from Lack of Olive Oil”:
Deforestation and Famine in Palestine
at War and in Peace Under the Late
Ottoman Empire and Early British Empire,
1910–1920

Jeffrey D. Reger

The historical literature has created an impression of widespread famine and deforestation in Greater Syria, particularly in and around its major urban centres, during the First World War. But Palestine, like much of the region, was predominantly rural and agrarian, in sharp contrast to the more industrialised and centralised nations engaged in the war.¹ Olive-derived commodities were key to the well-being of the peasantry, both in terms of income and nutrition, who had remained self-sufficient in the production of staple crops like wheat and barley. This chapter traces Palestinian agricultural production and planting, particularly of olives, as the conditions of Palestinian olive groves and the fates of their

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cultivators offer a rare lens to address questions of deforestation and famine from a rural perspective. Even after the end of the British mandate in 1948, the vast majority of Palestinians remained rural dwellers and subsistence farmers. Owing to the lack of written sources for rural history, stemming from widespread illiteracy, however, historians of Palestine have traditionally emphasised the history of urban centres (Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Nablus roughly in that order), in large part because foreigners, such as European consulate officials, provided accessible and extensive written documentation.

Olive-derived commodities, particularly olive oil and soap, had long constituted two essential sources of income for the hill peasantry.² This was true both on the local level, for peasants to pay their debts and their taxes, as well as globally, as exports of Palestinian agricultural products offered a small positive corrective to the overall negative balance of trade between the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe.³ Export-based analyses of the late nineteenth century show that by the turn of the twentieth century, two commodities—olive oil and olive-oil soap—ranked among Palestine’s most important exports.⁴ As a result, olives became one of the most important cash crops for the rural peasant or *fellah* in the central hills of Palestine, from the Western Galilee south through Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus (the north of today’s West Bank) and extending down to the Jerusalem area, especially around Ramallah, and north of Bethlehem, such as Beit Jala.

This chapter will focus predominantly on the wartime period from 1914 to 1917, with some comparison to surrounding pre-war and post-war periods. The chapter chronology begins around 1910 and ends in 1920, because in order to assess the impact of the First World War, we must establish benchmarks for comparison. Drawing on a range of sources, including American and British diplomatic archives as well as European and Palestinian diaries and memoirs, this chapter seeks to make two crucial interventions in our understanding of the history of this period. First, the historical literature has assumed that the Ottomans sanctioned widespread deforestation in both Palestine and broader Syria. These claims of widespread deforestation, typically assumed to have impacted all of Syria across the board, need to be qualified when it comes to Palestine. This narrative reflects an uncritical repetition of colonialist narratives, which sought to characterise the inhabitants as at best neglectful and at worst detrimental to the natural resources and

the land of Palestine. Thus, this chapter seeks to question traditional narratives of Ottoman despotism, peasant backwardness, and British munificence, which have their roots in Western Orientalism and the self-aggrandisement of the British colonial project.

Ottoman railroads, which had come to depend on imported coal, were forced to substitute other fuel sources when the war broke out. Hasan Kayalı has correctly argued that military considerations, particularly to expand infrastructure like railroads, came at the expense of trees, particularly along the Hejaz railway, in cities like Haifa, Amman, and Ma'an. He wrote that '[m]uch woodland was denuded in the building of the railways and the use of fuel. Cemal Pasha allowed the cutting of 40 percent of all apricot, olive, and mulberry trees for use as fuel for the locomotives'.⁵ Similarly, an Austrian consul concerned with deforestation in the Damascus area reported on 2 March 1917 that 40 tons of wood, or 400 kilogrammes of wheat, were consumed to fuel the railway every day; as Linda Schilcher has rightly concluded, 'the resulting deforestation in the region of Damascus and along the railways was devastating'.⁶ A joint Anglo-French (Entente) blockade of the eastern Mediterranean severed international connections in wartime.⁷ Its effectiveness capitalised on the patterns of trade established over the course of the nineteenth century. The blockade prevented both the exportation of cash crops such as oranges and olives, and the importation of staples such as rice, tobacco, and sugar. Most crucially for the questions of wartime degradation of the landscape, the blockade forced a wholesale change in the energy regime of the eastern Mediterranean, by forcing substitutions for coal and kerosene. Therefore, the British and the French should assume a substantial share of the blame for the deforestation in Greater Syria during the war.

Furthermore, railroads were not present everywhere, particularly in the hills of today's Galilee and the West Bank that constitute the heartland of Palestinian olive production. The mainline railroad from Jaffa to Jerusalem predominantly crosses plains, surrounded by field crops, not orchards. The Jazreel Valley railway, on the other hand, a branch of the Hejaz railway, extended west from Dara' to Afula, and branched off to Haifa in the west. This line was extended south from Afula to the villages of the Jenin district by the outbreak of war in 1914, but plans to extend the railroad further south to Jerusalem across the hilly olive country were never completed.⁸ Later, during the war, the railway was continued west to Tulkarm, across the plains, then out to the coast and

south to Lydda to connect with the Jaffa–Jerusalem mainline.⁹ While no detailed statistical breakdown is available, the best estimate is that around a third of the trees were cut down in the vicinity of the railways. It should be noted, however, that the olive tree, as with other indigenous vegetation such as the scrub oak, can be vigorously coppiced and regenerate, so what initially appeared to be short-term devastation could be quickly reversed.

While the damage resulting from the fuel needs of locomotives should not be minimised, the more pervasive short-term damage to the trees and to other crops during the war instead appears to have been the result, in fact, of droughts caused by heatwaves in 1914 and 1916, and by the locust plague of 1915. This connects to the second argument of this chapter, regarding the impact of famine on Palestine during the war. The famine, which had deadly effects in other areas of Syria, appears to have not impacted the residents of Palestine as badly as elsewhere. One reason traditionally provided is transnational relief efforts, particularly those funded by American philanthropy.¹⁰ The British, for their own ideological and political reasons, resupplied the area upon their conquest of Palestine in 1917 with the goods of the empire. In popular memory, this was a moment for celebration and relief, which elided the fact that the primary cause of the lack of imported goods was a British and French blockade of the coast of Syria. It needs to be noted, however, that the bulk of Western relief efforts came either towards the beginning or at the end of the war, not in the darkest days of 1915 and 1916.

As the Ottoman economy and Ottoman rule deteriorated over the course of the war, deprivation and death naturally resulted, particularly among the urban poor who were hardest hit by inflation and scarcity. But oftentimes, Palestinians were able to substitute older foodstuffs, which had recently fallen out of favour with the advent of cheaper imported goods. For example, across Greater Syria, Arabs returned to the homemade production of *dibbis*, a kind of distilled syrup made from boiling fruit such as grapes or seeds such as carob pea pods (also known as locust beans), in place of refined sugar. Similarly, the time- and labour-intensive processing of *burghul* or bulgur (cracked wheat) returned to central Palestine and once it again became a necessity: processed rice could no longer be imported, and the Ottoman military often requisitioned wheat crops.

In sum, the possibilities of food and fuel substitution kept rural Palestinians alive, if neither fully fed nor in accordance with taste preferences, but to a degree not seen elsewhere in Syria—especially in comparison with Mount Lebanon, where the death toll from famine was

catastrophically high (around a third of the population) and the war is remembered as a time of maternal cannibalism.¹¹ Estimates for the death toll from famine in Greater Syria overall range widely, owing to definitional disparities, but Beirut is thought to have been particularly hard-hit in losing half of its population, while somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 civilians perished in Greater Syria (a figure that does not include deaths of either military or civilian labour battalion conscripts) out of a total population of around 3–4 million, yielding estimated civilian death ranges of between 7 and 17%—extraordinarily high considering today’s Lebanon and Syria were not active war zones (unlike parts of Palestine).¹²

This chapter proceeds chronologically, first reconstructing the economic and agricultural conditions in the years preceding the war, and then analysing the effects of the war on both the micro and macro levels.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR: PEASANT PREFERENCES FOR THE HILLS AND FOR OLIVES

The First World War is a watershed period in the history of Palestine, and in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire more generally, causing numerous disruptions in the lives of Palestinians through food shortages, widespread conscription, military and political collapse, foreign occupation, and eventually the establishment of the Mandate system under the League of Nations.

Another crucial disruption inherent to the war, perhaps better characterised as an intensification of long-standing pressures in existence both before and after the First World War, was the internal dislocation of the population. Despite the greater fertility of the plains, most rural Palestinians traditionally lived in villages located in the hills and mountains that today comprise much of the still-Arab-populated areas of the Galilee and the West Bank. This was for reasons of both health and safety, owing to the dual threats of malaria and Bedouin raids in the less defensible areas on the coastal plains.¹³ Towards the end of the nineteenth century and continuing through the start of the war, the population of the plains had begun to increase at the expense of the mountains.¹⁴ Yet on the whole, the Palestinian peasantry continued to prefer the safety of the hills, to which the olive tree was particularly well suited. Olives therefore remained a dominant and lucrative crop for the peasantry in the early twentieth century.¹⁵

OLIVE CULTIVATION AND OLIVE-OIL PRODUCTION ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

John D. Whiting, the first child born at the American Colony in Jerusalem, a Christian utopian community founded in 1881, was fluent in Arabic and spent nearly his entire life as a resident there. Among numerous lines of work, he served as deputy United States consul for Jerusalem from about 1908 to 1915.¹⁶

Whiting was asked repeatedly by his superiors to compile reports on the olive crop and olive oil prices, allowing us to reconstruct the conditions of agricultural production in the late Ottoman period. Whiting and his superiors placed such an emphasis on the olive crop because it functioned, in their view, as an index for the conditions of the peasantry. When the olive crop was good, as in 1911, the peasants in the olive-growing districts quite obviously prospered, while in 1910, when the crop was poor, they suffered.¹⁷ The fortunes of the peasants were linked inextricably to the olive crop, from year to year. Overall, Whiting reported that the price of olive oil had been steadily rising in the last few years of the decade of 1900, and he highlighted a diminishing difference in the prices of oil between good and bad years just before the First World War, suggesting the immediate pre-war period was one of relative economic stability for the peasantry.

PRE-WAR FUEL REGIME

In a report dating from early October 1913, Whiting noted that while the stoves of city dwellers had formerly used charcoal, these *medany* (urbanites) had recently switched to imported kerosene.¹⁸ Charcoal, of course, had been derived from wood. Upon the establishment of the mandate, British colonial officials would later claim that Ottoman corruption in its final years led to the widespread granting of licenses for fees to produce charcoal, describing ‘fuel famines’ in Jerusalem over the winters of 1920 and 1921, and decrying ‘[t]he unhappy fate of the Village of Umm El Fahm (“mother of charcoal”) that epitomises the havoc wrought by the Turk. The inhabitants of this village which once flourished, as its name signifies, as a purveyor of charcoal to the neighbourhood, now scour the neighbourhood to buy it’.¹⁹ The increasing scarcity of scrub oak, from which the charcoal was predominantly made, along with the increasing availability of kerosene had likely driven the

change in fuel regime sometime prior to the war. The switch to kerosene stoves in the early 1900s among city dwellers would have enormous implications during the course of the war, since the joint British–French blockade on all imports to the coast of Syria would prevent nearly any kerosene from reaching the area.

CONDITIONS BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The disruptions of the Great War were foreshadowed on a smaller scale by the Italian invasion of Libya, which, Whiting noted in 1912, had disrupted tourism and trade.²⁰ In addition, Ottoman mobilisation led to conscription, which in turn spurred what Whiting characterised as ‘large numbers’ to emigrate from Palestine, especially among the Christian and Jewish minorities. War thereby acted as a catalyst for increasing emigration, in particular from Christian villages in the Ramallah and Bireh area to the United States.²¹

By the late summer of 1914, just prior to the outbreak of war in Europe, Whiting described bright prospects for the coming tourist season. Yet with the start of war in August, the banks, which were all run by European companies, suspended payments and so caused the start of a ‘severe business depression’.²² The outbreak of war caused a brief spike in prices of imported foodstuffs and provisions, such as coffee, rice, sugar, and potatoes, but prices returned largely to normal as the Ottoman Empire was not yet involved in the war.²³ Curiously, local products like wheat and grains came down considerably in price, which Whiting chalked up to a lack of cash for speculators, who could not get money to speculate while the banks were closed, as well as to a fear of government seizure as Turkish mobilisation would potentially lead to the requisitioning of stores of flour, rice, sugar, petroleum, lentils and peas for military use. In the short term, with low liquidity, dealers were hesitant to sell on credit, and so prices remained low on imported staples, despite the stoppage of imports, because of low demand from the purchasing public.

But then, upon the Ottoman entry into the war in late October and early November 1914, dealers sought to either hide their stores or sell their goods on the black market, seeking to avoid military requisitioning of their stocks and take advantage of the spike in prices caused by the shortages.²⁴ In short order, by March 1915, Whiting reported that rice, sugar and petroleum products were effectively ‘non-existent in the market,

and if any is sold secretly it is done at abnormal prices'.²⁵ While the closing of seaborne trade made certain former staples scarce, relief efforts funded by American Jews and Christians occasionally supplied certain privileged groups in some areas of Palestine with these imported goods. The most celebrated was a relatively early occurrence in April 1915, before the arrival of the locusts later that year, with the ship *Voulcan*.²⁶ A Palestinian conscript in the Ottoman army, Ihsan Turjman, recorded in his diary that he heard it most notably provided rice and sugar, which were already luxuries.²⁷

The most immediate and widespread impact of the war on food and diets was the impossibility of obtaining rice, which Whiting described as commonly consumed throughout Palestine, in contrast to other areas of Syria: 'Rice as it is now is a staple food here eaten regularly as potatoes are in the United States', with the preferred kind of rice imported from Egypt, and a less-preferred type from the West Indies through England and other European ports.²⁸ With rice unavailable, however, Palestinians could turn to bulgur or cracked wheat (*burghul* in Arabic), which had remained a staple in Mount Lebanon and northern Syria, while falling out of disuse in central Palestine owing to the lower cost of rice and the tedious amount of labour required to make hard wheat like durum edible.²⁹ Flour, on the other hand, was selling at 30% above pre-war prices—not as high as might be feared, but more injurious than normal to most Palestinians, considering the lack of work that resulted from the economic downturn.³⁰

Palestinian exports were similarly and immediately impacted by the closing of foreign markets to its products. The exportation of barley from Gaza ended with its confiscation by the Ottoman military.³¹ Meanwhile, the two principal markets for Jaffa oranges, Liverpool and Egypt, were closed just before the crop ripened sufficiently for export.³² In this case, however, orchard owners' sorrow provided a source of succour for local consumers, who were the beneficiaries of abnormally low prices. Whiting reported that growers received, on average, about 10% of the usual price for their best fruit, which was therefore consumed locally instead of being turned into Jaffa cakes in England.³³ Finally, as had occurred with the Italian invasion of Libya, the souvenir and tourist trade in Jerusalem and Bethlehem suffered due to a lack of tourists and pilgrims coming to visit the Holy Land.³⁴

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly for this study, the isolation of Palestine imposed radical changes on the fuel regime. Petroleum had

come primarily from Russia, and the railroads were powered by coal, mainly in compressed brick form, which was imported from England.³⁵ Without kerosene, some Palestinians could turn to wood or potentially olive oil, if available, for heating and light. Without coal, the locomotives would need to rely on firewood. Therefore, deforestation would be a natural result, particularly in areas near the railways.

1915, THE YEAR OF THE LOCUST: QUESTIONS OF DEFORESTATION AND FAMINE IN PALESTINE

For grain, urban Jerusalem traditionally depended on the Hauran (a fertile plain in southwest Syria) and the plateau east of the Jordan River; however, with the onset of war, the Ottoman military requisitioned every draft animal available. The lack of transportation options prevented grain from these areas from reaching Jerusalem.³⁶ In March 1915, Whiting reported that enough wheat could be raised for home consumption.³⁷ However, as with the possibility of bringing grain from what would later become Jordan, the conscription of men and the confiscation of animals threatened future harvests by hindering planting efforts. Even worse, locusts had been spotted east of the Jordan River.³⁸ The locusts would eventually do perhaps even more damage than either the Ottoman military or the Entente embargo.

The government took various steps to attempt to combat the locust plague, first mandating the collection of eggs, which was strictly enforced, to the point of closing shops, but to no avail.³⁹ Even better-organised, smaller-scale efforts, such as those mounted by the American, German, and Jewish colonies, failed.

Fortunately, however, much of the orange crop around Jaffa was spared, and the grain crops in the upland districts sustained no damage, as the locusts hatched much earlier in the lowlands than in the upland districts, which enabled the grain harvest to be completed in the hills. Whiting therefore foresaw a rather good cereal crop for the year 1915.⁴⁰ By contrast, the summer crops were almost completely destroyed.⁴¹ Whiting held out hope that the crops could be replanted, as the plains around Jaffa and Ramla were also the first to be clear of locusts.⁴²

Unlike other areas of Syria, then, famine was not the immediate result of the locust plague. The harsher and more long-term effect, most notably around Jerusalem, was the loss of the olive crop, and the resultant inability to produce olive oil and olive-oil soap.⁴³ Worse, the poorest

would be most hurt by the loss, as Whiting rightfully noted: ‘Olive oil is a staple article of food among the peasants and poorer classes, taking the place of meat’.⁴⁴ While the wealthier classes would have been able initially to substitute olive oil for kerosene, the locusts made even the thought of such a fuel substitution impossible. Additionally, the locusts consumed even the bark of many olive trees, meaning a good crop in 1916 could not be expected.⁴⁵

According to an article Whiting wrote for *National Geographic*, published in December 1915, the olives were largely consumed in June.⁴⁶ While noting how catastrophic the loss was for the peasantry, Whiting presented his account to a general audience in quasi-apocalyptic language regarding the effects on Christian worship in the Holy Land in a section vividly entitled ‘Lamps Never Before Dim Are Being Extinguished From Lack Of Olive Oil’:

From days immemorial olive oil in this land has been used as fuel for lighting sacred lamps. Because of the locusts, lamps never before dim, hanging in Christian churches in front of icons and altars, are daily being extinguished, just as the sacrifices of Judah’s Temple were unwillingly suspended after the locust devastation described by Joel.⁴⁷

The loss of the olive crop, Whiting lamented, ‘no doubt will outweigh, economically and commercially, the destruction caused to all other crops combined’,⁴⁸ particularly owing to its unique role as both the primary fat and protein in the peasant diet.

The devastation to the olive trees in June is corroborated by the diary of a Spanish diplomat posted in Jerusalem during the war.⁴⁹ By August, Whiting wrote in a consular report: ‘At present the markets are pitifully empty of olive oil; in fact it is difficult to get any either for food or to use as light or fuel in place of the now unprocurable imported kerosene’.⁵⁰ Therefore, the locust plague of 1915, in combination with the Entente blockade preventing the importation of kerosene, appears to have brought about the peak of the felling of olive trees. With olive oil unavailable as a fuel source thanks to the locusts, and many trees likely unable to produce for another year for the same reason, the short-term need for warmth in the winter may have quite understandably outweighed the long-term monetary loss of felling still-productive olive trees, especially with trade impossible because of the war. With kerosene likewise unavailable, a return to wood was unavoidable.

Initial assessments of the percentage of olive trees felled were catastrophic, and these assessments were later echoed in the early post-war period, as Western consuls reported that 50–60% of the trees had been cut down. But the most likely estimate is that around one-third of olive trees, along with other trees within the vicinity of the railroads, were felled. While British officials claimed that up to 60% of all olive trees had been chopped down, their key evidence for this claim was that orders were issued by the Ottoman authorities to the owners of olive groves to provide first 10% of their trees; then another 10% of the remainder; then, finally, 25% of what was left.⁵¹ Taking this math as the upper limit, that would have left slightly more than 60% of olive trees untouched—not 60% felled.

The American consul in the immediate post-war period corroborates an assessment of somewhere around a third of the olive trees felled. His initial assessment in 1919 was apocalyptic: he claimed it would take 50 years for the olive oil industry to recover, claiming half of all the olive trees in Palestine had been destroyed.⁵² However, just a year later, in 1920, the American consul was much more sanguine in revising his assessment. In a follow-up report, he now asserted that it would take a decade to recover, as about one-third of all trees within a 10-mile radius of the railway lines had been coppiced.⁵³ It is essential to note that the primary sources of wood in Palestine at the time were the scrub oak and to a lesser extent the olive tree, which are hardy and can regenerate relatively quickly from severe coppicing.

In the short term, the impact of the locust plague on the diet of the rural peasantry, in the form of possible malnutrition, is undeniable. The urban poor fared much worse, however, lacking the capacity to grow their own crops once the locusts had passed. Ihsan Turjman's diary demonstrated the plight of the urban poor, who faced the prospect of starvation beginning in October 1915. Yet, unlike other areas of Syria, flour from locally grown wheat was still available, albeit at an elevated cost, out of reach of the poor.⁵⁴ By the winter of 1915, the urban poor were hardest hit. In an entry from 17 December 1915, Turjman wondered if a bread rebellion was on the horizon.⁵⁵ Turjman himself had nothing to eat, and his family could find neither bread nor flour to purchase. Observing that peasants had joined the throngs of impoverished men, women and children at the markets near the Damascus Gate attempting to buy scarce, expensive flour, Turjman concluded: 'I became very depressed and said to myself, "Pity the poor" — and then I said,

“No, pity all of us, for we are all poor nowadays”. Luckily, however, the Turjmans could rely on their extended family network: cousins sent a bag of semolina and a great-aunt sent a few pounds of flour. Turjman first blamed the government for the scarcity of wheat and flour, thanks to Ottoman attempts to establish a pricing and rationing regime without actually creating mechanisms for distributing and delivering the rations. Second, he blamed the wealthy for hoarding supplies.⁵⁶

The summer of 1916, like the winter of 1915, appears to have been particularly lethal. Turjman noted another period of bread shortages in the summer of 1916. In an entry dated 10 July, Turjman wrote: ‘The government is trying (with futility) to bring food supplies, and disease is everywhere. [...] Jerusalem has not seen worst [sic] days. Bread and flour supplies have almost totally dried up. Every day I pass the bakeries on my way to work, and I see a large number of women going home empty-handed’.⁵⁷ The Spanish diplomat Antonio Ballobar also noted an acute shortage in August of the same year.⁵⁸ Yet by the autumn of 1916, the situation seems to have improved: an article published on 26 October 1916 in the Hebrew-language Jerusalem daily newspaper *ha-Herut* mentioned that 25,000 kilos of grain were brought to Jerusalem daily from Jordan, Karak and al-Salt in particular, and the grain was then distributed by the municipality to Jerusalemites.⁵⁹ The situation, while periodically dire, appears far superior to elsewhere in Syria. The broader conclusions regarding famine in Greater Syria therefore cannot be extended to Palestine without considerable allowance for the specificities of the situation in Jerusalem and surrounding areas.

THE LAST YEARS OF WAR FOR PALESTINE

In the meantime, however, the lower classes continued to suffer from the blockade and from another failed olive crop in 1916. Towards the end of April 1916, the *sirocco* (a hot, dust-bearing Mediterranean wind, originating from the Sahara) damaged the olives along with other crops. The *sirocco* was followed by a heatwave from 13 to 18 May, with recorded temperatures around coastal Jaffa of 43 Celsius (109 Fahrenheit) at 5:00 a.m., 52 °C (125 F) at noon, and 46 °C (114 F) at sunset.⁶⁰ A lengthy report by agronomist (and spy) Aaron Aaronsohn submitted to the British military intelligence section known as the Arab Bureau recounted the impact:

The effect of this hot wave was like that of burning fire [...] the wheat, all over the Country, and the barley North of Jaffa were greatly destroyed. The vegetable crop suffered heavily again, and also the fruit crop. The olive trees were in full blossom and were scorched; the previous year the olives suffered already greatly from the locusts.⁶¹

Once more, nature had conspired to ruin the crop of 1916. We can thus account for the shortages in the summer of 1916, noted by both Turjman and Ballobar, owing to the damage to the local grain crops noted here, and a resultant spike in prices with only expensive imported foods available. On 10 July 1916, Turjman noted that all food prices had gone up, with no local lentils, onions or vegetables available, and only overpriced imported goods remaining on the market.⁶²

Despite continuing shortages of man and animal power for Palestinian agriculture through 1916 and 1917,⁶³ sources east of the Jordan River could thankfully compensate—at least until the British captured Jerusalem in mid-December 1917. The British reported a resultant severe grain shortage in Jerusalem, since the eastern bank of the Jordan was still in the hands of the Ottoman enemy, thus making the Jerusalem area’s primary external grain source inaccessible.⁶⁴

PALESTINE UNDER BRITISH MILITARY RULE AND THE SUCCESS OF THE BRITISH BLOCKADE

In his personal account of the last two years of the war, circa 1917–1918, Nicola Ziadeh (later to be a professor of history at the American University of Beirut) recalled a childhood in Jenin shaped by the blockade, and the forced substitution of imported goods and staples: ‘We used ordinary lamps with olive oil because kerosene had become absolutely unobtainable’, and maize instead of wheat to make bread.⁶⁵ ‘There were some olives’, he added, ‘but the better olives were taken for the army and only tiny little ones remained for the people.’ Ziadeh summarised the desperation of the situation with an exclamation: ‘People could hardly sell olive oil!’⁶⁶ When the British arrived, one of the important changes Ziadeh recalled was the return of kerosene.⁶⁷ Even more importantly, rice and flour could again be purchased at a normal price, though not from the usual sources.⁶⁸

Ziadeh’s recollections illustrate how, in popular memory, the British received the credit for reversing the fortunes of the people.

While Palestinians were not starving to death to the same extent that others were in other parts of Syria, the people nevertheless celebrated the return of imported staples like rice. For political and ideological reasons that would later become clear with the revelation of the Sykes–Picot Agreement, the British sought to legitimise their claims to rule Palestine by supplying its people with imported staple goods and foodstuffs. What occurred, in effect, was a reversal of the blockade, which appears in this view to have been a success: first, the blockade demoralised the inhabitants, who blamed their political leadership, the Ottomans; then, after the invasion, the British could supply the inhabitants with the goods of the empire, and people would then thank the new occupiers. By doing so, the British not only asserted their claims of being more sympathetic and capable rulers of the region, but also began integrating Palestine into the networks of their empire.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I would like to return briefly to the first core argument regarding the question of famine. While Palestine clearly suffered from various food shortages, Palestinians likely did not experience widespread starvation as occurred elsewhere in Syria. Reliance on sources like Turjman’s diary provides anecdotal evidence that the urban poor, dependant on government-donated bread, were hardest hit. This was unsurprising considering that scarcity would lead to a rise in prices, which would impact the non-farming poor the hardest. On the other hand, the rural peasantry, who were the vast majority of the inhabitants, would have been better positioned to substitute other foods as they were largely self-sufficient, subsistence farmers. For example, Ziadeh recalled making bread out of maize, owing to prohibitive prices for wheat in Jenin during the war. By contrast, the rural economy in Mount Lebanon had been revolutionised in the late nineteenth century as it had become oriented towards the export of silk.⁶⁹ Drought and locusts would have posed the greatest danger, then, not the Ottoman war machine, whose capacity and presence in rural areas diminished throughout the course of the war.

Second, to the question of deforestation: trees were both objects of taxation and a traditional (if increasingly scarce and less commonly used) source of energy as firewood. Despite their central importance to

Palestinian agriculture and industry, and their perennial value, olive trees were certainly coppiced during the war. The collapse of political authority and desperation during the war may have led to the culling of the olive trees, with an attendant short-term impact on the production of olive oil and soap. However, deforestation, to the extent that it occurred, was not the result of Eastern despotism or the Ottoman yoke, as the British colonial discourse later posited.

Scholars have uncritically repeated the British narratives that assume intentional and widespread Ottoman destruction of Syrian forests, particularly when focusing on the British Mandate.⁷⁰ These sweeping generalisations often focus on blaming the conduct of the Ottomans during the First World War. The 1937 Peel Commission Report declared, with respect to the forests of Palestine, the guilt of indigenous inhabitants and the Ottomans during the war for deforestation: ‘[D]uring the [Great] War large quantities of trees were felled, including olives, which were one of the main sources of revenue’.⁷¹ These sweeping claims, as this chapter has illustrated, are at best an exaggeration. There was, of course, some deforestation over the course of the war. The question, however, is where precisely deforestation occurred. The answer is primarily along the railways, which did not extend comprehensively or evenly throughout Syria.

Rather than rapacious Ottomans or ignorant Palestinian peasants, however, the foremost cause of wartime deforestation was the British policy, along with its Entente ally France, of establishing a blockade that required the Ottomans and Palestinian locals to find substitutes for imported coal and kerosene. Before the war, city dwellers had become dependent on Russian kerosene for fuel and light; the railroads depended on British coal. Without their preferred sources of energy, the Ottoman military and Palestinian civilians were forced to rely on locally sourced wood.

Most likely, then, if any parts of Palestine suffered significant deforestation, it was the triangle (*al-muthballath*) between Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm in the north of what is today the West Bank, owing to the extension of the Hejaz railway into that area. Similarly, the Hejaz extension west of Afula to Haifa may have caused similar damage to the surrounding areas. The root cause, however, was not Ottoman despotism or Arab ignorance, but a lack of practicable alternatives, forced by the Entente blockade.

NOTES

1. On the definition of ‘Palestine’ as a regional geographic unit within Ottoman Syria, see Salim Tamari, *The Great War and the Remaking of Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 3, 12–13. Although of deeper historical heritage, by roughly the eighteenth century the term *Filastin* typically referred to the combined *sanjags* (Ottoman districts) of Akka (Acre), Nablus and Jerusalem, the last of which would become an increasingly independent *mutasarrifya* (or governorate) in the nineteenth century, extending roughly from Jaffa to the Sinai. In short, Ottoman Palestine was mostly commensurate with the borders of the British Mandate of Palestine.
For the demographics of late-Ottoman Palestine, see Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). McCarthy puts the population of Palestine at 600,000 in 1900, and close to 800,000 by 1914.
2. Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
3. Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800–1914* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993).
4. Alexander Scholch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic, and Political Development* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993).
5. Hasan Kayali, “Wartime Regional and Imperial Integration of Greater Syria During World War I,” in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schaebler (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 300.
6. Consul Ranzi for Damascus, Syria, 2 March 1917, OA 38/370 cited in Linda Schilcher, “The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria,” in *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, ed. John P. Spagnolo and Albert Hourani (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996), 243, footnote 44.
7. Lindsey Cummings, “Economic Warfare and the Evolution of the Allied Blockade of the Eastern Mediterranean: August 1914–April 1917” (MA thesis, Georgetown University, 2015).
8. Paul Cotterell, *The Railways of Palestine and Israel* (Abingdon: Turret, 1984), 11–13.
9. Additionally, two branch lines were extended north from Tulkarm to transport wood from the forests in the locality. Cotterell, 14.
10. Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 46.

For American donations and other international relief efforts in Lebanon, see Melanie S. Tanielian, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), especially 201–33.

11. On the death rate in Mount Lebanon, see Graham Auman Pitts, “Fallow Fields: Famine and the Making of Modern Lebanon” (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2016). On popular memory and narratives of the famine in Lebanon and Syria, see Najwa al-Qattan, “When Mothers Ate Their Children: Wartime Memory and the Language of Food in Syria and Lebanon,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 4 (November 2014), 719–36.
12. The pioneering Schilcher put the death rate at one in six (the upper end of the estimates) on the basis of German-language sources. See also Tanielian, *The Charity of War*, 2–3. For further calculation considerations and comparative civilian death rates globally and regionally, see Zachary J. Foster, “The 1915 Locust Attack in Syria and Palestine and Its Role in the Famine During the First World War,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 3 (2015): 370, 385, especially footnotes 2–4.
13. James Reilly, “The Peasantry of Late Ottoman Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 4 (1981): 82–83.
14. Reilly, 83. The inhabitants of the hills were both pushed by economic and population pressures to leave their villages, and pulled to the towns and the cities of the plains, which had become more secure under Ottoman control and where commercial agriculture, such as orange cultivation, had recently begun to expand. The Jaffa orange would become Palestine’s dominant export under the British Mandate.
15. Reilly, 84.
16. For further biographical information, see Laura J. Kells, *John D. Whiting: A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress* (Washington, DC: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 2006).
17. “Report: The Financial Conditions of 1911,” 9 February 1912, 16/6, John D. Whiting Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress [henceforth MD LOC], Washington, DC, 138.
18. “Cooking Stoves and Fuel as Used in the Jerusalem Consular District,” 4 October 1913, MD LOC 16/6, 149.
19. “Agricultural Situation in Palestine: Review by the Director of the Department of Agriculture,” 15 June 1923, The National Archives of the UK [henceforth TNA] CO 733/46, page 18, paragraph 39.
20. “Report: The Financial Conditions of 1911,” 9 February 1912, MD LOC 16/6, 139.
21. “Report: The Financial Conditions of 1911,” 141.

22. "Economic Conditions—Causes and Results," March 1915, MD LOC 16/6, 182.
23. "Economic Conditions," 182.
24. "Economic Conditions," 182.
25. "Economic Conditions," 183.
26. Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 46.
27. Ihsan Turjman, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past*, ed. and trans. Salim Tamari (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 108–9.
28. "Economic Conditions," 183.
29. "Economic Conditions," 183.
30. "Economic Conditions," 183–84.
31. "Economic Conditions," 184.
32. "Economic Conditions," 184–85.
33. "Economic Conditions," 185.
34. "Economic Conditions," 184–85.
35. "Economic Conditions," 185.
36. "Economic Conditions," 184.
37. "Economic Conditions," 185.
38. "Economic Conditions," 185.
39. "The Locust in Palestine," undated (likely summer 1915), MD LOC 16/6, 201–6. This is likewise corroborated by Turjman's diary. See, for example, entries from 25 April 1915 and 20 May 1915, pp. 110 and 125 respectively.
40. "The Locust in Palestine," 201–6.
41. "The Locust in Palestine," 201–6. These summer crops were *durrah* (native corn), sesame, tomatoes, melons, apricots, and grapes, grown on the plains between Jerusalem and Jaffa.
42. "The Locust in Palestine," 208. According to vegetable dealers consulted by Whiting, all summer vegetables were expected to be produced apart from tomatoes.
43. "The Locust in Palestine," 206.
44. "The Locust in Palestine," 207. Vineyards, as well as olive groves, were also destroyed, making production of *dibis* impossible for the year.
45. "The Locust in Palestine," 207.
46. John D. Whiting, "Jerusalem's Locust Plague: Being a Description of the Recent Locust Influx into Palestine, and Comparing Same with Ancient Locust Invasions as Narrated in the Old World's History Book, the Bible," *National Geographic* 28, no. 6 (1915): 541
47. Whiting, 543.
48. Whiting, 543.

49. Conde de Antonio de la Cierva Lewita Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I: The Palestine Diary of a European Diplomat*, ed. Roberto Mazza and Eduardo Manzano Moreno (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 67–68.
50. "Report: Methods of Making Olive Oil," 11 August 1915, MD LOC 16/6, 213–14.
51. "Agricultural Situation in Palestine: Review by the Director of the Department of Agriculture," 15 June 1923, TNA CO 733/46, page 18, paragraph 39.
52. Consul for Jerusalem, Palestine, "Vegetable Oils in Palestine," 16 November 1919, National Archives and Records Administration, USA, [henceforth NARA] RG 166 170/71/28/01-07, Box 424.
53. Consul Oscar S. Heiser for Jerusalem, Palestine, "Olive Crop in Palestine," 24 November 1920, NARA RG 166 170/71/28/01-07, Box 424.
54. Turjman, *Year of the Locust*, 141.
55. Turjman, 142.
56. Turjman, 142.
57. Turjman, 154.
58. The indirect cause was that wheat depots in Beersheba had been set on fire by a British airplane attack. See Ballobar, *Palestine Diary of a European Diplomat*, 106.
59. Cited in Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 194, footnote 39.
60. Aaron Aaronsohn to Arab Bureau, "(On the) Present Economic and Political Conditions in Palestine," [circa November] 1917, TNA FO 882/14 PA/17/14, 9.
61. Aaronsohn, 9.
62. Turjman, *Year of the Locust*, 155.
63. TNA FO 882/14 PA/17/14, 16.
64. Report regarding Jerusalem supplies, 15 December 1917, TNA FO 141/746/4, quoted in Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 194, footnote 39.
65. Nicola Ziadeh, "A First-Person Account of the First World War in Greater Syria," in *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp, and Stefan Dähne (Würzburg: Ergon, 2006), 270.
66. Ziadeh, "A First-Person Account," 271.
67. Ziadeh, 272.
68. Ziadeh, 272. The wheat came from Australia, and rice came from India rather than the preferred source, Egypt.
69. Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); see especially Chapter 2 "Factory Girls," 19–47.

70. See for example, the following from the introduction of an article on Mandate-era agricultural policy: ‘Centuries of over-exploitation and the abandonment of terracing caused the soils of Palestine to be much denuded. This had been made worse during the First World War when the Turks used up enormous quantities of timber for fuel and destroyed large areas of forests and protective tree-barriers.’ Roza I. M. El-Eini, “The Implementation of British Agricultural Policy in Palestine in the 1930s,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 4 (1996): 211.
71. Palestine Royal Commission Report, Cmd. 5479 (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1937), 272.



Rain and Bad Weather During War: The Role of Climate and Environment During the Great War in Cameroon (1914–1916)

Isidore Pascal Ndjock Nyobe

Douala and its surroundings, in present-day Cameroon, is a strategic point on the Atlantic coast which came under German control in 1884. The territory also had a strong British presence, represented from 1845 onwards by missionaries and merchants. Through a series of conquests and treaties, however, Germany consolidated its position in Cameroon and even managed to extend the country's territory to 750,000 km² in 1911, after the Agadir Crisis forced France to concede it 272,000 km² of the territories of French Equatorial Africa (AEF).¹

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Great Britain and France thus had several grievances to address with the Germans in Africa. Given the superior strength of the Allied army (11,000 men) compared to that of the Germans (5,000 men), as well as the favourable geographic situation (German Cameroon was surrounded by several French and British

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colonies), one would think that the conquest of the German colony in Cameroon would be a mere formality for the Allies. Notwithstanding this state of affairs and although they had only needed 20 days (from 7–27 August 1914) to chase the Germans from Togo, the Allies had to manoeuvre for 18 months to defeat them in Cameroon. The Germans' resistance can be partially explained by the Allies' ignorance of the natural environment, the diversity and hostility of which confounded the Franco-British and Belgian soldiers and sailors engaged in the Cameroonian campaign.² In fact, aware of their inferior numbers, the Germans resorted to a defensive war, with ambushes as their central tactic.

The conflict in Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular, often took place in heterogenous theatres of war:

Deserts in the south-west or steppes in parts of East Africa, the terrains of battle imposed heavy logistical constraints on the water supply of the enemy forces. [...] By contrast, the theatre of operations was overgrown, tropical and unhealthy in southern Cameroon, the coastal zones of Tanganyija and, above all, in Mozambique; there, the war effort required slow advances and a constant struggle against illnesses and fatigue, a struggle that was as tough as the battles themselves.³

The Great War on the African continent has been investigated by several scholars. By way of example, we might cite the works of Marc Michel, Bryon Farwell's 1986 monograph *The First World War in Africa (1914–1918)*, Hew Strachan's *The Great War in Africa* (2004) or Franklin Eyelom's *L'impact de la Première Guerre mondiale sur le Cameroun* (2007).⁴ For the most part, these scholars focus on the role of the indigenous during the Great War, on the bitter fighting between the belligerent parties, or on the impact of the conflict on the future of the African territories. Their works on the Great War in Africa almost consistently evoke the specificity of the African environment, a key factor in the African campaigns. However, these references to the environment for the most part remain superficial and do not sufficiently analyse the vital importance of forests, rivers, topography, vegetation, rainfall and climatic conditions for the outcome of the conflict in Cameroon. This chapter is an attempt to respond to that gap in scholarship.

In order to do so, I will first present the general geographical framework of the theatre of the Cameroon Campaign (1914–1916) and

then go on to sketch how the actors involved in the conflict took into account the vagaries of climate and environment in a context where nature was no longer an object, or a victim, of war, but became one of its most feared protagonists. All actors involved in the conflict did in fact emphasise the hostility of the Cameroonian natural environment. For the Belgians, ‘the campaign was tiresome and long. It took place in a country full of unhealthy swamps, covered in thick forests and defended foot by foot by a tenacious enemy.’⁵ In a letter written to his mother in July 1916, Yves Picot, a French military doctor on board the cruiser *Le Surcouf*, describes the climate he observed upon his arrival in Cameroon in more detail:

Nothing can describe what rainy season means in these tropical countries, it is unimaginable. Take a formidable downpour as we get them in France only after heavy thunderstorms, and imagine that this rain falls without even a five-minute break for 12 hours, or 14 and more, rarely for less than 10, afterwards a glaring sun that dries everything with the help of the wind, then a cloud reforms and it begins again.⁶

Similarly, in a letter to his father, on 8 October 1916, he wrote:

My dear father, here we are still in this dirty Cameroon. [...] I’m starting to feel sick of this godforsaken place. You shouldn’t imagine that the equatorial region is characterised by heat, it obviously is hot, but you get used to it very quickly, what characterises these countries is only the rain. Imagine that there haven’t been two days in a row without rain for the entire 4 months that I have been here, it’s written down in the logbook and I checked. I have seen it rain cats and dogs constantly. Also, numbers speak for themselves, in Douala 12 metres of water fall in 10 months (there is normally no rain in December and January), there is in the entire world only one place in the Indies where they get 15 metres. Cameroon is the second wettest. The hot season, which begins around the 15th of October, makes itself felt through obviously higher temperatures and even more rain. Tonight, on the 8th of October, it has been raining since 4 o’clock this evening without the slightest break. You cannot imagine how exasperating these torrential rains are, everything you touch is wet, you sweat enormously and if you take off a layer you get a cold. Everything is mouldy, if you take off your shoes in the evening, they are completely white in the morning, as if it had snowed on them.

The British were equally troubled by the climate and the forests, which became veritable accomplices of German tenacity: 'though the Germans fought with great courage and determination in defence of their colonies, the climate of the coast and low-lying regions of the interior was the arch-enemy causing many more casualties than bullets'.⁷

CAMEROON'S ENVIRONMENT DURING THE GREAT WAR: A DIVERSE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

At the outbreak of the conflict, Germany was intent on realising its old dream of creating 'Mittelafrika', a vast geopolitical space stretching from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Within this configuration, Cameroon was supposed to become the basis of colonial Germany's 'Trans-African Empire'. It was this vast territory that General Joseph Gaudérique Aymérich, commander of the French forces stationed in the AEF, discovered as his troops set out to conquer Cameroon:

The German colony has the overall shape of a triangle, the bottom of which, in the South, touches on French Gabon, Spanish Guinea, and the gulf of Benin. Its apex is in the middle of Lake Chad, its left-hand (Western) side borders English Nigeria and its right-hand (Eastern) side covers the French possessions in Chad, Ubangi-Shari and Middle Congo. Stretching into Bonga and Zinga, Cameroon borders the Belgian State of Congo.⁸

The territory that the Allies began to conquer in August 1914 was vast. It covered about 900,000 km², with a length of 1,500 km from north to south (from Lake Chad in the north to Bonga in the south) and 1,100 km from east to west. The size of this territory, as well as the diversity of its vegetation, orography, hydrography and climate, played a prominent role in the management of operations. In fact, Cameroon is a geographically misunderstood entity, so striking is the contrast between the physical and human environments in the north and the south of the country. A region with elevated temperatures, the northern part of the territory has a tropical climate and is characterised by stunted vegetation, with topography that varies from plains to mountain ranges with plentiful and diverse fauna. The dry climate and the dense flora of the savannah support significant animal herds. Elsewhere, wooded areas break with the more sinister character of the savannah: lush vegetation forms a dense

forest that was estimated to be more than 22 million hectares by French Cameroon. The French administration stated that the forest situated in its territory comprised '7,300,000 hectares of primary forest, 5,740,000 hectares of secondary forest, 60,000 hectares of mangroves and the temporarily uncultivated surfaces equally constitute a not inconsiderable portion of the rainforest'.⁹

In the north of the country, the post of Garoua, an important indigenous administrative centre, occupied a strategic military position for the conquest of Cameroon:

Built on the pointed hill which dominates the entire region and stretches towards the North in the form of a rounded crest, the military position had been transformed, in the first six months of the war, into an impregnable fortress. The pointed hill served as the pivotal element in the defence: its rounded crest in the north was protected by a veritable fort, linked to the ancient position, now transformed into a redoubt by two posts established on two neighbouring crests which formed a kind of belt around this pivot of the defence.¹⁰

Further to the north of this military post is another mountain range, the Mandara Mountains, in whose foothills, 'the German troops, ousted from Kousséri, found an impregnable refuge for the entire duration of the war'.¹¹

Like the terrain, the watercourses of the territory coveted by the Allies were highly varied, with several rivers which, depending on whether water levels were rising or falling, determined the course of operations. Having their source in the Adamawa Plateau, the rivers and streams of Cameroon were not navigable in their entirety because of the rapids and waterfalls punctuating their course. While those of the south regularly swelled with water, thus at times becoming impossible to cross for the troops, the watercourses of the north followed their own pattern: they were fordable during the dry season, while they flooded the surrounding plains during the rainy season.

The aspect of the environment that perhaps turned out to be the greatest enemy for the Allied troops was the vegetation. Faced with the impossibility of navigating the country's rivers, crossing the territory by land would have been the ideal solution for the war's protagonists, had the impracticability of the forests not presented them with an even more serious problem. In fact, as General Aymérich put it, 'the entire southern

area, up to the fourth degree, that is, up to the parallel of Yaoundé and Doumé, is covered in impenetrable forests; further to the north, we find undulating terrain overgrown with high grasses which vaguely resemble corn stalks, or sugarcanes, called Napier grass [sissongo].¹²

This, in short, is the reality of the territory on which the Allies would, for several long months, fight the German troops, who relied heavily on the natural environment to mount a fierce resistance.

THE ENVIRONMENT AS A PROTAGONIST OF THE CAMEROON CAMPAIGN

Owing to the outbreak of fighting, the natural environment was damaged, most notably in forest areas, as the belligerents had to clear a path through this immense obstacle that rose up in front of them. Certain parts of the forest were cut down with machetes or axes to allow the troops and their equipment to advance. Nevertheless, these portions of destroyed forest, miniscule in size, were nothing compared to the adversity they imposed on the troops. More than any other single factor, the natural environment would shape the trajectory of operations underway in Cameroon between 1914 and 1916.

The question of the influence of the environment is present in the majority, if not all, of the works written by witnesses of the Great War in Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular. British Brigadier General E. Howard Gorges specified that while the climate in Cameroon was generally unhealthy, the coastal and forested region had its own peculiarities: 'the Cameroon coast has the reputation of being one of the most pestilential in the whole continent of Africa. [...] During the campaign it played the mischief with the allied European officers, non-commissioned officers and men, both naval and military'.¹³

Similar references to the hostility of nature during the Great War in Africa can be found in writings by other actors, such as British Lt-Col. C. S. Stooks, the writer and colonial commentator W. Basil Worsfold, Sir Maitland Park, editor of the *Cape Times* newspaper, the highly decorated French colonel Marie Louis Joseph Eugène Weithas, and the British historian W. O. Henderson.¹⁴

For all these writers, moving around, eating, drinking, obtaining supplies and even fighting became heavily dependent on the vagaries of

nature, which thus became a fully-fledged protagonist of the conflict. It was at the very heart of this often-hostile nature that French, British and Belgian soldiers confronted a tightly organised and well-prepared enemy, engaging them in never-ending battles ‘in the marshes or under the boiling sun, amidst enormous difficulties in resupplying because of the large distances and the hostility of the equatorial climate’.¹⁵

The Germans understood early on the advantages that this environment, which they had known and studied for over thirty years, could offer them.¹⁶ From the very start of the conflict, aware that they were masters of a vast, resource-rich territory, they could move quickly from one threatened point to the next, determined to benefit from the country’s topography to push back the attackers. The *Journal des marches et opérations* of the Expeditionary Corps of the troops of the AEF details the difficulties experienced by the Allies in Cameroon because of the delicate natural environment:

At km 58, the enemy’s resistance becomes relentless. The forest in the North is occupied and in the South our artillery opens fire on the presumed site of the entrenchments. The advancement slows down considerably, the enemy hidden in the forests to the North and South of the route render it untenable. The column tries to march under the cover of the undergrowth on either side of the line; the exceptionally stifling heat make advancement more and more difficult; several Europeans suffer sunstrokes. Km 61.3 is reached at about midday with the most considerable efforts. Exhaustion is extreme.¹⁷

Even the flight of the Germans, who were completely surrounded, was partly enabled, according to Colonel Brisset, commander of the French troops operating in north-east Cameroon, by the vastness of ‘the huge forests where the enemy could, with a few men, contain our forces as long as necessary for the majority of their forces to escape. That’s exactly what happened’.¹⁸

The natural environment was certainly a major factor in the battle for Cameroon. *L’Almanach illustré du Petit Parisien*, a French propaganda journal which appeared regularly during the First World War, described the Cameroonian forest as an impenetrable one which turned into a swamp as soon as it rained.¹⁹ The Germans used this landscape to slow down the Allied advance by setting up several ambushes in the

‘treacherous forest’.²⁰ Thus, in the south and east of Cameroon, home to the vast equatorial forests, operations were extremely difficult for the Allies:

The columns in the east and south have been manoeuvring for 14 months in the equatorial forest, where, during wet season, the rain persists during long hours so that it seems never to stop; and during the season that is conventionally called dry season, violent storms break out every day. In addition to the difficulties of communication, we need to mention the problem of manoeuvring in a forest where you cannot deviate from the barely visible path without getting stuck. Providing supplies was difficult, the Europeans and the indigenous often had to live off pieces of manioc for months. Everyone went by foot.²¹

The hostility of the environment was confirmed in a German letter intercepted by the Allies in December 1914, in which colonel Oscar Zimmerman, commander of the German forces in Cameroon, evidently sickened by the harshness of the terrain, wrote: ‘We cannot remain in the equatorial forest because we would lack food which Germany cannot supply by sea’.²²

Supplying the troops was a major issue on both sides of the conflict. A pencilled postcard, found among German equipment, tells of the complaints of a German soldier who declared he had had ‘nothing to eat [...] for three days’.²³ The Germans, as well as the Allies, were confronted with the considerable problem of that most important of needs: food. On 8 November 1914, Aymérich, whose troops were stationed in the middle of the forest at Bete Mantanga in eastern Cameroon, declared a shortage of ‘the most common’ foods, stating that ‘we have only drunk water for a long time and we are about to run out of coffee. Personally, I have only been smoking tobacco leaves collected around the villages and dried at the fire; they are mediocre, and I am not sure that I will always be able to find some’.²⁴

These details provide us with valuable information about the troops’ diet. If the Europeans and the indigenous people spent several days at the front without eating, this proves the harshness of the hostilities as well as the impossibility of transporting staples to the theatre of operations. In fact, in addition to military equipment, transport carriers had to haul numerous crates containing biscuits, rice, tinned meats, sugar and coffee.

Shortages and other disruptions in supplies were not rare, caused by the difficult environmental conditions in the theatre of operations.

The particularity of the campaign in Cameroon also lies in the difficult food supply conditions caused by the environment. Military strategies and the management of the troops changed as a result, as the military commanders decided to only provide them with cheap local products such as cassava, bananas or potatoes.

Often, the officers commanding the various columns were as demanding when it came to adhering to the various strategies and tactics as they were intransigent when it came to food provision. In addition to dealing with the Germans' pugnacity, the Allied forces also had to ensure that their supply and communication routes remained intact, as both the enemy and the terrain threatened to block them. Because of this, as they were chasing the enemy over 1,500 km from one point to the next, the Allied troops, without a connection or a telegraph line between them, could only communicate via the 'vague tracks criss-crossing the forest, which one frequently has to cut free with a machete, and which among swamps and a thick undergrowth of intertwined lianas'.²⁵ On the British side, progress was no less painstaking: 'The difficulties of an advance were accentuated by the dense forest, in which any movement off the road was only possible by cutting a way through the bush'.²⁶

In this particularly hostile context, the means, military strategies and even the deployment of men had to accommodate the realities of the terrain. On this last point, Frederick James Moberly provides us with information confirming that the organisation of troops on the theatre of operations was a central question for the general staff:

At the beginning of the month [June 1915], learning that the 5th Light Infantry of the Indian army was being sent to Douala, General Dobell had suggested to the War Office that it should, instead, be sent to Garoua, where the country and climate were more suitable for its employment than the forest region. After the fall of Garoua the War Office telegraphed on the 18th June suggesting its employment in the Bare-Chang area, where it could relieve African troops accustomed to bush warfare.²⁷

The difficulties posed by climate and environment forced the belligerent parties to redefine their objectives. At the beginning of the war in August 1914, General Charles Macpherson Dobell was tasked with capturing Victoria, Buea and Douala, three cities important because of their

location close to the Atlantic and also because of their strong German presence. This initial objective was changed after a meeting of the British Committee of Imperial Defence:

On the 29th August the Sub-Committee C.I.D. [Committee of Imperial Defence] met again to consider recent and reliable information to the effect that the country between Victoria and Duala was quite impracticable for military operations during the rainy season then prevailing, and it was agreed that if this proved to be correct, the operation would have to be more of a combined naval and military character than had been contemplated.²⁸

Given the difficulty of crossing the forests and of enduring the unbearable weather conditions, African civilians, as well as soldiers, were asked to put into service their capacity to adapt to and withstand the climatic diversity of the country. As F. Q. Champness wrote: ‘The heat at this time was very oppressive, temperatures in the stokehold frequently rising to 130°F., and natives (*Kroomen*) were therefore engaged to trim coal in the ship’s bunkers, to man the surf boats when landing over bars, and for other useful work’.²⁹

Among the kinds of ‘useful work’ that Africans could perform was transport. Indeed, the most common means for transporting ammunition, canons, wounded men and supplies were ‘the heads of the indigenous’. The hostility of the climate and terrain thus forced the belligerent parties to rely on human force, forming a section of transport carriers in each column whose task it was to cover vast distances by foot, carrying a legal maximum of 25 kg.³⁰ As thankless as this task was, it became vital for the continuation of military operations; thus, the advance of the troops became dependent on the vigour and availability of this workforce. For example, during the autumn of 1916, the Allied column of east Cameroon faced the problem that 3,000 loads had been held up at Doumé because of a lack of available hauliers. This situation led Aymérich to circulate on the frontline ‘an energetic note, decreeing that everything had to be subordinated to the transport of ammunition’.³¹

While in southern Cameroon the forest presented a considerable obstacle to operations, the terrain in the north became a favourable asset (for the Germans), enabling the implementation of several defence strategies, as evidenced by the difficulties experienced by the Franco-British column in their attempt to capture the post of Mora. Trapped by the

Allies, the German company holding the position, having tried and failed to destroy it, was forced to take refuge on a rock standing out from the eastern end of the Mandara Mountains. The company, unassailable on this 590-metre-high rock, separated from the mountain by a natural 200-metre-deep ditch, had access to the grain reserves of the Sultan of Mandara and as much livestock and water as necessary. Their task, part of the Germans' skilfully implemented strategy, was to attract the Allied forces from the north so that the Germans were free to manoeuvre in the central plateau. As Colonel Brisset concluded: 'A month and a half of reconnaissance and repeated attacks made us understand that we would never be able to oust this company'.³²

The German commander in charge of defending the position very quickly understood the strategic advantages of the terrain. Upon their arrival, the English also noted the particularity of the topographical relief of this unassailable German bastion:

Examining the position, he [General Cunliffe] found that the slopes of the mountain, on the summit of which was Mora, rose precipitously [sic] to 1,700 feet, were accessible in few places only to me climbing with hands and feet and were strewn with huge boulders which afforded excellent cover to the defenders, and all approaches were commanded by strongly built sangars, but in spite of the strength of position he was resolved to capture it, if possible.³³

For the entire duration of the war, the Allies failed to capture this fortress; all of their repeated attacks were repulsed, causing them considerable losses. For instance, an attack lasting for eight days (1–8 September 1915), cost the British dearly: 'The British losses during this operation were thirty-eight, including Captain Pike and sixteen natives killed, and Captain A. Gardner and Lieut. A.J.L. Cary wounded'.³⁴

Just like the forests of the south of Cameroon and the topographical relief of the north (rocks, mountains, plateaus, etc.), the country's streams and rivers were natural elements used to attack, destabilise or flee from the enemy. The Allied troops realised this too late when their attempt to intercept the Germans escaping to Spanish Guinea failed because they did not succeed in joining the two main companies of the Mayer Column based at Kribi; together, these could have defended the main crossing places of the Ntem, an important river close, and almost parallel to, the Guinean border. Reflecting on the strategic role of the

Cameroonian rivers, Colonel Brisset expressed surprise that the Germans had not used ‘the beautiful waterline of the Nyong against us, so favourable to the defence which has cover, while the attacker has to be out in the open’.³⁵

As they retreated, the Germans made sure to demolish numerous bridges across the streams and rivers. This forced the Allies to ask the indigenous people to construct bridges out of lianas, or to build make-shift rafts. In early September 1914, for example, the column led by General Frederick Hugh Cunliffe was held up at the Ntem river, where the Germans were visibly guarding the crossing points. Unable to overcome this obstacle, the column had to spend several weeks there. The Pigeaud column which was sent to help them could hardly communicate with the besieged, despite signals and bugle calls. The many attempts to cross the river were all in vain. Finally, on 24–25 November, the operation succeeded. To do so, given that the Germans had destroyed all the means for crossing the river or taken them to the opposite bank, ‘large trees had to be felled, canoes and rafts constructed, in short, floats created from scratch before operations could begin. In mid-December, the 8th company managed to reach the opposite river bank, with the support of artillery and machine guns’.³⁶

Given the impossibility of crossing the rivers during the rainy season, most operations were interrupted between July and November 1915. The Germans, convinced that the weather conditions would wear out the Allies, had bet on the vagaries of the climate. All the columns manoeuvring in Cameroon had to endure what appeared to be whims of nature. Cunliffe, for example, who had tried to take the town of Banyo from the Germans, recognised the difficulties he was facing: ‘the rain, having transformed the numerous little streams into serious obstacles, has considerably increased the difficulties posed by the terrain’.³⁷ The example of Doumé illustrates Cunliffe’s point nicely. As he entered Doumé in mid-October 1915, Aymérich braved the storms, noting that ‘the rainy season is raging, all the rivers in Doumé are extremely swollen; the bridges built from branches and logs that the leaders of the region had been kind enough to construct for us have drowned or been carried away by the current’.³⁸

These challenges also forced General Charles Macpherson Dobell, commander of the British troops, to interrupt his offensive between July 1915 and the end of the wet season. The same was true for the southern

and south-eastern columns, which, during the entire rainy season, were cut off from the troops in north Cameroon. Dobell declared in a letter, written on 23 June 1915 to the Ministry of War, that there were two main goals for the coming rainy season: in addition to actively defending the already occupied positions, he also intended to make it impossible for the Germans to get any equipment and weapons from neighbouring Spanish Guinea: 'by which route he had reason to believe that the enemy had recently received fresh supplies of munitions'.³⁹

It should also be emphasised that the most important towns, as well as the most significant battles during the Cameroon Campaign, were found in the southern part of the territory, which was most affected by the heavy rainfalls. Colonel Emile Mayer, commander of the French troops in Cameroon, wrote in July 1915:

The rainy season is raging. It rains almost constantly every day; it will be like this until the end of October; during this period, the terrain is impassable away from the roads and any long-term operation impossible; it would mean utter ruin for the already tired French column.⁴⁰

As the conflict wore on, the Germans entrenched themselves in ever more inaccessible areas, which also had the effect of creating fissures in the Allied camp, as solidarity between columns diminished. By way of example, Mayer wrote the following to the Brigadier General Isidore Honoré Pineau, superior commander of the troops of the French West Africa group (*Afrique occidentale française*, AOF):

In any case, if the climate and the sanitary conditions make large-scale operations impossible, the current military situation does not make them necessary. The troops of the A.E.F are about 500km away from Édéa. A connection between battalions operating at such distances is all the more illusory given that they are separated by an impenetrable forest which can only be crossed via a few tracks and a single road, on which a handful of men can halt considerable forces. Each column has to be self-sufficient and not count on the help of the others.⁴¹

The self-sufficiency that Mayer called for had already been proclaimed by Cunliffe, when, in a letter to General Victor Largeau, he gave details highlighting how exhausted the Allies were becoming:

I insist, General, on pointing out to you that I am neither under the orders of General Dobell nor accountable to him in any way. In fact, I am entirely independent, and my only concern is to use the northern troops in the best way possible under the circumstances. If I thought that I could strike the enemy more effectively by merging with the French troops of the south-east, I would follow this line of operations and I would bring all my troops there, rather than trying to cooperate with the South for longer.⁴²

In Cunliffe's statement, a schism becomes apparent between the troops in northern Cameroon, who benefited from a healthy climate and a less hostile terrain, and those in the south, who found themselves in a forest region rather unfavourable to Europeans. Several of them died during the conflict, not only through combat, but also because of the harsh climate. The Allies themselves noticed this division between the troops, whose objectives, though equally centred on fighting the common enemy, diverged because of the geographical differences in a territory with diametrically opposed environments. In an attempt to remedy the situation, Brisset underlined:

The fact that the French columns from the South and South-East cannot cooperate with the troops in North Cameroon does not mean, in my opinion, that it is impossible for the troops in North Cameroon to cooperate with them; it is up to us to go help them; this would be an act of military solidarity, very simple to execute and absolutely dictated to us by our regulations.⁴³

Because of the harsh climate, health conditions among the Allied columns declined steadily. In July 1915, in the area around Douala, 160 sick officers and soldiers were being treated at Édéa (about 50 km from Douala), and 225 were hospitalised in Douala, not counting the numerous sick treated directly in the companies. Among the Europeans, the main causes for hospitalisation were fever, anaemia and bilious fever, and among the indigenous people, beriberi, venereal diseases and ulcers. The British Brigadier General E. Howard Gorges confirmed this assessment: 'for while tropical ulcers, dysentery, pneumonia, and rheumatism thinned the ranks of the native troops and transport carriers, malarial fevers played havoc with Europeans'.⁴⁴

For both groups, the illnesses were a direct consequence of the conflict. Beriberi among the indigenous people seemed to be linked to the inexact cooking times of the rice, a food with which they were

unfamiliar; the ulcers seemed to be caused by wounds which rapidly deteriorated because of bad general health or because they were kept open by the soldiers to avoid fighting.⁴⁵ The fevers of the Europeans, on the other hand, were caused, without any doubt, by climate and environment. Thus, Colonel Mayer writes: 'In such a debilitating climate, the Europeans do not get better despite resting, despite treatment; only the indigenous can recover, at a push, in this country.'⁴⁶

To remedy the troubling health conditions, the sick were prescribed repatriation to Europe or to African territories (AOF) with a more hospitable climate than Cameroon. Mayer, one of the French initiators of the policy of repatriation, modelled on the British example, thought that the sick almost always saw their general health palpably improve already during the journey. For Mayer, the reason for this improvement was the climate:

Away from the constant humidity, the heavy and unhealthy climate of the forests of the lower region of Cameroon, the sick find more comfortable facilities on board, as inconsiderable as they may be, and healthy, more abundant and more varied food. The moral tension created by the exhausting life in the column disappears bit by bit. These climatic, physiological and moral causes thus render comprehensible the fact that rehabilitation begins with the stay on board.⁴⁷

From the first implementation of this policy, nine officers, 25 European troops (16 ranked), 71 indigenous infantrymen and ranked personnel, and 82 hauliers were transported to France or to the AOF by the hospital ship *Asie*. On 23 July 1915, an English ship repatriated 26 Europeans. In a telegram to the ministry of the colonies, sent on 13 August 1915, Pineau confirmed the relatively good state of health of those sent to Dakar, Senegal, where they found conditions favourable to their recovery:

Although Senegal is not exactly a sanatorium, [...] the Europeans' state of health, apart from one doctor who had to be evacuated, has slightly improved, so that I could make use of some elements judged incapable of recovery in Cameroon.⁴⁸

This proves the considerable influence of the climate and environment on the conflict between the Allies and the Germans in Cameroon. Vegetation, topography, hydrography and, above all, the high levels of

rainfall played such an important role that they forced the two parties to institute a ‘rainfall cease-fire’, lasting for several months. During this period, of course, strategies were redefined in preparation for the dry season, but it also saw numerous evacuations for health and/or climatic reasons:

In the southern regions from July to October it was impossible to engage in active operations on any scale owing to floods caused by heavy rains, consequently the General seized the opportunity to send as many British officers and non-commissioned officers as could be spared to England for a short period of change and rest, he likewise granted furlough in batches to the natives [sic] ranks of the Gold Coast and Nigerian regiments to enable them to visit friends and relations in their own colonies.⁴⁹

The difficulties linked to the climate of the country’s southern region led General Cunliffe to change the objective of those men who were not sent to recover and charged them with the conquest of other sites in the north, such as the fortress of Mora, which was skilfully defended by the Germans.⁵⁰

All the units engaged in the conquest of Cameroon experienced the downsides of its environment. The railway troops, too, had to permanently work to maintain and repair the tracks. Indeed, in addition to the tracks destroyed by the escaping enemy, rains and tornadoes also caused considerable damage, rendering the construction of embankments as well as more challenging interventions imperative. On 8 November 1915, for instance, heavy rains between Douala and Edéa caused two ruptures in the tracks at 53 and 63 km, necessitating long hours of repair.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this contribution has been to highlight the influence of the environment on the Cameroon Campaign. In this territory with widely differing environmental conditions, the nature of combat differed from area to area. The most strategic towns (Douala, Yaoundé, Kribi, Edéa, etc.), for instance, situated in forest regions with high levels of precipitation, saw the most difficult operations, protracted by a nature intent on playing a role in the outcome of the conflict. The geography of Cameroon lent itself to a strategic war from an environmental point of view.

Describing the different landscapes of the territory, which would be extended after the First World War, the *Almanach illustré du Petit Parisien* summarised the situation in the Cameroonian theatre in 1917 thus:

The centre of Cameroon is composed of a high plateau covered in shrubs with an altitude of about 900–1,000m, while the periphery is made up of equatorial forests, almost impenetrable and often transformed into a water-hole by the rain. The French and British troops thus had to cross the most difficult zone before arriving at the more accessible one. That is why their progress was slow. It was only after 15 months that they arrived in the centre of the country. The enemy slowed them down with a series of attacks and ambushes which were easy to set up in the treacherous forests.⁵¹

Surrounded and attacked concentrically, the Germans realised very quickly that the torrential rain, the swollen bodies of water, the sharp elevations and the unhealthy climate gave them considerable advantages. They organised themselves in such a way as to slow down the definitive victory of the Allies, whose numbers and presence in all neighbouring territories made the outcome of the conflict predictable; the environmental conditions only delayed it. The Allies' final victory should, of course, also be attributed to the soldiers and sailors who had to withstand nature's hostility for more than 18 months. Paying them homage at the end of the conflict, Aymérich noted:

You have, at the price of incredible efforts, wrested of the Germans one of their most beautiful colonies. For over 18 months, you have faced torrid days and the cold humidity of nights without cover; you endured the torrential rains of the equator; you crossed impenetrable forests and fetid swamps, without the faintest complaint, without ever losing hope, until you had attained the objective you had been set.⁵²

In conclusion, the vagaries of climate and environment, far from being inconsequential, were a determining factor for the course of the hostilities, even becoming central to the strategies of the various protagonists. While the Germans used the hostility of the climate and landscape to slow down the progress of the Allies, and, later, to escape the vigilance of the Franco-British troops, the latter had to work hard to progress in this hostile environment and to avoid the numerous ambushes set by the enemy. Several of the Allies' operations failed because of environmental factors.

On 13 February 1915, for instance, the operation for Yambou-Pétel planned by Brisset's French and Lieutenant-Colonel W. I. Webb-Bowen's British troops turned out to be a fiasco and a nightmare for the French. The British simply did not participate 'because of the bad weather'. Trapped, the French suffered heavy losses. Webb-Bowen sent his sincere apologies.⁵³

It is not surprising that the military literature on the Great War in Cameroon should highlight environmental factors. The words used by the French to describe this 'treacherous forest',⁵⁴ these rivers 'swollen out of proportion'⁵⁵ because of 'the torrential rains of the equator'⁵⁶ reveal their weariness with nature, which seemed to be their true adversary. The unpredictable character of this natural environment, particularly the forest, often imposed a halt or suspension of hostilities. From this fact, it is possible to conclude that environmental, or more precisely climatological, hazards gave a unique rhythm to the Cameroonian campaign. This factor also often dictated moments of calm or respite when the protagonists themselves were incapable of pursuing decisive action. This can be defined as a 'climatic or pluviometric ceasefire', those periods of several months of torrential rain during which the belligerents were forced to cease fighting, faced with a theatre of operations in southern Cameroon that had become impracticable.

Together, the documents and eye-witness accounts cited here prove the exhausting and treacherous nature of the Cameroonian theatre of operations. There was not a single man, unit or column that did not suffer from the climatic and environmental conditions in Cameroon during the Great War. If the numbers seemed favourable for the Allies, the unexpectedly long resistance on the part of the Germans can reasonably be explained by their perfect knowledge of Cameroon's heterogeneous environment. The victory of the Franco-British and Belgian forces was, thus, also a victory over nature.

NOTES

1. To better coordinate its colonial enterprise in sub-Saharan Africa, France regrouped its possessions into two large federations: firstly, French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française* or AOF), with its capital in Dakar, Senegal, which was created by decree on 16 June 1895. It included Senegal, French Sudan, French Guinea, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Upper Volta and Mauritania. Secondly, French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique*

- Equatoriale française* or AEF), instituted by decree on 15 January 1915, with its capital in Brazzaville, Congo. It included, in addition to Congo, the territories of Gabon, Ubangi-Shari and Chad. See René Vincent, *On les nommait A.O.F et A.E.F. C'était l'Afrique Occidentale Française et l'Afrique Equatoriale Française* (Paris: Editions Thélès, 2006); and Alois Maderspacher, "European Colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Germans, French and British in Cameroon, 1884–1939" (PhD. diss., University of Cambridge, 2011).
2. The Belgians, holding the Belgian Congo, were careful to follow international agreements, particularly the Treaty of Berlin (1 August 1885), which stipulated that in the case of a European conflict, the Congo River Basin would have to be preserved. However, they were forced to join the Allies when the Germans began their attack on Lukuaga, a Belgian port on Lake Tanganyika, in August 1914. In doing so, Germany rallied together and thus had to face the opposition of three military forces: French, English and Belgian.
 3. Marc Michel, *L'Afrique dans l'engrenage de la Grande Guerre (1914–1918)* (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 71–72.
 4. See Michel, *L'Afrique dans l'engrenage de la Grande Guerre* and *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre. L'appel à l'Afrique (1914–1918)* (Paris: Karthala, 2014); Byron Farwell, *The First World War in Africa (1914–1918)* (New York: Norton, 1986); Hew Strachan, *The Great War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Franklin Eyelom, *L'impact de la Première Guerre mondiale sur le Cameroun* (Paris: L'Harmattan Cameroun, 2007).
 5. *La guerre de 1914–1916. Les campagnes belges au Cameroun et dans l'Est Africain allemand* (Le Havre: Imprimerie du «Havre-Eclair», no date), 5.
 6. This letter is dated 25 June 1916 and is one of many written by Yves Picot, military doctor aboard *Le Surcouf*, which anchored in Cameroon between May 1916 and July 1917. Yves Picot regularly corresponded with his family in France and his letters are preserved at the Archives of the Musée du Service de Santé des Armées, Val-de-Grâce, Paris, carton A 402.
 7. Howard Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (Uckfield, UK: The Naval & Military Press, 2004), 20.
 8. Joseph Gaudérique Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun* (Paris: Payot, 1933), 16.
 9. ANY (Archives Nationales de Yaoundé) APA 10047, Rapport annuel du Gouvernement français à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies sur l'administration du Cameroun placé sous tutelle de la France, 1951–1953, 16.

10. Henri Mailier, *Le rôle des colonnes françaises dans la campagne du Cameroun (1914–1916)* (Paris: Publication du Comité de l’Afrique française, 1916), 77.
11. Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun*, 17.
12. Aymérich, 16. Napier grass, or elephant grass, *Pennisetum purpureum* Schum by its scientific name, is a tall perennial grass which forms large clumps, often found in deforested regions where it colonises sites left vacant after primary forests have been cut down. The size of the plant varies from between three to five metres and often forms an inextricable thicket that is difficult to access. Its straw is used to cover houses, while the plant, both grass and grains, is consumed by cattle, sheep and goats. Horses feed on it too. Pierre Malzy adds that Napier grass produces a lot of humus, keeping the soil fertile, although is difficult to get rid of once planted. See Pierre Malzy, “Graminées du Nord Cameroun et leurs utilisations,” *Journal d’agriculture tropicale et de botanique appliquée* 2, nos. 5–6 (May–June 1955): 281–297. The plant [*sissongo* in French] is so thick and abundant that it has given rise to expressions such as ‘partir dans les sissongos’, which for the French in Africa meant ‘to swerve in the bushland’. For a comprehensive overview of the Cameroonian forest during the colonial era, see Louis Hedin, *Étude sur les Forêts et les Bois du Cameroun sous mandat français* (Paris: Emile Larose, 1930) and André Aubreville, *Étude sur les forêts de l’Afrique Equatoriale Française et du Cameroun* (Nogent-sur-Marne: Section technique d’agriculture tropicale, 1948).
13. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa*, 70.
14. C. S. Stooks, ‘From a Diary in the Cameroons’, *Cornhill Magazine*, n.s. 2, 46 (October 1919): 380–390; W. B. Worsfold, ‘The Taking of German South West Africa’, *United Empire: Royal Colonial Institute Journal*, 6, (1915): 747–751; M. H. Park, ‘German South West African Campaign’, *Journal of the African Society*, 15, n. 58 (Jan., 1916): 113–132; M. L. J. E. Weithas, *La conquête du Cameroun et du Togo*, Paris, 1931; and W. O. Henderson, ‘The Conquest of the German Colonies, 1914–1918’, *History*, 27, n. 106, (September 1942): 124–139.
15. Georges Regnard de Gironcourt, “L’ancienne colonie allemande du Cameroun,” *Bulletin de la Société de géographie et d’études coloniales de Marseille* 40 (1916): 157.
16. The Germans had been present in Cameroon since the end of the nineteenth century. After a lengthy period of conquests, they organised the territory politically, administratively and economically, planning to make it the basis of their trans-African empire. For a full understanding of the German project in Cameroon, see Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884–1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* (New York:

- Greenwood Press, 1968); Adalbert Owona, *La naissance du Cameroun. 1884–1914* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996); and Albert Pascal Temgoua, *Le Cameroun à l’époque des Allemands: 1884–1916* (Paris: L’Harmattan Cameroun, 2014).
17. *Journal des marches et opérations du corps expéditionnaire des Troupes françaises venues de l’Afrique Occidentale Française*, Archives du Service historique de la Défense, 26 N 571 à 1370, 1914–1918, 12.
 18. Col. Brisset, “Le Cameroun,” *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lille* (January–March 1920), 39.
 19. *Almanach illustré du Petit Parisien*, 1917, 145.
 20. *Almanach illustré du Petit Parisien*, 145.
 21. Col. Brisset, “Le Cameroun,” 39–40.
 22. Col. Brisset, “Le Cameroun,” 39–40.
 23. Quoted in Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun*, 45.
 24. Aymérich, 126.
 25. Aymérich, 8.
 26. Frederick James Moberly, *Military Operations: Togoland and Cameroons, 1914–1916* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1931), 286.
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 28. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa*, 87.
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 30. Ministère de la Guerre, *Les armées françaises dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931), vol. 2, 313.
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 32. Aymérich, 41.
 33. Moberly, *Military Operations*, 223.
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 35. Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun*, 45.
 36. Aymérich, 160.
 37. Ministère de la Guerre, *Les armées françaises dans la Grande Guerre*, 130.
 38. Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun*, 119.
 39. Moberly, *Military Operations*, 286.
 40. Ministère de la Guerre, *Les armées françaises dans la Grande Guerre*, 134.
 41. Ministère de la Guerre, 135.
 42. Ministère de la Guerre, 131.
 43. Ministère de la Guerre, 132.
 44. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa*, 20.
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48. Letter from Brigadier-General Pineau, Superior Commander [commandant supérieur] of the troops of the French West Africa group, to the Minister of Colonies, Military Services, 1st bureau, 1 section, 13 August 1915, Archives du Service historique de la Défense, Paris.
49. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa*, 222.
50. Gorges, 222–23.
51. *Almanach illustré du Petit Parisien*, 113.
52. Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun*, 192.
53. Aymérich, 81.
54. *Almanach illustré du Petit Parisien*, 145.
55. Aymérich, *La conquête du Cameroun*, 119.
56. Aymérich, 192.

PART II

Urban and Industrial Landscapes
Transformed



CHAPTER 5

The First World War on the Streets: Urban Conformity and Citizenship in the United States

Ross Wilson

This chapter examines how the city streets across the United States became a key site in controlling and mobilising citizens during the First World War. Before the advent of the conflict, mass immigration and unfettered capitalist development in the nineteenth century had ensured that urban areas of the United States were viewed by some politicians, religious leaders and reformers as centres of vice, radicalism and sedition. Within art, literature and politics, cities were represented as a problem and in need of moral, social or religious salvation. With the outbreak of the war in Europe, the city streets of the United States became a focus of concern for national and municipal authorities. In Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Baltimore, diverse populations with connections to the combatant nations were viewed as potential sources of subversion. In response, a range of initiatives were introduced, from direct policing to patriotic parades, which sought to homogenise metropolitan areas to ensure conformity and citizenship. By drawing upon a range of media,

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this chapter expands upon the recent development of the study of cities during wartime to create a new way of understanding how the war came to the streets of the United States from August 1914.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR, THE CITY AND THE 'STREETScape'

Over the last two decades, the important function of urban areas during the First World War has come to the fore.¹ As sources of mobilisation, targets for belligerent action or centres of authority and control, towns and cities have been assessed by historians as 'locales of conflict'; areas where the processes and the pressures of the war shaped social, cultural and economic life.² These studies have demonstrated the vast array of wartime experience, as cities during wartime do not simply represent a microcosm of wider national life.³ Rather, they possess a dynamic, individual and frequently diverse response to the international conflict.⁴ Indeed, the way in which the conditions wrought by war are encountered within towns and cities has been assessed as the product of the specific circumstances of these urban communities before the outbreak of the conflict.⁵ This is reflected in Chickering's study of the German town of Freiburg.⁶ Within this assessment, the internal tensions of the area were enacted within wartime contexts as the conflict exposed or exacerbated existing issues within the locale. Whilst this work has initially focused upon the experience of European powers and capital cities, scholars have begun to examine the impact of the war on urban life across the world in both neutral and belligerent states.⁷

This builds upon the use of landscape, material culture and the environment as analytical categories within the study of the First World War.⁸ Each of these concepts refers to the sensuous experience of the physical world and stems from an interdisciplinary agenda that has marked contemporary examinations of the conflict.⁹ The term 'landscape' has been utilised by historians, archaeologists and anthropologists as a means to discuss how soldiers encountered the battlefields of the Western Front.¹⁰ A number of assessments of space and the transformation of individuals through the war environment have been published over the course of the last few decades.¹¹ However, the recent wave of landscape studies have considered how locales do not serve as sites where individuals alter and change their identities, rather there is a recursive relationship between people and places where issues of power, identity and perception are formed through this nexus.¹²

As the war transformed the spaces of battlefields, it also spurred significant changes in the physical, emotional and ideological landscape within cities and towns across neutral and belligerent nations. Taking this approach could provide a new insight into how societies responded to the effect of the conflict on their ideas of national and municipal identity as well as ethnic, religious and political ideals. Indeed, work within human geography can be used as a guide as it has focused upon how the urban landscape shapes individual identities and is itself shaped by people who actively interact with their environment.¹³ As such, to examine the way in which cities were transformed by the war, we can utilise the concept of ‘streetscapes’; a term which denotes the recursive relationship between the urban landscape and the individual.¹⁴ It is on the streets where the urban drama is enacted, where the forces of control and authority meet the actions of individuals, where economic processes meet social forces and where identities and ideals are formed, restrained and remade. To engage with the streetscapes of the First World War is to comprehend the intimate and the public response to the complex and contradictory nature of the war.¹⁵ To see the war on the streets is to assess how an international conflict was brought home to the lives of individuals and communities across the world who, while far removed from the fighting, were nevertheless intrinsically tied to the war.

THE WAR ON THE STREETS: THE UNITED STATES AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The value of examining the streetscapes of the First World War can be clearly demonstrated with the United States. Before its entry into the conflict in 1917, the nation shifted between neutrality and belligerence in a carefully coordinated fashion as domestic and international economic and political concerns were weighed.¹⁶ The pursuit of these objectives was taken within a context of tremendous upheaval in American society.¹⁷ Indeed, these policies had a direct impact upon citizens as the world’s largest and most diverse democratic state navigated itself through the turbulent war years. The role of the United States during the conflict and the way in which the nation was reformed during this period has been highlighted by scholars.¹⁸ The advent of the conflict ensured that the social, racial and political divisions within the United States were exposed and it was on the city streets where these processes were most keenly experienced.

The connection between the First World War and the urban landscape in the United States can be located in the nation's demographics at the outset of the twentieth century. In 1914, the population of the continental United States numbered over 91 million people with the 1910 Census classifying 88.9% of the nation as 'white', 10.7% as 'negroes' and 0.4% 'other races'.¹⁹ Between 1870 and 1910, the population had more than doubled from 38 million. Indeed, in 1910, the population had expanded by 21% compared to the previous census in 1900. New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio and Texas were the most populous states due principally to immigration, industrial development and agricultural expansion. Whilst 53% of the population were classed as 'rural', the proportion of those living in cities had increased significantly in the space of two decades with only 25% of the population defined as 'urban' in 1880. The phenomenal growth of cities in the United States was reflected in the 1910 Census, with just under 10% of the entire population residing in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.²⁰

This increase was predominantly due to the level of immigration into major urban areas. The proportion of the foreign-born population of the United States in 1910 was approximately 15%, constituting nearly 14 million individuals. That section of society was almost exclusively drawn from European countries, which accounted for 87% of all foreign-born residents in the United States. This included:

- Germany—2,501,333
- Russia—1,732,462
- Austria-Hungary—1,670,582
- Ireland—1,352,251
- Italy—1,343,125
- Great Britain—1,221,283

Nearly 75% of the foreign-born population was classed as 'urban' within the 1910 Census. For example, in 1910, Chicago was home to 883,428 foreign-born residents. Of that total, 23.3% were from Germany, 16.9% from Austria, 15.5% from Russia and 8.4% from Ireland. New York's 1,944,357 foreign-born population constituted 24.9% from Russia, 17.5% from Italy, 14.3% from Germany and 13% from Ireland. In these cities, the percentage of foreign-born residents compared to national averages was significantly higher, with between 30 and 40% of Chicagoans or New Yorkers classed as 'non-Native'.²¹ It is within the

cities that these new immigrants established themselves, found work, developed businesses, organised newspapers, established religious institutions, social clubs and political alliances as part of their transformation into 'Americans'.

As populations had increased within urban areas, the provision of housing, education and sanitation services for the poorest sections of society had been neglected, resulting in widespread inequality.²² Studies of urban, working-class districts across the nation highlighted the overcrowded, unhealthy and turbulent lives of the 'huddled masses' who had arrived in the United States seeking economic advancement.²³ The stark levels of poverty within these areas were contrasted with the considerable wealth generated by the economic and industrial expansion of the era. Great fortunes had been made on the railroads, manufacturing and the stock exchanges which supported the construction of ornate mansions, parks and civic institutions within cities. This disparity in wealth had given rise to anarchist groups, socialist politics and trade unions as urban politics in the United States became increasingly fraught. For example, the 1886 Haymarket Affair in Chicago had seen public rioting, authoritarian repression, fatalities and the executions of anarchists who were convicted of throwing a bomb at police during a labour demonstration. The event resulted in a lingering sense of industrial resentment within the metropolis. Large-scale immigration had also transformed electoral wards across the nation as political parties sought to harness or control the votes of these new Americans. In Philadelphia and New York, Democratic Party officials had been able to secure control over municipal affairs from the mid-nineteenth century through predominantly Irish immigrant votes. This was bought at the expense of dissatisfaction and resentment from 'nativist' groups and a growing sense from individuals outside the major cities that the metropolitan areas were no longer truly 'American'.

Through social programmes, political rhetoric and cultural initiatives, the 'foreign-born' population of the United States was compelled to conform to an expectation that they should divest themselves of previous ties and regard themselves as 'American'. Such debates regarding citizenship and belonging were conducted while over 10% of the nation's population were being systematically denied their rights within the United States. From the 1890s, African Americans were effectively disenfranchised through repressive legislation and subject to the threat of extreme violence. Within cities, prejudice and discrimination also barred

African Americans from employment, housing and education. Race riots across the nation from the 1890s to 1910s saw fatalities, damage to property and the intimidation of families and communities.²⁴ In these circumstances, the outbreak of war in 1914 occurred as urban society within the United States was marked by divisions of politics, ethnicity and class. As the conflict brought the same issues into stark relief across Europe, the war appeared to threaten the stability of the nation on the city streets.

DEFINING URBAN IDENTITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

The assassination of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was initially viewed by the mainstream press within the major cities as yet another tragic event in the course of European monarchy. Whilst newspaper vendors selling papers in the city streets would proclaim their own title's unique coverage of this incident, it was always within a detached perspective. Indeed, the unfolding of events was examined from a physically and politically distant viewpoint rather than as a direct point of concern for American readers. *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times* all cast disapproving glances at the continent as ancient enmities appeared to cause modern turmoil.²⁵ Such positions were in marked contrast to the ethnic and religious presses within the cities who regarded the war as having a direct influence on their lives. African-American newspapers considered the violence in Europe in comparison to the violence faced by their readers across the United States.²⁶ *The Crisis*, edited by the civil rights campaigner W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), compared the atrocities in Europe to the repression experienced by African Americans.²⁷ Similarly, the African-American newspaper, *The Appeal*, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, regarded the war in the context of the wider issues faced within the city.²⁸ Similarly, *The Sentinel*, the Chicago-based Jewish weekly paper and the *Bnai Brith Messenger*, the Los Angeles Jewish bi-monthly and the New York Yiddish-language daily *Die Wahrheit*, remarked upon fears that the assassination was undertaken by a Jewish group or individual as they considered the possibility of reprisals against the wider community.²⁹ It was these connections to the conflict that brought urban émigré communities to the streets and which demonstrated the level of difference across the nation. This could be most obviously observed with the

German-American population as sections of this well-established ethnic community aligned themselves with the cause of the Fatherland.³⁰

The Germanistic Society of Chicago quickly published a series of pamphlets designed to inform non-partisan citizens of the reluctance of Germany to enter into the war in the face of Russian aggression, French machination and British subterfuge.³¹ Similarly, national groups such as the German American National Alliance, which was based in Philadelphia, supported public talks and publications that promoted the cause of Germany and the contributions of Germans in the United States.³² Its president, Charles John Hexamer (1862–1921), was widely reported for his efforts in demanding the neutrality of American businesses and politicians and attempting to prevent the sales of arms or war materials to Britain and France.³³ Such statements of loyalty were also performed in the streets with marches of German and Austrian expatriates and immigrants in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia.³⁴ German-language newspapers, which were widely read and distributed within the larger cities, such as *Tageblatt* and *Pennsylvanische Staats-Gazette* in Philadelphia, the *Illinois Staats Zeitung*, the Sunday edition *Abendpost* and *Chicagoer Freie Presse* all published in Chicago, as well as the highly-popular *New Yorker Staatszeitung* and the Baltimore *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, all made their support for the Kaiser, German culture or the Fatherland clear in both their reporting and their editorials.³⁵ German businesses, churches, beer halls and social clubs across the cities of the United States were sympathetic to the cause, and thus the urban landscape of the nation became part of the battlefields as patriotic speeches were delivered and war relief charities were organised.

In Chicago, a meeting at the Vorwaerts Turner Hall in the West Side of the city in August 1914 served as a rallying point for large sections of the German population. Members of this *turnverein*, a community gymnastic club, dedicated themselves and their institution to aiding the war effort and affirming the righteousness of the cause of Germany and Austria-Hungary within the United States.³⁶ However, such declarations were stated in full recognition of their status as American citizens. Indeed, the various monuments and institutions across the city of Chicago that had been sponsored or supported by German-American groups were highlighted as evidence of the dedication to the state. From the statue of the poet J. W. von Goethe, unveiled in 1911 in Lincoln Park, Bismarck Gardens which was the city's most popular beer hall, the

prestigious Bismarck Hotel and the German Hospital of Chicago which was built in 1884, the urban landscape was replete with reminders of German-American identity. This was replicated across the United States. For example, in the city of Indianapolis, which possessed a significant German immigrant community, institutions such as the local *turnverein*, Das Deutsche Haus, German churches and the German Park, reflected a legacy of nineteenth-century charity and community but were mobilised as centres of German-American pride after August 1914.³⁷ In the wake of the European war, these locales became vital components of promoting the German-American cause.³⁸

Similar uses of the newspapers, businesses and community venues of immigrant communities within the United States demonstrate how the urban landscape was reused to establish and reaffirm connections. Czech Americans formed the Bohemian National Alliance in Chicago in September 1914 as a coordinating organisation to mobilise Czech newspapers and communities in the United States for the purpose of Czech peoples in Europe.³⁹ Polish-language newspapers across the nation also reported on the war to readers and the potential for the rebirth of an independent Poland which was encouraged by the Philadelphia-based Polish National Alliance.⁴⁰ Czech Americans in Chicago regularly gathered in Pilsen Park to promote the cause of Bohemian independence and nationhood.⁴¹ This site also became highly important in the charitable operations run by Czech societies in Chicago to raise funds for refugees or those left widowed or orphaned by the war.⁴² Whether asserting support for the homeland, raising funds for war relief or presenting themselves at consulates seeking passage to join the conflict, such overt demonstrations of attachment raised concern amongst both municipal and the national governments. The perception of cities representing a potential site of dissent was addressed by President Wilson in his Declaration of Neutrality in August 1914:

The spirit of the nation in this critical matter will be determined largely by what individuals and society and those gathered in public meetings do and say, upon what newspapers and magazines contain, upon what ministers utter in their pulpits, and men proclaim as their opinions upon the street.⁴³

Within cities like New York and Philadelphia, the mainstream press and government officials appealed to their diverse populations to commit to the state and avoid such fervent displays of loyalty to another nation.

Indeed, Mayor John Purroy Mitchel (1879–1918) issued a proclamation in New York, which prohibited the display of flags and paraphernalia that would compromise the appearance of neutrality or the perception of loyalty to the state.⁴⁴ The city streets thereby became a focus of observation, where identities were monitored. However, in urban areas where German-American politicians and industrialists served as prominent members of the community, civic buildings, churches and community halls were transformed into demonstrations of German-American identity and part of a wider network of charitable work. For example, in Chicago, the businessmen and respectively second- and first-generation German immigrants, Charles H. Wacker (1856–1929) and Oscar F. Mayer (1859–1955), promoted the cause of Germany and financially supported the work of German-American institutions in the city.⁴⁵ With the advent of war, the American urban landscape, which had appeared to politicians and reformers as divided and disparate, now seemed more alienated than ever. The pre-war tensions regarding the incorporation of an immigrant society now took on a highly complex meaning as the conflict raged across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Rather than just asserting American neutrality on the streets, it was now a matter of asserting American identity in the nation's cities.

ESTABLISHING URBAN CONFORMITY IN THE UNITED STATES DURING THE WAR

As the scale of the war intensified, there was an increase in the war relief work undertaken by expatriate communities for the Entente and the Central Powers in the United States. This could encompass the work of small churches and community groups in cities such as Baltimore where a dedicated German-American population collected for war relief.⁴⁶ Public places, businesses and private institutions altered the experience of the urban landscape through substantial fundraising activities.⁴⁷ The industrial and commercial wealth of German Americans in Chicago provided significant sums for orphans, widows and aid programmes across Germany, Austria and Hungary.⁴⁸ However, these public displays of support for the Fatherland were not conducted apart from a connection to the United States. In the fairs, bazaars and events organised by German Americans, loyalty to both nations was apparent. For example, a charity bazaar organised for the widows of Germany, Austria and Hungary in the 71st Armory on 34th Street and Park Avenue in New York in late

1914, proclaimed a 'German American union'. Germans who had fought in the War of Independence were commemorated in the market rows of the bazaar which were named DeKalb, Steuben and Leisler Streets.⁴⁹ Despite the protestations of allegiance, these actions became increasingly subject to criticism from the formation of 'patriotic' groups such as the National Security League and the American Defense Society who organised urban chapters across the country to promote military preparedness amongst the middle and upper classes.⁵⁰ Whilst promoting 'American' values, these organisations were part of a wider pre-war trend which sought to establish conformity and control within the streets.

The war provided an opportunity to address the issue of the 'hyphen' in American society and it was within the urban environment with the presence of businesses, newspapers and institutions where the hyphenated identity was regarded as being all too apparent. The foreign association that came with the title German American or Irish American was subject to greater surveillance within the cities as the nation increased the scale of its involvement in supplying Britain with materials to aid the war effort.⁵¹ By 1915, vast fortunes were being made by bankers and industrialists in this highly profitable venture.⁵² With rising prices for foodstuffs and uncertainty surrounding employment, the disparity between rich and poor within the major cities was highlighted by socialist newspapers and anarchist publications.⁵³ The *American Socialist*, published in Chicago and serving as the mouthpiece of the Socialist Party of America, published critical pieces of both the government and the industrialists for causing poverty within the nation's leading metropolitan areas: 'While the workers in Europe are murdering each other by orders from their masters, the workers in the United States are starving by the will of their masters'.⁵⁴

Similarly, Emma Goldman's New York-based anarchist publishing company, *Mother Earth*, asserted the image of the city divided on the basis of war profiteering and capitalism.⁵⁵ Within some cities the support for the German cause, anti-war sentiment and socialist politics intermingled as campaigners spoke in city venues against American intervention. The social reformer Jane Addams (1860–1935) campaigned in Chicago and New York on both a suffrage and pacifist agenda.⁵⁶ Such speeches provided points within the urban landscape where issues of conformity and commitment were challenged and alternative ways of viewing the city and the nation were created.⁵⁷ As the scale of the nation's involvement in the war increased, so too did the accusation from

German-American newspapers and periodicals that neutrality was being flagrantly ignored.⁵⁸ The sense of alienation was intensified by the level of suspicion attributed to 'hyphen' identities. Across the United States, politicians sought to encourage diverse communities to state their existence as only 'Americans'; to 'yank' out the hyphen. Some expatriate groups used this opportunity to establish themselves as part of the national culture. The Bohemian National Alliance of America declared, 'there are no Bohemian-Americans [...] we owe no divided allegiance'.⁵⁹

However, the suspicion of German Americans as potential subversives undermining the processes of business and industry was elevated through high-profile cases which uncovered spy networks and plots against the state. As such, representations within mainstream newspapers of German Americans who argued against the nation's involvement in supplying the Entente escalated to full-scale anxiety. The urban environment was now the centre for uprisings and revolutions. Such fears were captured in the 1915 film *Fall of a Nation*, where German Americans join up with an invading army culminating with a march down New York's streets.⁶⁰ With the destruction of a warehouse containing war material on Black Tom Island in New Jersey just south of Manhattan in July 1916, the perception of foreign elements undermining the nation and the need for collective expressions and commitments of allegiance were demanded from municipal and national governments.⁶¹ This was given greater form through the passing of the National Defense Act in June 1916, which enabled an expansion of the Army and the National Guard and which encouraged the Preparedness Movement. Since the spring of 1916, prominent industrialists and businessmen had been coordinating with municipal governments and private organisations to host 'Preparedness Parades' within cities to encourage commitment to the nation.

In New York and Boston, vast processions were organised in front of jubilant crowds with prominent displays of the stars and stripes. Over 130,000 people gathered in May 1916 as New York was turned into a gleaming spectacle of patriotism.⁶² Socialist and anarchist protestors attempted to disrupt this event, but the sheer scale of the procession overwhelmed dissenting voices. However, the Preparedness Parade in San Francisco on 22 July was targeted and an explosive device detonated, killing 10 and injuring approximately 40 individuals. Whilst the two union leaders who were arrested were later pardoned, the suspicion of foreign subversives and internal dissidents was marked.⁶³

The policy of 'Americanisation' began to emerge within these events as 'Preparedness' was equated to patriotism. In the city streets, overt demonstrations of support for any other state were becoming increasingly out of place as municipal authorities sought to affirm the identity of their citizens as '100% American'. These urban displays were not extended to African-American communities, who remained largely removed from this compelling but non-violent demand for conformity. This absence was apparent in the riots in the city of East St. Louis (Illinois) in July 1917, where official reports suggested nearly 40 African Americans were murdered.⁶⁴ Such violence was met with the Silent Parade in New York on 28 July 1917, where the rights of citizenship were demanded by 10,000 African Americans.⁶⁵ As cities were turned into arenas of patriotism, where a new society was supposed to emerge as 'hyphens' were discarded, such transformations excluded communities on the basis of race.

The significance of this process was that by the time the United States entered the war in April 1917, the alteration within the urban landscape was complete. Indeed, the call to arms with the installation of the draft, the drives for savings, the appeal for Liberty Loans were all made in a supportive and patriotic climate. The city streets, churches and community halls which had once proclaimed their allegiance to the Fatherland now spoke of 'one city' and 'one nation'. This can be noted with the change in place names across the United States. Bismarck Gardens in Chicago became Marigold Gardens. Elsewhere in the city, the Bismarck Hotel became the Randolph whilst the German Hospital became the Grant Hospital. Similar name changes were seen in the parks and public buildings in New York, Baltimore and Indianapolis. The shifts in the streetscapes of American cities demonstrates that while Americans entered the field of war in 1917, they had been fighting the war on their own streets right from the outset in August 1914.

CONCLUSIONS

The city streets of the United States during the First World War demonstrate the potential in understanding how identity, values and perceptions were altered through engaging with these physical places. As landscape studies become increasingly prominent within First World War studies, 'streetscapes' can be assessed in the same manner as battlefields. Within the United States, these sites, which before the war had been the

subject of debate regarding citizenship, capitalism, reform and democracy, became centres of control and authority as tensions were exacerbated and altered by the conditions of the conflict. Whilst asserting the value of neutrality within the nation, the national and municipal authorities became keenly aware of the divides and potential for dissent as the United States became embroiled in the economic and political ramifications of the conflict. Within these diverse cities, churches, charities and community groups established ethnic and cultural connections to the warring states in Europe and expressed allegiance and attachment. Such developments became the focus of concern for the various groups promoting the preparedness movement, which used the social pressures of conformity to alter the urban landscape to encourage '100% Americanism'. It is on the streets where the history of the United States during the First World War can be located and within the 'streetscape' where the impact of the global war on the lives of individuals and communities can be witnessed.

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Land of the Red Soil: War Ruins and Industrial Landscapes in Luxembourg

Sandra Camarda

‘I greet you, land of the red soil’.¹ So begins Nik Welter’s poem celebrating the industrial landscape of Luxembourg at the onset of the Great War, a time when the blast furnaces and the thick smoke rising from the conduits had come to embody the Luxembourgish identity as much as the ancient fortifications and the idyllic vineyards along the Moselle. Deeply intertwined with the process of nation building, the transformation of Luxembourg from small rural country to major world industrial centre had occurred in a relatively short time.

From the mid-nineteenth century, benefitting from the Grand Duchy’s entry in the *Zollverein* (the German Customs Union), several steel plants had begun to dot the Luxembourgish countryside, while the construction of new railway links between Luxembourg and the German industrial centres of the Saarland promoted the development of an important industrial basin, attracting foreign investors and a large number of immigrant workers from Germany and Italy. The real industrial boom occurred, however, between the 1870s and the years immediately preceding the Great War when the processes patented by

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Henry Bessemer and Sidney Gilchrist Thomas for eliminating impurities and phosphorous from molten pig-iron made possible a more intensive exploitation of the *minette*, the local sedimentary iron-rich soil that characterises the South-West of the country (an area known as *Terres Rouges*, red lands).

The merger of a number of steel companies into the *Acéries Réunies de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange* (ARBED) in 1911, and the construction of large, vertically integrated steelworks, able to locally oversee all phases of steel production, became crucial for the economic development of the country. By 1913, with over one million metric tons of steel per annum, the Grand Duchy was listed among the top ten producers in the world.² This rapid industrialisation had a profound effect on both the land and on Luxembourgish society. According to the censuses of the early twentieth century, nearly 40% of the total working population was employed in the steel sector, vacating the rural villages and pouring into Luxembourg City and the southern industrial centres.³ The steel plants set the pace of people's lives, while the country's geography was subjected to a brutal visual transformation with tall, smouldering chimneys and blast furnaces populating the landscape of the Canton d'Esch.⁴

As a small, predominantly rural country that had only recently gained independence, the sudden economic prosperity deriving from siderurgy came soon to signify also a stronger political position on the international scene.⁵ In a time of nation building and political and cultural redefinition, the steel industry progressively acquired a prominent place in the collective consciousness and was internalised by the population as a national symbol. As argued by Myriam Sunnen in her studies on the Luxembourgish industrial landscape,⁶ the *minette*, ultimate metonymic icon of the national industry, could be well regarded as a *lieu de mémoire*, a symbolic place of remembrance, marking the foundation of the Grand Duchy's political independence and wealth and representing an essential element in the ongoing construction of its identity.

A shared sense of historical experience and the identification with real or imagined geographies are known to be crucial elements in the shaping of national identities. Landscape constitutes a 'discourse through which identifiable social groups historically have framed themselves and their relations with both the land and with other human groups',⁷ and symbolically salient sites, with their associated mythologies, represent fundamental points of reference.⁸ Particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the interwar period, European nations

registered a tendency to seek their national emblems in regional landscapes,⁹ defining the boundaries and borders of their often-idealised territory, mapping stories and events to specific locations, and fabricating rich visual documentations of the native geography.¹⁰

The identification of the nation with its industrial heritage is a leitmotiv that runs steadily throughout the twentieth century up until today. Luxembourgish scholars have pointedly remarked how the steel industry crisis of the mid-1970s was collectively experienced as a national catastrophe, with deep political, social and psychological implications,¹¹ accompanied by a profusion of publications lamenting the decline and the loss of cultural heritage.¹² Tributes to the country's industrial past recur in the architectural elements of new city buildings,¹³ in postage stamps, commemorative medals and advertisements, in the conversions of the old mining sites and in governmental projects of cultural and historical valorisation.¹⁴

PICTURING THE LAND OF THE RED SOIL

It is predominantly poetry that, at the onset of the Great War, glorified the image of siderurgy with a production that spoke of the monumentality of the industrial sites, the furnaces, the machines and the quasi-alembic transformation of raw matter into refined metal¹⁵; a celebration of progress and modernity that coexisted with concerns over the loss of the natural world and the institution of agrarian movements—such as the *Landwüol*¹⁶—aimed at reviving traditional folklore and rural values.

Alongside a tradition of landscape writing preoccupied with the creation of a collective national narrative mediating between past and modernity,¹⁷ the industrial sites also found a place in the country's iconography, starting from the neat axonometric perspectives of the lithographs chosen for the Luxembourgish national pavilions of the early universal expositions,¹⁸ and progressively establishing a visual canon.¹⁹ The arts reinforced the notion of national sovereignty by highlighting the country's wealth and power²⁰ and Luxembourg's economic and political emancipation took the shape of the industrial centres of Esch, Dudelange, Rodange and Dommeldange, with their steaming machineries, modern buildings and tall chimneys.

The birth of photography in 1839 coincided with the year of Luxembourg's political independence, the country's demilitarisation—with the demolition of its imposing fortifications—and the loss of a

significant part of its territory to Belgium. In a century obsessed with scientific classification, photography came to represent a privileged epistemological tool to map salient sites and individuate local core motives, reaffirming a sense of national identity. Instrumental to the processes of nation building, photographic atlases documented the material culture of a country identifying, systematising and comparing its nature, architectural features, traditional crafts and customs.

In line with this tendency, Luxembourgish commercial and amateur photographers progressively displayed an intent to contribute to the visual remapping of the country, re-defining a national landscape cropped of its western territories, mutilated of its iconic ancient fortresses and repopulated with steelworks. Complementing a literary production that praised modernity and saw in the steel mills the epitome of progress, dynamism and prosperity, a thriving photographic market produced and circulated images of the industrial centres. The foundries of Differdange, Esch sur Alzette and Dudelange, with their aestheticised ironworks, communicated a narrative where siderurgy set the foundation for the country's fortune and political independence.

SOUVENIRS DE LUXEMBOURG

One of the most common means of diffusing landscape photographs was through illustrated postcards. Postcards appeared for the first time in the 1870s, but their popularity increased exponentially in the first decades of the twentieth century,²¹ particularly after the introduction of the so-called 'divided back' in 1902. The back of the early postcards had contained exclusively a space for the address and the message had to be written over the image. Thus, this apparently trivial change in design—with the verso of the postcard split into two separate sections for the addressee and for the content of the message—factually turned the postcard from a simple means of communication to a visually appealing collectable object. When the war broke out in 1914, illustrated postcards were sold by the millions, widely exchanged and collected and quickly became a major means of communication between home and the battlefields.²²

Whereas today we tend to think of postcards mainly as souvenirs pertaining to tourism,²³ their use in the early decades of the twentieth century was significantly broader. The marketing of user-friendly Kodak cameras, with the consequent diffusion of vernacular photography, had

affected the demand for private studio portraits, leading most commercial photographers to integrate their activity with the production of illustrated postcards.²⁴ The cards, printed with a photomechanical process (such as the collotype) or alternatively issued in smaller batches as ‘real photographs’, represented inexpensive visual items that could be either sent off to family and friends or collected in special dedicated albums as private mementos.

Beyond the traditional market of leisure and tourism, postcards were used to advertise all sorts of services and products, and with several postal deliveries a day, they represented a standard way to exchange short messages as well as a means to rapidly spread images of current events. Among the variety of services and products advertised by Luxembourgish photographers, one also finds ‘*Aktualitäten-Albums*’, postcard collections of public celebrations and happenings, which supplemented the already popular illustrated press.²⁵ Inexpensive and easy to produce, postcards offered images of remarkable quality, which could be printed and distributed in a short time to respond to an immediate public demand and communicate news to the masses. The interval spanning between the events depicted in the postcards and the date on the postage stamps is indicative of how rapidly these images were processed and put into circulation.²⁶ Every event worthy of notice was promptly documented with a quasi-journalistic usage of the postcards, particularly evident in the visual chronicles of the war.

Postmodern critique places a great importance on the modes and mediums employed in shaping and circulating national narratives.²⁷ In recent decades, new tendencies within visual culture have proposed different ways of looking at images, pointing to the limits of a rigid semiotic interpretation and suggesting, by contrast, an approach that addresses their material and presentational forms.²⁸ Photographs are simultaneously images and three-dimensional objects and their different physical and performative qualities affect the way they are consumed and understood, revealing complex patterns of values and social relationships.²⁹ By virtue of their materiality—designed to be handled and shipped, practical, sturdy and portable, yet large enough to allow the appreciation of their visual content—illustrated postcards were the ideal mnemonic devices to embody and carry national narratives and shared values. As argued by Rob Shields,³⁰ sets of core images of a place, widely disseminated and collectively accepted in a discursive economy, form a ‘place myth’, which displays both a constancy and a shifting quality as the core

images are invented, and circulated, acquiring or losing their connotative power.³¹ Far from being fixed and immutable, identity is constantly subjected to processes of change and renegotiation, and postcards—like other forms of visual objects—reflect a community’s socio-cultural development and influence its ongoing processes of redefinition and nationalisation. Drawing from these considerations, an analysis of illustrated postcards in the context of Luxembourg’s experience of the First World War, with its ongoing processes of invention and definition of a national identity, is particularly relevant.

Performing a number of functions within several intersecting discursive spaces and networks of consumption, both inside and outside national borders, illustrated postcards played a fundamental role in the construction of visual tropes and cultural myths. Popular, mass-produced and apparently trivial commodities, they reflected the dominant ideologies of a society, offering a significant insight into how the nation chose to represent itself, operating selections of visual and textual content that shaped, defined and sustained broader narratives about identity and nationhood.³²

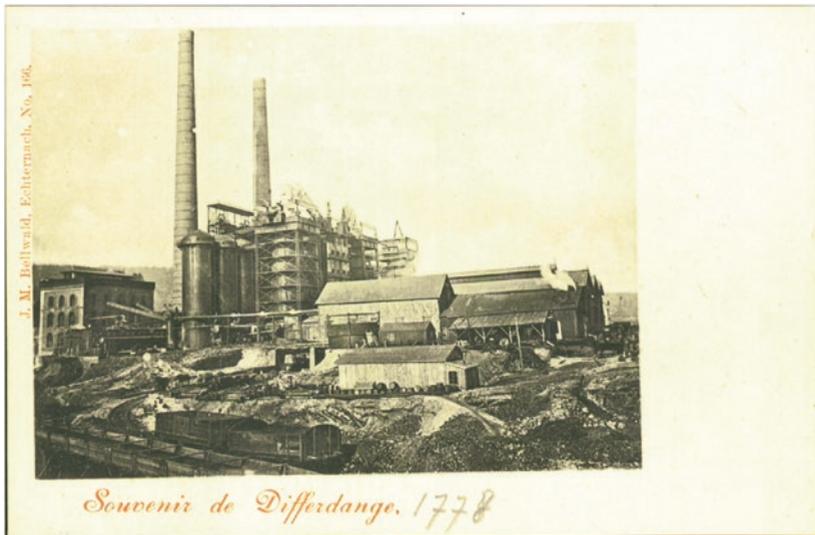


Fig. 6.1 Jacques Marie Bellwald, *Souvenir de Differdange*. Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg, Réserve précieuse, Collection de cartes postales, 000479r

Steelworks appear in Luxembourgish illustrated postcards from the late nineteenth century, following an established pictorial tradition. A booming photographic scene, with several studios and editors operating locally and in neighbouring countries, produced every year hundreds of *vues* ('views') of the industrial centres. The illustrated postcards of Differdange and Dudelange by Jacques Marie Bellwald (1871–1945) are among the earliest examples, followed by the series of court photographer Charles Bernhoeft (1859–1933), explicitly assembled with the ambition of providing a visual documentation of the nation.³³ Large steel factories looming in the background with their smoking chimneys (Fig. 6.1) alternate with close-ups of the machineries, imposing converters, loaded rail wagons and foundries (Fig. 6.2), communicating optimism towards the social, political and economic changes underway.

Composite postcards—with collages of the most representative locations forming a single meta-image—displayed idyllic landscapes, architectural landmarks and steel plants, in an attempt to reconcile history and modernity, rural and industrial. In addition, national symbols such as

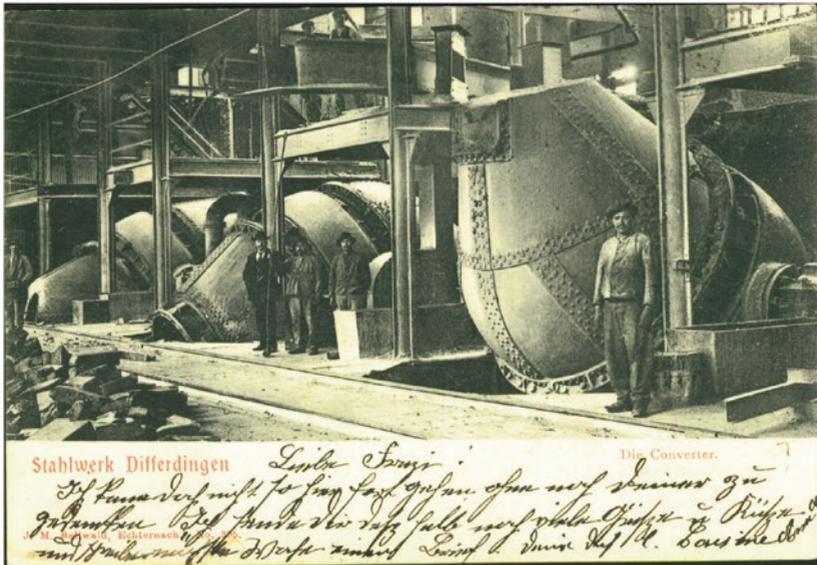


Fig. 6.2 Jacques Marie Bellwald, Converter in Differdange. Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg, Réserve précieuse, Collection de cartes postales, 002992r

coats of arms, draped flags, maps of the country, rampant red lions, gold-crest birds and roses, framed and embellished the postcards, reinforcing the statement about a distinct collective culture.³⁴

POSTCARDS FROM THE HOME FRONT

In the course of the Great War, the photographic portrayal of conflict was varyingly regulated by civil and military authorities, with images of violence and death periodically being censored and resurfacing to serve specific political agendas. While there has been a tendency towards a dichotomy between ‘home’ and ‘front’, with many countries explicitly forbidding the distribution of violent images of the conflict to present a sanitised vision of war devoid of blood and gruesome details,³⁵ a striking abundance of postcards portrayed the ruins of cities and villages in the aftermath of the bombings. Shelled buildings, blown-up bridges and debris displayed an aesthetic of war and destruction that stressed the theme of the violated homeland, perpetuating an image of the enemy as the barbaric destroyer of heritage. A substantial number of illustrated postcards produced by Luxembourgish photographers during the course of the First World War fell into this category.

Away from the front and yet involved in the conflict, Luxembourg experienced the Great War in a peculiar fashion.³⁶ Formally neutral but occupied by the Germans and bombed by the Allies, from the summer of 1914 to the end of the war in 1918, the Grand Duchy was the target of 136 aerial attacks, specifically aimed at destroying the steel mills and disrupting the railway network.³⁷ On 2 August 1914, German troops had marched unchallenged through the capital, occupying the country with a contingent of approximately 5,000 soldiers.³⁸ The violation of Luxembourg’s neutrality³⁹ was justified as a measure of military necessity as Germany, following the Schlieffen Plan, attempted to strike France by rapidly mobilising German troops through the undefended Low Countries. Luxembourg’s strategic geographic position, efficient railway network and thriving industries represented further advantages.

As a small, demilitarised country, the Grand Duchy offered little resistance to the occupation,⁴⁰ partly aware of the impossibility of fighting the Germans and partly because of the political and economic ties to the German Empire.⁴¹ The occupation remained relatively peaceful and amicable. Luxembourg could retain its constitutional and administrative structure while implementing a measured accommodation

policy to appease the occupiers.⁴² The Allied Forces, on the other hand, identified the Luxembourg region as a primary military objective. The blast furnaces in the area provided the Germans with a substantial portion of their steel,⁴³ while the railway junctions in the Metz–Luxembourg link were critical to the deployment of troops and to the shipment of supplies to and from the German centres.⁴⁴ Of the four most important enemy industrial complexes (the other three represented by Mannheim–Ludwigshafen, Mainz and Cologne), the proximity of the Saar–Lorraine–Luxembourg region made it the most feasible target for an aerial attack.⁴⁵

The Hague Convention of 1899 prohibited the attack or bombardment of towns, villages or buildings that were not defended. The presence of enemy steel in Luxembourgish territory, however, offered a justification for the attacks and the Allied Forces declined responsibility regarding the damage to people and things occurring in the course of the bombings.⁴⁶ The first raids on the Grand Duchy started as early as 24 August 1914, only a few weeks after the German occupation, and continued with nearly weekly frequency until the end of October 1918.

While aircraft had been already utilised in previous conflicts for reconnaissance purposes, it was in the course of the First World War that aerial warfare started to develop and become increasingly significant. Tactical bombings of critical locations were carried out either by large howitzers (long-range artillery capable of covering great distances), by dirigibles, or by special airplanes developed for this purpose. In the early days of the conflict, bombs were dropped from aircraft by hand, their accuracy depending on a number of variables and left mostly to the fortuitous aim of the pilot. As was to be expected, only a small percentage of them managed to hit the target and detonate and unexploded shells were regularly found half-buried in soft mud, and then meticulously measured and photographed, much to the excitement of the local population (Fig. 6.3).

The large number of photographs in Luxembourgish collections⁴⁷ of both the remains of exploded bombs and the unearthed duds attest to the morbid curiosity and fascination elicited by this new form of warfare. Unexploded bombs posed a threat that extended the dangers of the actual aerial attack. Lurking and hidden from sight, they had the power to transform the familiar landscape into something potentially deadly and alien. The unpredictability of the bombs' trajectories meant that, more often than not, civilian buildings located in the proximity of key military

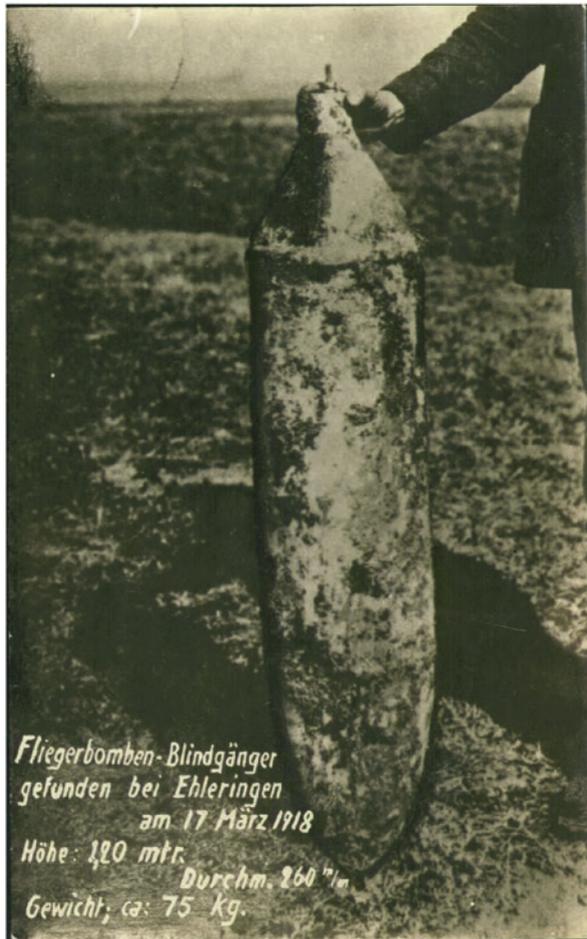


Fig. 6.3 Unknown photographer. Unearthing of unexploded bomb, 17 March 1918. Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg, Réserve précieuse, Collection de cartes postales, 004316r

targets were hit inadvertently. The overall number of deaths and casualties in Luxembourg remained relatively low.⁴⁸ This, however, did not affect the relevance and ample coverage given to the bombings by the press, and the countermeasures taken by the local authorities to minimise the risks.⁴⁹

Supplying an eager market, local photographers documented the devastation, taking numerous shots of the damaged buildings and promptly distributing them as illustrated postcards. J. Neumann, Broucher, Al. Anen fils, Thibor and A. Heinen in Luxembourg City, J. Marx in Esch sùr Alzette, Cappelari in Dudelange and Tippman in Diekirch, to name a few, were some of the ateliers involved in the visual representation of the war in the Grand Duchy. With the exception of a few well-known artists such as Bernhœft, the information on these Luxembourgish photographers is scarce and fragmented, deriving mostly from the studio imprints on the cards, newspaper advertisements or lists of professionals in the city archives. One name which recurs with particular insistence, especially in the context of war ruins, is that of Theodor Wirol, descendant of a family of paper producers from Fishbach and owner of an atelier near the central station in Luxembourg City.

The wartime postcards depicted an array of ruined industrial structures and private housing, mostly taken at street level, with collapsed chimneys and rooftops, shattered windowpanes, bent iron rods and stumps of charred wood (Fig. 6.4).

A busy urban context showed the citizens amassing in the streets in front of the bombed sites, policemen at work searching for victims and children posing in front of the debris in an affected juxtaposition of innocence and destruction. The bulk of postcards held in local pictorial collections⁵⁰ possess a quality of urgency and immediacy, with white handwritten captions scribbled on the negatives themselves as a way of saving on time and printing costs. A different typology of images, issued at a second stage with more elegant frames and printed labels, portrayed empty and silent sites, paying more attention to spatial composition and symbolism (Fig. 6.5).

War ruins fall into what Gavin Lucas calls ‘fast ruins’,⁵¹ the result of an abrupt and traumatic transition, as opposed to the products of abandonment and gradual decay⁵²; and as ‘fast ruins’ they are also ephemeral sites, meant to remain ruin only for the time it takes to clear the rubble and rebuild.⁵³ Photography, however, by freezing into images the elusive and transitory, would produce a lasting memento that would continue to perpetuate that image of destruction, independently from the interventions of restoration. The rubble of the industrial landscape, reminders of the country’s lost heritage and metaphors for the devastation of the homeland, were aestheticised and turned into ruins, transforming what was once a symbol of modernity into a nostalgic memento of the past.

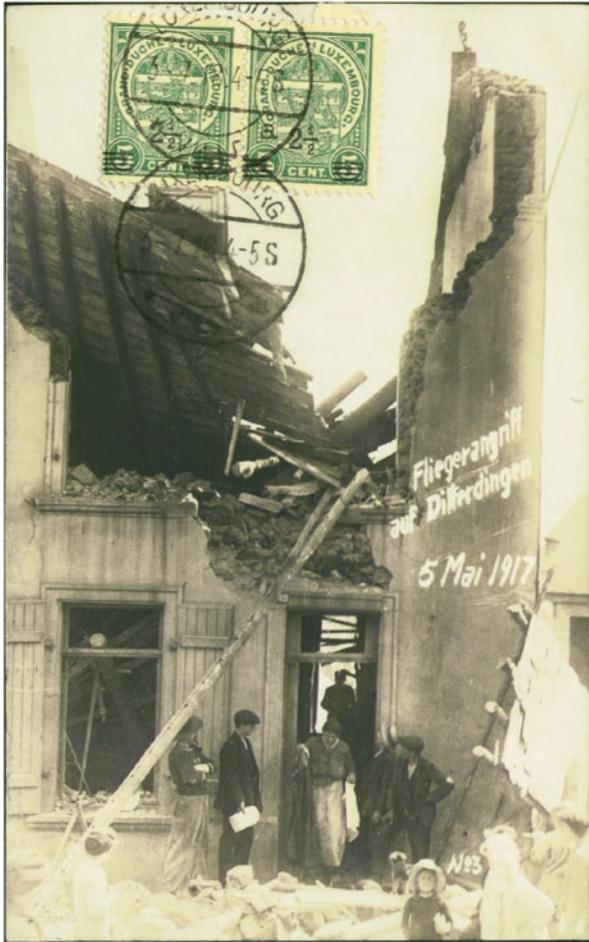


Fig. 6.4 Unknown photographer. Furnace bombed in Differdange, 5 May 1917. Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg, Réserve précieuse, Collection de cartes postales, 004315r

Attitudes to ruins and ruination are not univocal and the different narratives that at various stages emerged from and coexisted within these sites revealed political ambiguities as well as social and cultural values.⁵⁴ During the war, a strong overarching narrative centred on the unjust bombing of a neutral country and the killing of innocent people seen

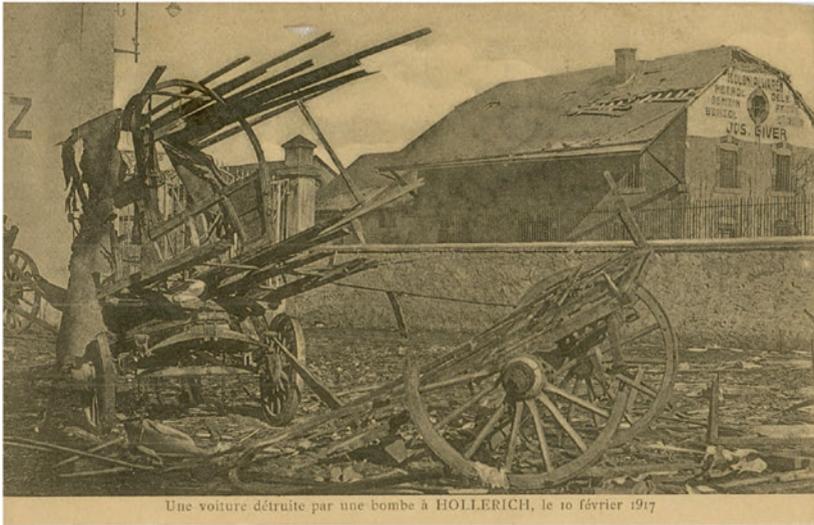


Fig. 6.5 Theodor Wirol, Bombing of Hollerich, Luxembourg City, 10 February 1917. Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg, Réserve précieuse, Collection de cartes postales, 13710r

as an act of ruthless barbarism.⁵⁵ The same *topoi* appeared in the post-card production of the other countries at war, particularly in France and Belgium, where photographs of bombed buildings and the portrayal of the German soldiers as brutal barbarians constituted a popular theme. The display of war ruins represented a fundamental part of the Allies' ideological campaign against the Germans, portrayed as a ruthless horde devoid of culture and conscience. The material devastation of heritage was presented as a deliberate attempt to erase civilisation and impose a brutal rule.⁵⁶ Conversely, the Germans responded to these accusations with the same rhetoric, encouraging the printing and distribution of images of the destruction caused by the Allied forces and exhibiting their love for art and heritage with photographic surveys (*Fotokampagnen*) of the monuments and architectural treasures in the occupied territories.⁵⁷ Alongside their purely informative use, then, the postcards could become forces for materialising collective anger and resistance, functioning as instruments of propaganda and counter-propaganda, to denounce, provoke indignation, inflame nationalist feelings and support the war cause.

While Luxembourg formally retained its political independence during the war, questions about freedom of expression in an occupied country were inevitably an issue. While the commander of the German occupation forces Richard Karl von Tessmar had, on more than one occasion, reprimanded the press for disclosing too many details regarding the bombing of the steel plants,⁵⁸ the photographs of the devastation, particularly when depicting the collateral damage to civilian homes, were allowed—if not encouraged. Nevertheless, while the French postcards of war ruins explicitly pointed the finger at the German army, reinforcing the visual message of the photographs with accusatory captions, the Luxembourgish ones were much more concise and factual, informing the viewer of the date and location of the bombings but avoiding moral evaluations.

The visual imagery of Luxembourg in wartime is one of a city occupied, destroyed and in mourning and the photographers underlined this aspect, altering some of the images to make the damage more evident. Several postcards in the Luxembourgish collections show obvious signs of retouching, particularly in the retraced contours of the shattered windowpanes of the bombed buildings. These interventions were often motivated by the necessity to compensate for the technical limitations of the medium, rather than by the deliberate intention to deceive. The correction made the destruction more visible, increasing the sense of loss and the dramatic impact of the image. The urban context with its ruined buildings experienced the same fate as the people, who subsequently identified with it on a deeper level.

In the fragile and ambiguous political context that followed the war, the industrial ruins, together with the glorification of the small contingent of Luxembourgish expatriates who had fought in the Allies' armies,⁵⁹ could embody the country's redeeming sacrifice to the war cause. Interpreted variously as places of trauma, symbols of the transience of human existence, and as romantic objects of mournful contemplation, ruins also contained the implicit promise of a new order to come,⁶⁰ a notion deeply linked to that idea of progress, modernity and change that the steel plants had come to symbolise in the first place.

Illustrated postcards of Luxembourg's industrial landscape, in its various degrees of triumphant prosperity and desolate decay, were produced, circulated and collected to communicate a wide range of intentions. Away from the battlefield and yet displaying the miseries of the war at home, popular images of war ruins reflected public attitudes and political

agendas. Salient cultural and historical artefacts, they contributed to a visual representation of the conflict as well as to the creation of narratives and the diffusion of ideologies, fostering ideas of social cohesion, resistance and national identity in the state of Luxembourg.

NOTES

1. Nik Welter (1871–1951) published the poem “An das Land der roten Erde” in 1913. See Arthur Hary, ed., *Erzland: Das Buch der Geschicke und Geschichte der Minettesgegend* (Luxembourg: Gustave Soupert, 1917), 12–13.
2. Data published in STATEC: *Economic and Social Portrait of Luxembourg* (2003), <http://www.luxembourg.public.lu/catalogue/economie/statec-economic-and-social-portrait/statec-eco-social-portrait-2003-EN.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2015. See also Christophe Knebler and Denis Scuto, *Belval: Passé, présent et avenir d'un site luxembourgeois exceptionnel (1911–2011)* (Esch-sur-Alzette: Éditions Le Phare, 2010).
3. Knebler and Scuto, 7.
4. Anne-Marie Millim, “Schooling the Gaze: Industry and Nation-Building in Luxembourg Landscape-Writing, 1900–1940,” *Journal of European Studies* 44, no. 2 (2014): 152.
5. Jeanne Glesener, “Éloge funebre de la siderurgie dans la littérature luxembourgeoise contemporaine,” *Art&Fact* 30 (2011): 161.
6. Myriam Sunnen, “De Minette comme lieu de mémoire,” in *Terres Rouges: Approche interdisciplinaire et transnationale = Rote Erde: Ein interdisziplinären und transnationalen Zugriff*, ed. Michel Pauly (Luxembourg: Fondation Bassin Minier, 2010), 11–21.
7. Dennis E. Cosgrove, “Landscapes and Myths, Gods and Humans,” in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Bender (Oxford: Berg, 1993), xiv.
8. The relationship between memory, landscape and national identity has been investigated extensively, stimulating a wide range of critical approaches, see Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992); Bender, *Landscape*; Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths, and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994); Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, eds., *Landscape, Memory, and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2003); and Duncan S. A. Bell, “Mythsapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity,” *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2003): 63–81.
9. See Francois Walter, *Les figures paysagères de la nation: Territoire et paysage en Europe (16e–20e siècle)* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2004) and, more specifically,

- Elizabeth Edwards, "Out and About: Photography, Topography, and Historical Imagination," in *Double Exposure: Memory and Photography*, ed. Olga Shevchenko (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2014), 177–209.
10. Bell, "Mythscapes," 76.
 11. Gilbert Trausch, *L'ARBED dans la société luxembourgeoise* (Luxembourg: ARBED SA. Corporate Communication, 2000), 64.
 12. Glesener, "Éloge funèbre de la sidérurgie," 160–65.
 13. A typical feature is the employment of *Edelrost* (German for 'noble rust'), steel elements purposely left to rust to acquire a ruddy, aged look reminiscent of the old steel plants. An example notably appeared in the Luxembourg pavilion designed by the architect Valentiny for the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010, see the company, <http://www.valentinyarchitects.com>, accessed 2 August 2017.
 14. See the proposals of the Fonds Belval for a national centre of industrial culture, http://www.fonds-belval.lu/media/publications/68/Concept_CNCL.pdf, accessed 2 August 2017.
 15. Glesener, "Éloge funèbre de la sidérurgie," 160.
 16. The *Landwüöl* movement (Country welfare) was founded in 1923, which supported an ideology of *Volkstum* (or 'folksdom', a concept encompassing all the cultural expressions of an ethnic minority) and valued the bucolic over urban modern life. See Glesener and Sonja Kmec, "Urbain-rural: dichotomie ou dialectique?," *Articulo: Journal of Urban Research* 3 (2010): 1–2.
 17. See Millim's extensive analysis in "Celestial Landscapes: The Supranational Imagination in Luxembourg's Pre-World War I Press," in *The Making of Landscape in Modernity*, ed. Tricia Cusack and James Koranyi, Special Issue, *National Identities* 16, no. 3 (2014): 197–208.
 18. Sunnen, "De Minette," 15. See also the volume curated by the Archives Nationales Luxembourg, *Feierrout: Le dernier siècle de la sidérurgie luxembourgeoise* (Luxembourg: Archives Nationales, 2011), 44–46.
 19. See Frederik Herman and Ira Plein, "Envisioning the Industrial Present: Pathways of Cultural Learning in Luxembourg (1880s–1920s)," in *Adventures in Cultural Learning*, ed. Herman and Sian Roberts, Special Issue, *Pedagogica Historica* 53, no. 3 (2017): 274.
 20. Scuto, "Art et révolution industrielle au pays de la terre rouge. Réflexions sur quelques œuvres d'art de la Collection de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette," in *Esch-sur-Alzette. Du village à la ville industrielle. Art et révolution industrielle au pays de la terre rouge*, ed. Scuto (Esch/Alzette: Editions Kremer-Muller, 1989), 72.
 21. This period is known among deltiologists as the 'Golden Age' of illustrated postcards.
 22. See Herbert Leclerc, "Ansichten über Ansichtskarten," *Archiv für deutsche Postgeschichte* 2 (1986): 5–65.

23. The visual spectacle is seen as a central aspect of modern tourist practice and many seminal contributions have discussed the function of postcards in enticing travel by pre-visualising and ‘iconising’ destinations. See Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2002); David Crouch and Nina Lübbren, eds., *Visual Culture and Tourism* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); and Adam Jaworski and Crispin Thurlow, eds., *Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space* (London: Continuum, 2010).
24. See Fernand Gonderinger and Edmond Thill, “Les cartes postales illustrées de Charles Bernhæft,” in *Charles Bernhæft: Photographe de la Belle Époque*, ed. Thill (Luxembourg: Musée national d’histoire et d’art, 2014), 723–93.
25. While the development of the halftone process allowed for the reproduction of photographs in newspapers, it was not until the late 1920s that this became a standard practice for the daily press. See Pierre Albert and Gilles Feyel, “Photography and the Media: Changes in the Illustrated Press,” in *The New History of Photography*, ed. Michel Frizot (Cologne: Könemann, 1998), 368.
26. A significant number of postcards found in the main Luxembourgish archival collections were printed and sent off within just a couple of days.
27. Bell, “Mythscapes,” 68–69. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.
28. See Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs Object Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004).
29. See Edwards and Hart.
30. Rob Shields, *Places on the Margins: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 61.
31. See Shields.
32. Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, “Mythic Geographies of Representation and Identity: Contemporary Postcards of Wales,” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 1, no. 2 (2003): 112.
33. Thill, *Charles Bernhæft*, 12–13.
34. Verena Winiwarter, “Nationalized Nature on Picture Postcards: Subtexts of Tourism from an Environmental Perspective,” *Global Environment* 1, no. 1 (2008): 214.
35. Allyson Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space Between Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 24.
36. See Gilbert Traush, “La stratégie du faible: Le Luxembourg pendant la Première Guerre mondiale (1914–1919),” in *Le rôle de la place des petits*

- pays en Europe au XXe siècle*, ed. Trausch (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005), 47–176 and Benoît Majerus, “Conceptualizing the Occupations of Belgium, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands (1933–1944),” in *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp and Stefan Martens (Oxford: Berghahn, 2011), 10–20.
37. Detailed accounts of the Luxembourg bombings can be found in Jean-Pierre Robert, *Die Fliegerangriffe auf Luxemburg während des Weltkrieges 1914–1918 in historisch-chronologischer Darstellung* (Luxembourg: Th. Schroell, 1922); E. T. Melchers, *Bombenangriffe auf Luxemburg in zwei Weltkriegen* (Luxembourg: Sankt-Paulus-Druckerei, 1984); and Gérald Arboit, “Les bombardements alliés sur le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg,” in *Terres rouges: Histoire de la sidérurgie luxembourgeoise*, vol. 1, ed. Charles Barthel and Josée Kirps (Luxembourg: Archives Nationales de Luxembourg, Centre d’études et de recherches européennes Robert Schumann, 2009).
 38. Majerus, “Les historiens luxembourgeois monomaniacs. Histoires de la Première Guerre mondiale au Luxembourg,” in *1914–1918: Guerre(s) au Luxembourg—Kriege in Luxemburg*, ed. Majerus, Charles Roemer, and Gianna Thommes (Luxembourg: Cappybarabooks, 2014), 10.
 39. Luxembourg had been declared politically independent and perpetually neutral with the Treaty of London of 1867.
 40. A number of Luxembourgish expatriates were enlisted in the Légion Étrangère and in the American and Belgian armies fighting the Central Powers. The contribution of the Luxembourgish legionnaires to the war cause would become, after the Armistice, a major theme in the country’s memorialisation process.
 41. Aside from Luxembourg’s inclusion in the *Zollverein*, the Grand-Ducal family belonged to the German house of Nassau-Weilburg and the contested Grand Duchess Marie-Adélaïde openly displayed philo-German attitudes.
 42. See Scuto, “Il subsiste un certain flou concernant les événements de l’époque...: Paul Eyschen et la Première Guerre mondiale,” in *1914–1918*, ed. Majerus, Roemer, and Thommes, 18–29.
 43. See Stateg Luxembourg, “Portrait économique et social du Luxembourg” (2003), <http://www.statistiques.public.lu/fr/publications/series/portrait-eco/portrait-fr.pdf>, accessed 24 September 2017.
 44. Arboit, “Les bombardements allies,” 110.
 45. Archives Nationales Luxembourg, FD 005 16.
 46. Archives Nationales Luxembourg, AE LBR 30.
 47. See, for example, the Ginsbach Album D. H. vol. 40 A (Docu-sans numéro) “Les attaques d’avions sur le territoire du Grand-Duché pendant la Grande Guerre,” Archives Nationales Luxembourg.

48. The death count saw 53 victims in Luxembourg throughout the entire duration of the war. See Archives Nationales de Luxembourg, AE 00609 “Dommages causés par des attaques aériennes, 1916–1918” (Dossier).
49. Archives Nationales Luxembourg, AE LBR 30.
50. The major repositories are the Bibliothèque Nationale de Luxembourg, the Photothèque de la Ville de Luxembourg, the Centre National de l’Audiovisuel in Dudelange, the Luxembourg Postmusée, the Musée d’histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, the Musée Dräi Eechelen and the National Museum of Military History in Diekirch.
51. Gavin Lucas, “Ruins,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Contemporary World*, ed. Paul Graves-Brown, Rodney Harrison, and Angela Piccini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198.
52. Caitlin DeSilvey and Tim Edensor, “Reckoning with Ruins,” *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 4 (2013): 466.
53. Lucas, “Ruins,” 198.
54. DeSilvey and Edensor, “Reckoning with Ruins,” 479.
55. The word ‘*barbareï*’ (barbarism) recurs also in the distraught and outraged telegrams sent by Luxembourgish diplomats and ministers. See Archives Nationales Luxembourg, AE LBR 30.
56. Emmanuelle Danchin, “Destruction du patrimoine et figure du soldat allemand dans les cartes postales de la Grande Guerre,” *Annis: Revue de civilisation contemporaine Europes/Amériques* 10 (2011), <https://annis.revues.org/1371>, accessed 2 August 2017.
57. See Christina Kott’s extensive study, *Préserver l’art de l’ennemi? Le patrimoine artistique en Belgique et en France occupées, 1914–1918* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2006).
58. Archives Nationales Luxembourg, AE 00607.
59. Arnaud Sauer, “Les Luxembourgeois dans la Légion Etrangère durant la Première Guerre mondiale. La construction d’un mythe national,” in *1914–1918*, ed. Majerus, Roemer, and Thommes, 149–60.
60. DeSilvey and Edensor, “Reckoning with Ruins,” 474–78.

PART III

Cross-Cultural Encounters With Landscapes



The Long Carry: Landscapes and the Shaping of British Medical Masculinities in the First World War

Jessica Meyer

5–7 October 1915 was a busy period for Frank Ridsdale, a private in the 89th Field Ambulance RAMC(T), serving on the Gallipoli peninsula. Having spent the night of 5 October at an advanced aid post dressing men's wounds, he came down for breakfast at the dressing station the following morning before spending the rest of the day flattening roads for ambulance waggons. The next day saw him moving between the Main Dressing Station, the Base, where he was sent to collect supplies, and finally the advanced aid post, where he spent the afternoon attending again to the wounded under shrapnel fire.¹

The variety of work that Ridsdale undertook over a two-day period was hardly uncommon for a Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) ranker, particularly in the midst of a campaign such as the Gallipoli invasion. What is notable throughout the nine volumes of diaries he wrote covering his service from August 1915 through to the spring of 1919, however, is the range of ways in which the varying landscapes he served in

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shaped the work he undertook. On the peninsula, he was both manipulating the landscape through his road levelling, and negotiating it as he moved between base, dressing station and aid post. Later he would find himself similarly occupied in France and Flanders, digging drains to enable a hospital to which he was posted to withstand the rain, and carrying wounded men from aid post to dressing station over periods lasting up to 20 hours.² In both settings, the landscape defined the rigours and challenges of the work undertaken, from the hills on the peninsula, which dictated the location of the base and its distance from the dressing station, to the damaged French landscape which caused Ridsdale to get lost while evacuating the wounded.³

The lives of all soldiers in the First World War were shaped, to a greater or lesser extent, by the landscapes in which they served. From staff officers planning strategy to the infantryman living a troglodyte existence in trenches, landscapes were an inherent part of wartime life. The relationship with the landscape varied, however, not only by rank and sector,⁴ but also by branch of service. The perspective of a cavalryman on the obstacles and opportunities presented by the landscape was fundamentally different from that of a tank driver, while a pilot's map of a landscape from the air would be entirely unlike that of a Sapper working in tunnels beneath the earth. It was not only artillery that, as Rudyard Kipling noted, moved 'by the leave o' the ground'.⁵ All military units did, but all did so in significantly different ways.

This chapter explores the particular relationship to the landscape of the RAMC. Their role within the military was unique in a number of ways. In the first place, they were, under the terms of the Geneva Conventions of 1864 and 1906, a neutral unit who were only allowed to carry arms in self-defence.⁶ Their status within the British armed services, therefore, was that of a non-combatant unit. This status had important implications for how RAMC servicemen were perceived by their combatant comrades, many of whom viewed them, at least initially, as 'poultice wallahs'. As George Swindell recalled, the disparaging epithet 'Rob All My Comrades' was in common use by combatant rankers in the early days of his service.⁷ The work of men whose primary purpose was to save lives and bodies rather than kill or damage them was dismissed as unsoldierly further up the chain of command, which viewed the young Corps (formally established in 1898) as not being properly part of the military.⁸ If, as has been noted by a number of gender historians, the soldier formed the hegemonic masculine ideal in wartime British society,⁹ the

experiences of men like Swindell point to the important qualification that it was *combatant* servicemen who this society deemed to have achieved dominant masculinity. Despite wearing a uniform and serving under military discipline, the masculinity of the RAMC serviceman was under threat throughout the war from perceptions of physical frailty and associations with the deviant masculinity of the conscientious objector.¹⁰ This perception of the fragility of RAMC masculinity had important implications for the ways in which men in the Corps constructed and represented their engagement with different types of landscape.

The relationship of these men to the battlefield was not only unique because they operated *in* it unarmed, however. Significantly their duties *on* it also had a dual purpose in military terms. The medical services were required to provide both care, in order to ensure the appropriate treatment of men who might return to health, and therefore active service, if treated promptly, and swift evacuation, removing the wounded from a space where they might become obstacles to the actions of the combatant units. This dual role of evacuation and care provision meant that the unit's work revolved around both movement and stasis—the former in the evacuation process, the latter to aid caregiving and the recovery of health and fitness. Both these priorities shaped the relationships of RAMC servicemen with the landscape, requiring them to interact with it in two key ways, through manipulation and negotiation. This chapter considers each of these forms of interaction within the context of two different landscapes, the Western Front and the Egyptian desert. Using the memoirs and diaries of RAMC servicemen, it examines how descriptions of landscape and, the work undertaken within it, were used by these men to construct definitions of medical service which emphasised the physical and emotional labour of their roles. This, in turn, enabled these men to lay claim to a particular subjective space within the landscapes of war, one in which they were comrades in service rather than 'slackers in khaki'.

THE LINE OF EVACUATION

To understand how landscapes shaped the work and identities of RAMC servicemen, it is necessary to examine the logistical and strategic place they occupied. The work of these men took place primarily along the lines of communication which formed part of the chain of evacuation from No Man's Land to hospital.¹¹ This stretched across three zones, the

collecting zone, occupied by the field units, the evacuation zone, corresponding with the Line of Communication (LoC), and the distribution zone, comprising the Base area, Home hospitals and convalescence (Fig. 7.1).

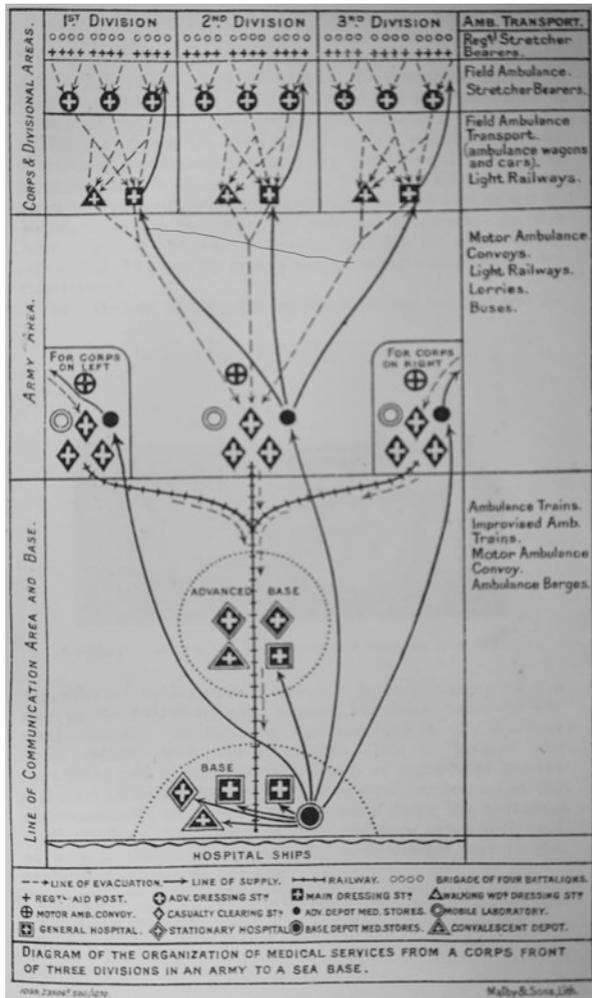


Fig. 7.1 Diagram of the organisation of medical services, W. G. Macpherson, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services General History*, Vol. 2 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921), 17

The *Royal Army Medical Corps Training* manual (1911), which served as the basis for training both officers and men of the Corps, acknowledged the fundamental nature of the relationship between the specialised work of the Army Medical Service (AMS) and the landscape in which they served. For example, specific considerations for the placement of each post along the line of evacuation were laid out in some detail. In the collecting zone, the Regimental Aid Posts (RAPs), the purview of the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO), were the first point of call for wounded men. Here they received the first medical assessment of their wound which was then classified and redressed.¹² The position of RAPs was decided by the RMO in consultation with the regimental, battalion or divisional commanding officer. It was to be placed 'as far forwards as consistent with reasonable safety. The range of rifle and shellfire and the configuration of the country must be carefully considered'.¹³ Proximity to artillery positions was to be avoided to minimise the chance of the post being hit by enemy fire, although in reality this was nearly impossible as the geography which made a site suitable for an aid post was very similar to that which made it a suitable gun emplacement. Low-lying ground was deemed most suitable as it avoided men having to be carried uphill, and water was often more easily available. Woods were to be avoided as they made dressing stations more difficult for bearers and the walking wounded to find. Nearby water and supplies of straw or grass for the wounded to lie on were desirable, as was a location readily accessible to wheeled vehicles. Ideally, RAPs and dressing stations, the next stop along the evacuation route for wounded men, would be located 'in suitable buildings. Such buildings should be easy of access; clean or capable of being readily cleaned and prepared for the reception of wounded; possess means of ventilation, and if possible, of lighting, warming, and cooking. Suitability for ready expansion of the dressing station is important'.¹⁴ Thus, the landscape was called upon to provide protection, accessibility, necessities for the provision of care and the potential for modification as the need arose. In reality, of course, many of these requirements were impossible to meet. RAPs were often little more than dugouts in the front line of trenches, while dressing stations were often exposed, with little access to either necessities of care or space for expansion.

Clearing Hospitals, or Casualty Clearing Stations (CCSs) as they became known after 1915, were the next stage along the line of evacuation. As the pivot 'upon which the removal of the sick and wounded turns',¹⁵ these were far larger establishments, requiring accommodation in

suitable buildings or in tents with a minimum camping space of 240 yards by 190 yards to accommodate 200 sick and wounded. As with dressing stations, ‘the area must permit of great expansion, as a clearing hospital may be required to take in many more sick and wounded’.¹⁶ CCSs were their own established unit within the RAMC and had always been more static than the dressing stations, set up and run by the tent subdivisions of Field Ambulances. In the early years of the war, they rapidly evolved, as noted by Mark Harrison, into ‘semi-permanent fixtures’. From October 1914, ‘CCSs gained bedsteads, trained nurses, more surgical equipment, and specialist surgeons. By the end of the year there were eight such units [increased from the original six sent out in August] doing relatively advanced surgical work at the front’.¹⁷ By 1915, units could accommodate between 500 and 1,000 patients and their staff consisted of seven medical officers, a quartermaster, a dentist, a pathologist, and seventy-seven other ranks, as well as seven professional nurses from the Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS). Under the influence of Consulting Surgeon Sir Anthony Bowlby, CCSs became nuclei ‘around which a larger surgical organization could be formed’.¹⁸ Working in pairs from late 1915, CCSs were able to offer forward treatment and care to men suffering from a variety of wounds, including shock, bleeding, lung wounds and soft-tissue injuries. For men with abdominal wounds, where movement dramatically increased the mortality rate, retention and care closer to the front line had an important impact on survival rates. Thus, the increased size of establishment and sophistication of surgery meant that more wounded men both needed to and could be retained for longer, rather than being rapidly evacuated to the base. As a consequence, despite the change of name from hospital to clearing station in 1915 to better reflect their role in the evacuation process, CCSs in fact developed into increasingly static sites of care, a fact which influenced their relationship with the landscapes in which they sat.

MANIPULATING

The growing size and stasis of the CCS meant that the landscape increasingly had to accommodate the unit rather than the unit altering to fit the landscape. This was in contrast to the stationary field hospital, the equivalent unit from the Second Anglo-Boer War, which, as Frederick Treves noted in *The Tale of a Field Hospital* (1912), followed Headquarters, in the case of No. 4 Field Hospital from Chieveley to Spearman’s Farm and

back again. In Treves' memoir, the landscape over which the hospital travelled, and the locations where it established itself, defined the experiences of both travel and care.¹⁹ While this remained in many ways true for the more mobile medical establishment of the Field Ambulance during the First World War, the existence and strategic centrality of the much larger CCS units brought about a change in the RAMC's relationship with the landscape. While the mobility and flexible structure of the Field Ambulance, formed of three sections, each divided into a bearer and tent subsection, enabled, to some extent, the use of the extant landscape in the setting up of dressing stations, the RAMC increasingly found itself manipulating the landscape to enable it to undertake its dual duties of evacuation and care, the imperatives which coalesced around the role of the CCS.

While RAPs were located in or very near the front line trenches, and dressing stations made flexible use of abandoned buildings and other existing features of the landscape, the location of most CCSs was defined by one of two specific landmarks, with 'most being located at the junction of the collecting and evacuation zones, usually near a railway terminus or the confluence of several roads from the front'.²⁰ This type of location emphasised the role of the unit as a pivot point for the movement of men along the line of evacuation, a role which required good transport links. While railheads were necessary, navigable roads were equally important, as they allowed men to be brought down from dressing stations by ambulance wagon, and later ambulance car, as well as being transported on further down the line, either by the same method or via ambulance train or hospital barge. The quality of these roads was particularly important for the care of the wounded, with the jolting of poorly-sprung ambulances over badly-maintained roads often proving lethal to men at risk of haemorrhage.²¹

Thus, one of the jobs undertaken by men serving with the RAMC was that of construction. J. W. Upton, a private with the 137th Field Ambulance, was, on one occasion, detailed 'up to the Regimental Aid Post which was practically in the line', not to help care for the wounded there, but to 'dig a place in a bank, to enable a Ford Ambulance car to take shelter whilst waiting for "cases"'.²² Norman Femor, serving near Albert, found himself undertaking 'a different job for a time helping the Engineers dig a large Dugout with two Entrances. They dug and we carried it all out'.²³ The 2/1st London Field Ambulance similarly helped to build the dugout which served as 'B' section's advanced dressing station in Hebuterne in May 1916.²⁴

It was not only roads and dugouts that RAMC servicemen were called upon to construct, however. Sites of caregiving along the lines of evacuation needed to both move and expand to meet the growing demands placed upon them. As a result, men such as Walter Bentham often found themselves undertaking fatigues such as ‘clearing all the wreckage and making a good entrance’ to an abandoned building which was to be the winter headquarters of No. 8 Field Ambulance at Hoograff in 1915.²⁵ On the Western Front, this sort of repurposing of abandoned or damaged structures, which offered some sort of protection against shellfire, was not only common but often creative. The bearers at the headquarters of the 2/1st London Field Ambulance, for instance, found themselves, during the Arras offensive, ‘located in a deep chalk cave at Wancourt, which certainly provided better shelter than the usually very temporary and unprotected bivouac, but the atmosphere of the cave was—well, to put it mildly—not particularly healthy’.²⁶ Not all locations pre-existed, however. As we have seen, CCSs and other large hospital units could be formed of tents covering a large area of land and requiring the installation of amenities such as pathways, incinerators and cook-houses (Fig. 7.2).²⁷

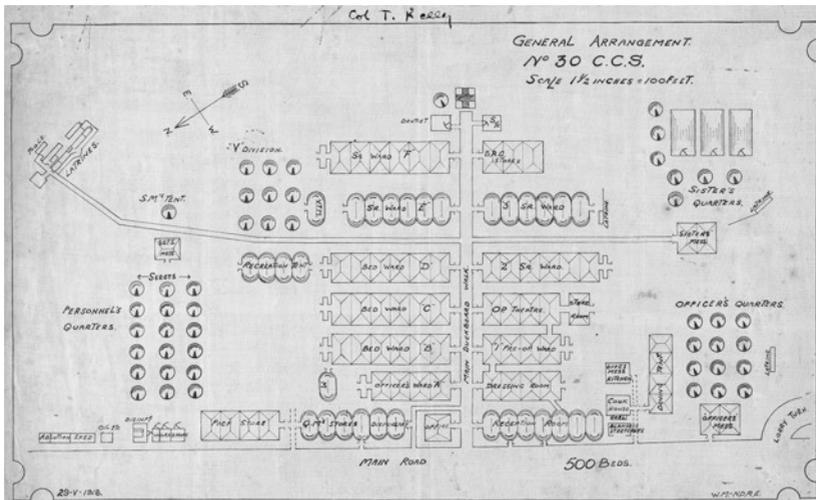


Fig. 7.2 General arrangement of No. 30 CCS, France, Wellcome Images, Wellcome Library, London, L0044173

In Egypt, drainage was a necessity in an effort to combat mosquitoes.²⁸ The comparatively sparse population outside the major conurbations in this theatre meant that tented units were extremely common. As Pt. W. M. Lamb wrote of his time in Palestine, ‘Tent pitch and hard work [were often] the order of the day’.²⁹ Where possible, the landscape, as in France, was utilised to protect static encampments. Thus, the dressing station that Lamb built on 14 April was ‘in a gully, or whadi as it is called here’.³⁰ Later, he would find himself serving in a monastery near Jerusalem which had been turned into a hospital.³¹ Like the 2/1st London Field Ambulance and Bentham, Lamb both utilised and manipulated the landscape in which he found himself. In Egypt and Palestine, as on the Western Front, the work of RAMC servicemen in static sites of caregiving was defined by the need of the units to adapt to the landscape as well as by the labour of shaping the landscape to suit the unit.

While this role as labourer may seem divorced from the medical imperatives of evacuation and care, it was nonetheless significant in structuring RAMC rankers’ identities as servicemen. As Rob Thompson has argued, the work of the majority of British servicemen on the Western Front was that of the labourer rather than the soldier. The dominance of daily chores, known in the British military as fatigues, and working parties meant that the work of construction, which shaped many men’s civilian lives, was also a significant theme of their military experiences.³² In undertaking such manual labour, RAMC servicemen like Upton and Femor were serving in exactly the same way as their combatant colleagues, without arms or killing, but in the service of the national military endeavour. Such service, and the physical labour on which it was based, formed one way in which RAMC servicemen viewed their war work as an appropriately masculine form of service, equal to that of the combatant.

NEGOTIATING

The equivalence of service between combatant and medical service men has also been identified in the shared experience of trauma that both encountered.³³ Yet while Lamb wrote that during his time serving in the operating theatre in the monastery he ‘saw some dreadful sights’,³⁴ that period of the campaign was, for him, dominated less by the emotional labour of medical care than by a routine of ‘putting up camps, receiving wounded then evacuating them by any transport available [...] then

moving forward'.³⁵ The war of movement that Lamb experienced might appear, on the face of it, very different from the stasis that has tended to define the war, particularly on the Western Front. Yet, as we have already seen, movement was central to the work of RAMC rankers on all fronts. The work of men like Upton in constructing roads and turning places was intended to ease the flow of traffic across the landscape. The process of clearing the battlefield that this enabled was as important a military priority as the movement of troops and supplies. Indeed, it was this process of moving wounded men which most clearly defined the RAMC ranker's, and more particularly the stretcher bearer's, relationship with the landscape. This relationship was, above all, one of negotiation.

The need for the stretcher bearer to negotiate landscapes in order to do his duty was acknowledged from the start of these men's service. The syllabus laid out for training camps in the RAMC training manual included five hours of drill, exercises and lectures related to the removal of the sick and wounded from battlefield to base.³⁶ As part of this drill men were to be 'exercised in carrying the loaded stretcher over various obstacles, and taught the methods most suitable for the safe carriage of the patients'.³⁷ Exercises were, therefore, to be carried out over 'rough ground' with 'special attention [... being] paid to the carriage of the stretcher so as to keep it level and avoid jolting or unnecessary swaying'.³⁸ The *Guide to Promotion for Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of the RAMC*, a privately produced training manual which summarised the information contained in the official training manual, included a seven-question interrogation of how a stretcher should be carried up and down hill, as well as over uneven ground, with emphasis placed on the fact that, 'under all circumstances' the stretcher should be carried in a horizontal position. This was to be achieved 'by practising the carriage of stretchers over uneven ground until the bearers become trained and habituated to perform this duty with ease and dexterity and comfort to the patient'.³⁹ The guide also contains a six-step description of how to carry a loaded stretcher across a ditch, with the emphasis again placed on maintaining the stretcher in as flat a horizontal position as possible under all circumstances.⁴⁰

This, of course, wasn't always possible, as stretcher bearers themselves recalled. C. Midwinter's memoirs of the 32nd Field Ambulance noted that 'carrying in the wounded on Gallipoli, under fire, was terribly hard work. The ground made the going very rough. Stretchers had to be lowered over ledges, steered through narrow paths and thorn bushes'.⁴¹

H. L. Chase's history of the 2/1st London Field Ambulance describes the work of the bearer companies at Ypres in August 1917 as:

an almost overwhelming task [involving] carrying wounded through Sanctuary and Chateau Woods past the Hooze Crater and down the Menin Road, where they were met by the motor ambulances which relieved them of their loads and then sped away down the Menin Road [...] while the bearers returned to the regimental aid posts for more wounded. The carrying track was nothing more than a single line of duck-boards winding its way along through a veritable sea of mud, and one false step might well have proved fatal, as was evident from the numbers of drowned men (and horses) who could at intervals be seen almost completely submerged in that dreadful swamp.⁴²

George Swindell similarly recalled the effects of weather: 'it was easy carrying wounded on a stretcher, on dry duck-boards, but when the rain had soaked them, and also washed some pieces of mud onto them, it was like trying to walk, [*sic*] the greasy pole'.⁴³

Nor was it only wet that caused problems for stretcher bearers trying to negotiate the landscape. Swindell described one valley he had to travel through as covered with 'earth [which] from the continual explosions, was like breadcrumbs. [...] T]here were no dug-outs, or anything in it, the two sides of the valley, were just earth colour, not a bit of colour for hundreds of yards, the shell holes, linked, and over lapped, the whole length'.⁴⁴ Such landscapes made the safe and comfortable transport of patients additionally challenging as a lack of landmarks was deeply problematic for men whose work required 'walking backwards and forwards all day'.⁴⁵ If they were acting as stages in a relay over long distances, they additionally needed to be able to accurately pinpoint where to meet the next company of bearers or the rendezvous with motor ambulances.

The visualisation of landscape was thus an important element to the process of medical evacuation. Stretcher bearers had to be able to identify and note 'ground suitable for moving wounded to or over',⁴⁶ while officers had to be able to evaluate landscapes in order to successfully locate aid posts and dressing stations, as well as communicating these locations and landscapes to those who would need to traverse them. RAMC officer training included military as well as medical training, with lectures on 'the working of the lines of communication, with special reference to the evacuation of the wounded, provision of hospitals, etc., selection of routes for evacuation of sick and wounded, and the

general principles which regulate their choice' and 'map reading and simple field sketching [...] the object in view being to enable an officer to reach a point indicated by reference to a map, to describe the proposed site of a hospital, etc., or to send in a rough sketch of such things as a dressing station, a hospital site, or a building with its surroundings and approaches, according to the accepted methods'.⁴⁷ For both officers and men, therefore, the ability to evaluate and communicate the landscapes over which evacuation and within which treatment would occur were vital skills.

While the development of these skills in officers via staff training might suggest that these were general medical skills, the ability to evaluate and negotiate landscapes often developed into a specialist one over the course of the war. Delays in the evacuation of the wounded, caused by problems of negotiating landscapes, had significant consequences both for individual wounded men and battlefield logistics.⁴⁸ Yet the shifting nature of the landscape defined the speed of the evacuation process. Bearers used damaged buildings, groups of trees and even dead and rotting corpses as landmarks for their journeys. On the Western Front, as land was fought over and bombarded again and again, this intimate landscape could alter on a daily, or even an hourly basis, affecting men's ability to move through it successfully. Lost bearer units were not uncommon, delaying the speed with which a wounded man was collected and transported successfully to a point where he could be treated, thereby affecting the ultimate success of such treatment.⁴⁹ The bearers of the 6th London Field Ambulance '[r]egularly [...] lost our way [on the Somme], the one and only landmark being High Wood [...]. I recall one journey when my squad toiled for seven solid hours carrying one case from the aid-post near Eaucourt to High Alley'.⁵⁰

If the problems of negotiating landscapes for RAMC servicemen on the Western Front were defined primarily by rain and damage, those in Egypt were similarly shaped by sand and distance. The slipperiness of muddy duckboards was nothing compared to the difficulties of walking through sand with a wounded man as a burden. W. D. Fothergill recalled, 'during our trek across the Sinae Desert [...] being issued with snow shoes as an experiment to see if we could make better progress in the sand—we didn't. We also had sledges drawn by mules to carry the sick and wounded but eventually got Model T Ford ambulances which ran on "roads" made by laying down ordinary rabbit netting on top of the sand—it worked'.⁵¹ Charles Ammons also recalled the invention of the

'wire road' '[t]o ease the movement of vehicles, animals and men in the loose sands [...]. This consisted of mesh chicken wire pegged down at the edges and it fulfilled its purpose admirably of keeping wheels and feet on the surface'.⁵² Even so, officers such as W. Brown and R. C. Evans spent a great deal of time experimenting with alternative forms of transportation to enable greater ease of evacuating the wounded, including a variety of sleighs and wheeled stretchers, mainly to replace the camel cacolets, detested for their lack of comfort or convenience and their tendency, like the *pavé* roads of France, to cause further pain and injury to patients transported in them.⁵³ Visual negotiation also linked RAMC servicemen's relationships to the landscapes of Egypt and the Western Front. While shelling constantly altered the visual landscape of France and Flanders, making negotiation difficult for stretcher bearers, the featurelessness of the desert had a similar effect in Egypt. The dangers of bearers becoming lost in the landscape were just as great.

In the face of these problems, RAMC stretcher bearers took great pride in their ability to successfully negotiate the landscape during long carries. Swindell recalled numerous cases of men who thanked him for his work in carrying them down, including one man who was:

fifteen stone, some odd pounds, in his skin, and all his clothes muddy, and wet, My he was a weight, turn and turn about we carried him, the further we went in the slithering mud, the heavier he seemed to get, [...] we arrived down at last, he was in a bad way, well thanks mates, the chaps up the line don't half call you some names, I did too, but I didn't know what you had to do, and I withdraw now all I ever said.⁵⁴

Swindell's response to another man who wanted to give him something in return for his labour was 'we don't do our job for that, we do it as our share of this job'.⁵⁵ As with the labour of manipulating the landscape, the effort of negotiating it enabled RAMC servicemen to construct themselves as comrades in service despite the fact that the nature of their service meant that they could not be seen as comrades in arms.

CONCLUSION

RAMC servicemen of the First World War served within a variety of landscapes which shaped the nature of the work they undertook. In all these landscapes, however, their work was underpinned by the dual

priorities of military medical care, to heal the wounded in order to return them to service and to evacuate the battlefield of wounded to facilitate combat. These two potentially conflicting imperatives of stasis and movement meant that medical servicemen's relationships with the landscape were defined by their need to manipulate it and negotiate it. Hospitals where care could be undertaken had to be placed within a landscape which then needed to adapt to the requirements of these sites to expand. The road and rail networks, along which these hospitals were placed, had to be created and maintained to enable the movement of men along the line of evacuation. However, this movement often had to adapt to the landscape, as medical servicemen learned to negotiate mud, sand, ditches and distance without getting lost in order to evacuate their patients.

The labour involved in both manipulation and negotiation was often intense and, for many RAMC servicemen, memorable. Importantly, it enabled them to define themselves as inhabiting appropriately masculine service identities in wartime. The building of hospitals and roads was the equivalent of the manual labour of combatant working parties, while the effort of carrying a wounded man under fire was an alternative form of effortful, even self-sacrificial, service in time of war. The landscapes of war thus shaped not only the roles but also the identities of RAMC servicemen in wartime. Given the centrality of landscape to both the work and character of medical service provision in the British military during the First World War, it is little wonder that landscape should form such a significant element of the records left by these men. It was, for many, the landscape which turned them from 'poultice wallahs' into comrades in service.

NOTES

1. Frank Ridsdale, *Diary*, 5–7 October 1917, Liddle/WW1/GS/1355, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.
2. Ridsdale, 13 August 1917, 2 August 1918.
3. Ridsdale, 13 August 1917.
4. Dennis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 80–106.
5. Rudyard Kipling, "Sappers," in *The Collected Poems of Rudyard Kipling* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 451.
6. *Convention for the Amelioration for the Condition of the Wounded of Armies in the Field*, Geneva, 1864, Articles 1 and 2.

7. George Swindell, *In Arduis Fidelus: Being the Story of 4½ Years in the Royal Army Medical Corps*, RAMC 421, Wellcome Library, London, 90.
8. John Blair, *In Arduis Fidelis: Centenary History of the Royal Army Medical Corps* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1998), 42 and Ian Whitehead, *Doctors in the Great War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1999), Chapter 1.
9. Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 53; Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5–6; and Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front, 1914–18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 10.
10. Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 89.
11. W. G. Macpherson, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services General History*, Vol. 1 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921), 9–10.
12. Most wounded arrived at aid posts with a First Field Dressing on the wound. This would have been applied by the man himself, one of his comrades or one of the regimental stretcher bearers whose duty it was to clear No Man's Land of wounded. None of these men would have had more than a very basic training in first aid and conditions meant that such dressings were usually filthy by the time men arrived at the aid post.
13. War Office, *Royal Army Medical Corps Training 1911* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1915), 113.
14. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 113.
15. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 125.
16. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 125.
17. Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33.
18. Harrison, 32.
19. Frederic Treves, *Tale of a Field Hospital* (London: Cassell and Company, 1912).
20. Harrison, *The Medical War*, 33.
21. Ana Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55–56.
22. J. W. Upton, *Diary*, RAMC 1750, Wellcome Library, London, 8.
23. Norman Fermor, "Personal Experience of an N.C.O. in Charge of Stretcher Squads R.A.M.C. Field Ambulance on the Western Front During World War One Including 12 Miracle Escapes," RAMC 1781, Wellcome Library, London, 5.

24. H. L. Chase, *The 2/1st London Field Ambulance: An Outline of the 4½ Years of Service of a Unit of the 56th Division at Home and Abroad During the Great War* (London: Morton, Burt & Sons, 1924), 24–25.
25. Walter Bentham, Diary, 16 September 1915, RAMC 2010, Wellcome Library, London.
26. Chase, *The 2/1st London Field Ambulance*, 46.
27. Harrison, *The Medical War*, 36.
28. Harrison, 354–55.
29. William Murray Lamb, Diary, 14 April 1917, Liddle/WW1/GS/912, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.
30. Lamb, 16 April 1917.
31. Lamb, 24 November 1917.
32. Rob Thompson, “‘By the leave o’ the ground’: The Engineers at Third Ypres,” Leeds Legacies of War Seminar Series Video, 1:17:29, posted 9 December 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coQ3wTU2ypc>, accessed 18 August 2017, 38:15–40:30.
33. Leo van Bergen, *Before My Helpless Sight: Suffering, Dying and Military Medicine on the Western Front* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 401; Carol Acton and Jane Potter, “‘These frightful sights would work havoc in one’s brain’: Subjective Experience and Trauma in First World War Writings by Medical Personnel,” *Literature and Medicine* 30, no. 1 (2012): 61–85; and Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, 61–9.
34. Lamb, *Diary*, 24 November 1917.
35. Lamb, 11–15 November 1917.
36. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 10–11.
37. S.T. Beggs, *Guide to Promotions for Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps* (London: Gale & Polden, 1914), 61.
38. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 211, 221.
39. Beggs, *Guide to Promotions*, 165–66.
40. Beggs, 166–67.
41. C. Midwinter, *1914–1919 Memoirs of the 32nd Field Ambulance 10th (Irish) Division* (Bexleyheath: G. E. Foulger, 1933), 22.
42. Chase, *The 2/1st London Field Ambulance*, 56.
43. Swindell, *In Arduis Fidelus*, 95.
44. Swindell, 215.
45. Swindell, 224.
46. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 9.
47. *Royal Army Medical Corps Training*, 5–6.
48. Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, 25–28.
49. Damage to the landscape affected motor transport as well as manual carries. Shell-damaged roads created delays and disruptions and ambulance journeys could be fatal, with poorly-sprung ambulances, many converted

- from private motor cars, and the *pavé* roads of Northern France and Flanders combining to turn the movement of the evacuation process through the landscape into a painful, and even lethal, experience for the patient. See Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, 56.
50. *6th London Field Ambulance (47th London Division) History*, RAMC 801/20/5, Wellcome Library, London, 2.
 51. W. D. Fothergill, *Memoir*, Liddle/WWI/GS/0575, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, 4.
 52. C. C. Ammons, *Service in the First World War*, RAMC 1599, Wellcome Library, London, 18.
 53. W. Brown, *Letters and Diary*, 23 February 1917, 28 February 1917, Liddle/WWI/GS/19, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds; Midwinter, *1914–1919 Memoirs*, 48.
 54. Swindell, *In Arduis Fidelus*, 149–50.
 55. Swindell, 149.

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Scientists in Uniform: The German Military and the Investigation of the Ottoman Landscape

Oliver Stein

This chapter deals with an understanding of landscape as an area which has to be discovered, investigated and exploited. In the case of the German investigation in the Middle East, the specific conditions created by the war improved a cross-cultural encounter with the Ottoman landscape in a way that German scientists in the region had hardly accessed previously. Nevertheless, long before the First World War, the landscape of the Ottoman Empire had been a focal point for Western researchers from a diverse range of disciplines. The outbreak of war, however, interrupted most of these studies but they were replaced, for the duration of war, with various research measures initiated directly by the German military or by members of the German military. These measures included research in both the humanities, where archaeology took on a particular importance,¹ as well as in the natural sciences. The latter is to be the focus of the present chapter, which relies on personal papers and testimonials, military files and printed sources. This chapter

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aims to address the various forms of scientific analysis of the Ottoman Empire undertaken by German military members in order to investigate their intentions and to carve out the particularity of such research under the conditions of war and in the context of the German–Ottoman alliance.

GERMAN OFFICERS AND SCIENTISTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

For many decades before the First World War, German researchers had been active alongside their British and French counterparts in the Ottoman Empire. Many German explorers, for example, toured the land in the nineteenth century. Archaeologists soon followed them, who undertook a series of significant excavations, beginning especially after the turn of the century.² The German engagement during the construction of the Berlin–Baghdad express from 1903 also brought numerous engineers and geologists to the Ottoman Empire, whereby economic and research interests increasingly began to overlap.

From the very beginning, Prussian-German officers played a significant role in the analysis of the Ottoman Empire's landscape. From the Prussian military mission of 1836 up until the eve of the First World War, German soldiers came time and again to the country as military instructors. These were typically well-educated officers who were able to ensure the desired knowledge transfer and to train the Ottoman army in the modern military sciences.³ The increasing mechanisation of the Western military gradually lent more importance to the scientific training of the officers, so that many of them qualified as engineers, cartographers or as professionals in other disciplines.⁴ Meanwhile, cartography assumed a particular significance in the Prussian military. Not only did it represent the basis of all of the military staff's work, but it was also essential for analysing regions and for laying out transport routes. As a military instructor in the 1830s, Helmuth von Moltke was already able to establish the important groundwork for the cartographic assessment of the Ottoman region,⁵ which other cartographers, among them Prussian-German officers, could build upon. While military instructors undertook relevant measurements within their military missions, German army members were also specifically commanded, or given leave, to carry out a research trip in the Ottoman Empire. Typically, these officers combined the cartographic recording of the regions with geological, ethnological and archaeological investigations. In men like Walter von Diest,

Max Schlagintweit or Eduard von Hoffmeister, in the decades before the First World War, the character of the officer merged with that of the explorer, driven by research interests. These men were meanwhile guided, as Major Schlagintweit articulated in 1898, by the idea ‘that this work in the service of science is also not lost to the army’.⁶ This tenet was, in addition, not a foreign one to the Prussian-German military leadership, which in the period before the First World War consistently promoted the collaboration between military and academic institutions and geographic societies. The leadership approved of this cooperation even when they did not expect militarily significant results.⁷

Even before the outbreak of the First World War, the work of both civilian German researchers and officers actively researching in the Ottoman Empire could therefore already look back to a decades-old tradition. With the Ottoman Empire’s entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers in the autumn of 1914, however, completely new prospects were opened up to German research in the region. The massively expanded presence of German personnel in the Middle East constituted one fundamental basis for this. While just 42 officers under General Otto Liman von Sanders were located in the Ottoman Empire before the outbreak of war, after November 1914 the extent of the military mission was expanded considerably, and, from 1916 onwards, larger German troop units began reaching the region within the framework of the *Asienkorps*. This amounted to a total of 25,000 German soldiers that were deployed to the Ottoman Empire throughout the duration of the war.⁸ Among them were not only career officers who were educated in the sciences but also, as a result of military mobilisation, a great number of men who were researchers in their civilian professions. These men were often reserve officers, who initially received an assignment to a troop that was unrelated to their career. With Germany’s increasing military engagement in the Middle East, however, the authorities in military leadership placed greater importance on effectively deploying regional experts. Therefore, soldiers who possessed language skills and cultural knowledge were in particular demand, such that many who had previously been to or researched the Middle East were ultimately requested for service in the military mission or in the German *Asienkorps*. These soldiers were mostly orientalists, geographers, geologists and archaeologists. For example, General Field Marshal von der Goltz, who had taken command of Turkish forces on the Iraq front in 1915, systematically brought archaeologists with advanced regional knowledge into his staff as officers.⁹ The networks of researchers,

which had already evolved in peacetime, were similarly harnessed; the influential orientalist Karl Heinrich Becker, for instance, or institutions like the Academy of Sciences and the Department for Oriental Languages, both in Berlin, campaigned for the transfer of young Orient scholars from the Western Front to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰ Oftentimes, the young scholars took the initiative into their own hands and volunteered for war deployment to the Ottoman Empire. For these men, like the orientalists Franz Babinger and Hellmut Ritter, this was a convenient opportunity to gain personal acquaintance and experience within the country of their university studies at minimal financial expense.¹¹ The largely uninvestigated landscape of the Ottoman Empire, however, was also appealing to researchers whose studies were not directly related to the Middle East. The epidemiologist Ernst Rodenwaldt, for example, requested a transfer to Turkey because he believed his work to be stagnating on the Western Front, whereas he anticipated an interesting and novel scope of duties in the Orient.¹²

Regional experts were frequently assigned to the Ottoman Empire for staff employment and interpreter services; however, they were also deployed for expeditions, inspections and service in military line units. As personal testimonials show, most researchers continued to devote themselves to their research areas alongside their main duties and used every opportunity to profit from their war service. The archaeologists, for instance, who were deployed both on and behind the front, utilised their free time for excavations.¹³ The research that was able to be carried out, however, was dependent on the opportunities offered: Hellmut Ritter, active as a translator in the Army High Command in Baghdad, was able to observe the Tigris from his office very well, which led to an ethnographic article, accompanied by extensive photographic documentation, in the magazine *Der Islam* about Arab river vessels.¹⁴ The Semitist Arthur Schaade represents another example, who, being deployed in Syria as a translator and officer, devoted himself, alongside his duties, to phonetically recording chapters from the Bible according to the dictation of a Samaritan priest.¹⁵

PURPOSES OF RESEARCH

While soldiers with civilian professions as researchers thus carried out studies, as it were, alongside their service, the military simultaneously ensured that researchers in uniform were deployed for war-conditioned

and research-related tasks in the Ottoman Empire. In this process, it was primarily scientists that were of interest to the military, in particular geologists, meteorologists and medical professionals. Furthermore, additional scientists were sent from the German Empire to Turkey on the initiative of civilian institutions. However, there was still a lack of a superior, overarching agency that could coordinate the service of all of these military and civilian researchers.¹⁶ Although this circumstance was criticised by both civilians and the German military mission, nothing was changed until shortly before the conclusion of the war.¹⁷ The official activity of these researchers was largely determined by the demands and necessities of war. Nonetheless, the needs of the military and of its leadership frequently became an inspiration and a catalyst for scientific research, as shall be demonstrated in the following examples from various disciplines.

The deployment of German medical professionals and hygienists was an urgent necessity in the face of the extreme danger of epidemics and the poor state of Ottoman sanitary conditions in the field. The doctors who were sent, however, not only provided for the medical treatment of troops, but also undertook investigations in the regions that fell under their responsibility.¹⁸ One of these many expeditions was that of the Medical Corps Major Ernst Rodenwaldt, who systemically recorded the malaria infestation of the Meander Valley in Asia Minor.¹⁹ Far-reaching plans for the time after the war arose out of Rodenwaldt's successful collaboration with the Ottoman agencies. The Turks offered to build him a large German research institute in Smyrna (Izmir), in which several significant German medical institutes would participate. With the commitment of the Prussian Cultural Ministry, the construction of such an institution was organised in 1917/1918. Concurrently, furthermore, there was a plan to establish a botanical and zoological research station.²⁰ Although the war's outcome hindered the implementation of these plans, this example demonstrates how much the collaboration between Germans and Turks, owing to the conditions of war, could become a motor for the scientific activity of Germans in the Ottoman Empire and for knowledge transfer.

This is even more clearly recognisable in the field of meteorology. The use of war meteorologists was necessary for the missions of flying units and for the protection of army units from extreme weather conditions such as floods or sand storms. The weather detachments of German flying units were employed for this purpose. In addition, following a request of the young Turkish leader and war minister

Enver Pasha, German meteorologists within the military mission constructed an imperial Ottoman weather service under the leadership of Professor Erich Obst. At the beginning of their activity, however, the Germans had to overcome the cultural resistance towards the establishment of meteorology. The Sheik ul-Islam, the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire after the Sultan, summoned the German officers and tried to forbid the continuation of their activities, as he believed it was presumptuous to want to meddle with the matters of God. However, with the support of Enver Pasha and based on the reliability of their own weather reports, the meteorologists were able to persuade many sceptics in Turkey of the potential value of their young science. With the construction of the Turkish weather service during the First World War, German meteorologists in uniform achieved an enduring knowledge transfer. Between 1915 and 1918, a broad network of observation stations arose all across the territory of the Ottoman Empire.²¹ Although Turkey disbanded the institution at the end of 1918, years later the Turkish workers who had been trained by the Germans constituted the foundation for the creation of a new Turkish weather service.

Geologists provided a particularly important contribution to the analysis of the Ottoman landscape in the context of war. They were frequently deployed in German survey units and their investigations were designed to support the installation of transport routes and to analyse water supplies. Several well-drilling commandos were regularly en route. In the process, they did not stop at the threshold of science, as the systematic use of water dowsing for the reconnaissance of water wheels in the desert can attest.²² Another significant interest was in the development of coal and oil as fuel for means of transport. German geologists travelled to Mesopotamia in order to search for oil reserves.²³ However, regular German troops in the field also dedicated themselves to this quest for natural resources. For instance, the head of base command in Baghdad, Major Fritz Klein, instructed his subordinate Lieutenant Hermann Blumenau, who was a mining engineer in his civilian profession, to search for coal deposits in Iraq for the supply of the locally-stationed army. It was only through Blumenau's discovery of a lignite deposit near Kifri at the beginning of 1915 that it was possible to sustain steamship transport on the Tigris and Euphrates. Owing to coal shortages, this transport had been on the brink of collapse, but was of central importance to the continuation of Ottoman warfare.²⁴ This case also highlights the way in which the utilisation of German researchers in the Ottoman Empire was not exclusively for the demands of warfare, for purely scientific interests

or for knowledge transfer. Knowing full well that Turkish authorities had specifically thwarted every kind of natural resource investigation before the war, Klein took advantage of the favourable opportunity to assign Lieutenant Blumenau ‘under the protection of the authorities’ commission and his uniform’ to ultimately explore all of Mesopotamia and parts of Anatolia for various kinds of natural resources. Looking towards the post-war period and considering the significant debt that the Ottoman Empire owed to Germany, Klein noted in his war diary that these explorations provided the opportunity to ‘procure records that could be useful even beginning in the peace negotiations’.²⁵ With the charting of natural resources, Klein thus envisioned supplying the German government with a kind of pawn or leverage to be used against the Turks while simultaneously strengthening the implementation of German economic interests. The resulting exploration of oil wells in Kirkuk, ore deposits in Diyarbakir and copper mines near Angora awakened great mistrust among Ottoman authorities, which then subsequently carried over onto the assignments of other German geologists in their empire (Fig. 8.1).

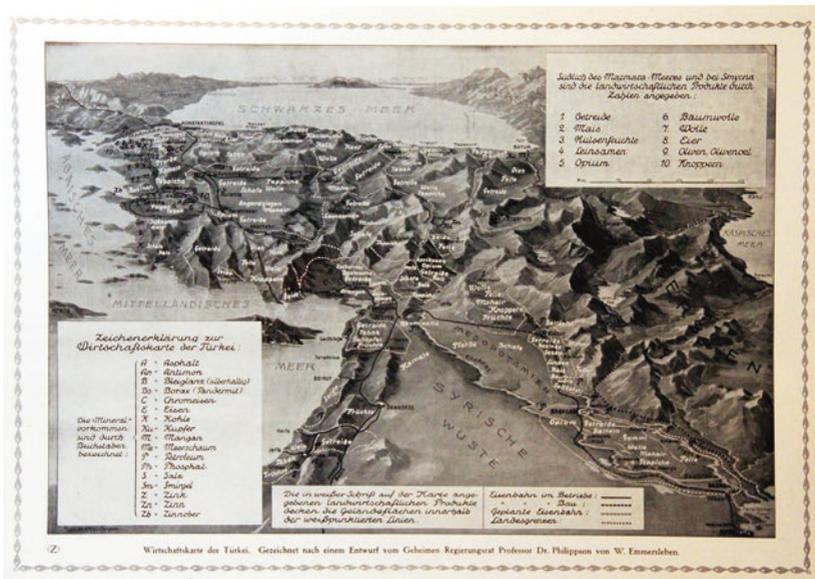


Fig. 8.1 Economic map of the Ottoman Empire, *Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 3803, 18 May 1916

While such individual undertakings were focused on German interests, the Professor of Geology at the University in Constantinople, Walther Penck,²⁶ directed his efforts towards linking Turkish and German economic interests.²⁷ In negotiations with Ottoman ministries and the German and Ottoman military, Penck pursued a plan for a widespread geological survey of Turkey. ‘Such a survey’, wrote Penck in a memorandum for the Foreign Office,

must adopt the character of a Turkish state establishment and must work unconditionally in the interests of Turkey in order to safeguard its own holdings and to dispel the Turk’s existing distrust of geological surveys. It must, however, be under German leadership in order that it is possible to guide the German economic interests in Turkey in the right directions.²⁸

Penck was convinced that it would be decided in the current wartime whether or not German researchers would be able to undertake geological surveys in Turkey in the future. Therefore, he searched for an approach that connected the interests of both sides.²⁹ German researchers benefitted from the situation in which members of the German military mission held leading positions in the Ottoman Army. The Ottoman Chief of General Staff, General Lieutenant Friedrich Bronsart von Schellendorf, for instance, supported Penck’s efforts when he argued that ‘every economic strengthening of Turkey [is] simultaneously a gain in military power’ and, therefore, ‘the work of a geological survey of Turkey [is] also of great military interest’.³⁰ Consequently, Penck was able to carry out his investigations and measurements in far-reaching parts of Turkey with official military support in 1917 and 1918.

If there was neither a strategic purpose nor a political-economic interest behind the research, higher officers of the military mission and of the German *Asienkorps* were also willing to support research measures themselves. The conversation between Walter Penck and Vice Admiral Wilhelm Souchon, who served as the Commander-in-Chief for the Ottoman fleet, clearly exemplifies this point. Upon Penck’s inquiry as to whether the navy could aid him in his oceanographic surveys of the Marmara Sea, Souchon explained his readiness, in statements to the German Imperial Naval Office, to ‘dress up the scientific work in military clothes’,³¹ although he himself could not actually identify a war-related necessity for the research. One year later, Penck was able to commence

his surveys with the support of the navy's personnel and materials. His work was identified from then on as being 'of great military value'.³²

Archaeology, a field which all too clearly lacked any militaristic utility, also benefitted from such a research-friendly attitude on behalf of the military authorities. It was out of this discipline that a fruitful German-Turkish collaboration developed in the form of the *Deutsch-Türkisches Denkmalschutzkommando* (German-Turkish Monument Protection Commando), supported by Djemal Pasha. Also arising out of the field of archaeology was the significant innovation of aerial archaeology, which was first made possible through the close cooperation between researchers, the Prussian War Ministry and German aviation units.³³

An expansive field of scientific activity thus became available to Germans in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War and the military played a central role in the process—partly as instigator and provider, and partly as supporter. This applies naturally to the numerous war-related studies as well as to the geological surveys that were to benefit the economic interests of Germany. As we have seen, this repeatedly led to studies whose research-related interests outweighed a specific application-based purpose. Even in these latter cases, the military often proved itself willing to support this research with its own resources—and sometimes on a grander scale. One of the reasons behind the military's approach to scientific endeavours was the networking that researchers often carried out with public and military institutions. Research initiatives and the support thereof were significantly facilitated through these connections. Additionally, reserve-officer scientists often had access to military decision-makers who, themselves being frequently educated in the natural sciences or humanities, then showed fundamental understanding for research, whether or not it was a military necessity.

RESEARCH WITH COLONIAL ATTITUDE?

There was also a critical cultural-political dimension to scientists' activity. Nations ultimately found themselves in an ongoing competition in the field of research, meaning that questions of prestige, whether with regard to the international public or the Turks, constituted an important motive.³⁴ Despite the existing German-Ottoman alliance, the concern over the reinstatement of British or French competition remained ever-present in the minds of the Germans. Similarly, many worried that the Turks would once again close their country to further scientific

investigation after the war.³⁵ Therefore, it appeared to be especially urgent to further expand Germany's current favoured position or, at least, to take advantage of wartime for their own research irrespective of which discipline this concerned. The conditions of war were exceptionally convenient for this. As members of the German army or the German military mission within the Ottoman Army, objects and areas of investigations were available to researchers that the restrictive Ottoman authorities would have made inaccessible to them as civilians or military members of a foreign power during peacetime. Time and again, the uniform proved itself to be the 'best equipment' for researchers during their investigations.³⁶

The question here is whether a colonial attitude in this context can be detected among Germans in the Ottoman Empire. A look at these individuals' biographies first shows some colonialist traits. A disproportionate number of German officers who were serving in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War had come from the *Schutztruppe*, the German troop force in the African colonies. Similarly, many researchers in uniform had been previously working in the German colonies. Among these men—to mention a few names already introduced here—were doctors like Ernst Rodenwaldt, geographers like Erich Obst or geologists like Carl Uhlig. Additionally, the situation in which, for example, the last two German governors of the colony German New Guinea, Albert Hahl and Eduard Huber, were commissioned as officers in Constantinople for coal mining and raw material extraction,³⁷ reflects not only the triangle of military, economy and science, but also renders apparent the close connection between colonial experience and its appropriation in the Ottoman Empire. Such a utilisation of colonial researchers and economists in the Middle East was quite obvious, since the situation of war prevented their activity in the German colonies and other regions outside of Europe. Ultimately, vast areas of the Ottoman Empire, which were largely uninvestigated by European research, presented themselves during the war years and it was the German scholars that first received access on a large scale. Meanwhile, however, it would be misleading to assume that the Germans' research occupation in the Ottoman Empire was fundamentally based on a colonial ideology,³⁸ even if the Germans' motives and approaches were quite ambivalent. There is no mistaking that the Germans were firmly interested in obtaining cultural and economic influence over the Middle East. Many of the scholarly undertakings performed in the foreign territory could be included in this context.

A dissertation from 1925, with the distinctive title *Deutsche Arbeit in Kleinasien von 1888 bis 1918* (German Work in Asia Minor 1888–1918), summarised the achievements of railway construction, industry, mining and other fields.³⁹ The author of this cultural-geographical study was a lieutenant deployed in 1918 to the Ottoman Empire and who, according to his own account, received a ‘powerful impression’ of the ‘German cultural work’ that was underway there. His use of the term *deutsche Arbeit* (German work) indicates a concept developed during the First World War that assumed a particularly systematic working method with which the Germans were capable of ‘cultivating’ less-developed regions outside of Germany. During the First World War, the German military in the occupied territories of Eastern Europe understood itself as being the bearer of *deutscher Arbeit* and connected this concept with a colonising ideology while simultaneously drawing on the support of numerous scholars in the sciences and humanities.⁴⁰ German activity in the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, did not follow this pattern. The fact that this was not an occupied enemy country, but rather an allied and amicable power was pivotal in this regard. Although demands for colonisation and efforts leading in this direction had existed since the middle of the nineteenth century,⁴¹ German politics and its leading masterminds, in contrast, were much more supportive of strengthening the Ottoman Empire so that they could realise their own imperialistic goal of the so-called ‘peaceful penetration’.⁴² In practice, these politics resulted in a broad spectrum that ranged from efforts towards gaining unfair advantages to honest cooperation and an enduring knowledge and technology transfer. The activity of German scientists in uniform reflected precisely this range. Therefore, just as the implementation of German economic interests in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War made no essential advances in comparison to the pre-war years,⁴³ and consequently cannot be characterised as being exploitative in nature, German scientists’ activity is similarly not to be equated per se with colonial appropriation. And in this sense, the author of the previously-mentioned dissertation argued in his introduction and conclusion that the *deutsche Arbeit* in Asia Minor, which he represented largely as a civilising mission, was ultimately, to be understood, however, as a ‘joint German–Turkish cultural task’, as a ‘collaboration between Germans and Ottomans’.⁴⁴ This cooperative approach separated the service of German researchers in the Ottoman landscape from those in the colonies or in the occupied regions of Eastern Europe.

The Turks themselves admiringly observed the Germans' effective interplay of military, economy and science, which is evidenced in an essay by Cenap Şahabettin. He saw Germany's power as leaning on the pillars of its military and economy and believed that scientific research was the leader of it all.⁴⁵ Turkish authorities then welcomed German research if they themselves could extract a significant gain from its results and the associated knowledge transfer. In some cases, they even provided the initiative themselves, as was the case with the newly established Ottoman weather service. However, the Turkish reactions, similar to the German motives, were quite disparate. In addition to admiration, concerns about cheating or unfair advantages also spread. This concern was based on a decades-long experience with the major Western powers as well as on rising Turkish nationalism. With the increasing presence of Germans in the Ottoman Empire on the one side, and with the Turks' growing self-confidence after the successes in the Dardanelles and at Kut-el-Amara on the other, a general mistrust towards the Germans increased during the second half of the war.⁴⁶ This was related to the activity of German researchers and was not at all limited to scientific investigations that promised an economic use. Art historians and archaeologists, for example, also became suspect either for wanting to appropriate cultural goods or for being spies.⁴⁷

It is important to note, however, that the German side reacted to the Turks' suspicions in the most accommodating way possible. A discussion about acquiring antiquities from the Ottoman Empire for German museums, led by the German military, politicians, museum professionals and archaeologists during the war, casts an interesting light on this. The position prevailed which considered the 'export of antiquities from Turkey as reprehensible'.⁴⁸ As a general rule, the German scientific activity in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War did not lead to exploitative politics in service of pre-existing self-interests. For those who did openly desire such an approach, they had no choice but to hope for the time after the war's conclusion when, as an archaeologist formulated, 'the nonsense with the "Turkish friendship"' would wane once again.⁴⁹ During the war, however, the principle of being considerate of the Turkish ally prevailed.

The results of German studies in the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1918 were very comprehensive and the research was published in part during the war in scientific periodicals.⁵⁰ Related publications were even sponsored by the military towards the war's conclusion:

in September 1918, the *Königlich Preussische Landesaufnahme* (Royal Prussian Land Survey) in the Prussian general staff declared itself prepared to manage printing works free of charge from German formations and offices that participated ‘in regional studies research’ in the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹ While there had long been a lack of an overarching coordination of research in the Ottoman Empire, in 1918, once it was arguably rather too late, a department within the military mission was created whose task was ‘to collect and promote German military members’ regional observations in Turkey and to achieve its economic-political utilisation’.⁵² Just seven weeks later, the Ottoman Empire established a cease-fire with the Entente. During the following evacuation of the German military, some research material was lost. Nonetheless, German researchers were able to draw on their wartime studies for years to come and were able to release many publications after the war’s conclusion, when they were forbidden access to the Ottoman landscape.⁵³

Even beginning in wartime, researchers serving in the army worked vigorously to ensure the mediation and popularisation of their research topics related to the Ottoman Empire. They held lectures in officers’ messes and soldiers’ clubs and wrote articles in army newspapers.⁵⁴ In this sense, they could reach a public that they never would have had access to in peacetime. The fact that the veteran organisation of German soldiers active in the Middle East, the *Bund der Asienkämpfer*, was also opened up to non-military ‘friends of the Orient’, including orientalisists,⁵⁵ and that its newsletter adopted the character of an oriental newspaper in parts, underlines how the military and research in the Ottoman Empire had arrived at a kind of symbiosis.

The exceptional situation of the German–Turkish war alliance enabled German researchers to be active in the Ottoman Empire on a scale that was impossible both before the war and thereafter. The military provided the institutional framework for these studies so that researchers were equipped with a visible authority in the form of their uniform. A part of these duties purely served war-related tasks or the military routine, whereby this often simultaneously resulted in a knowledge and technology transfer to the Turks. The war necessity of natural resource development led to the deployment of German geologists that simultaneously endeavoured to utilise the opportunity for German economic interests. Moreover, the military leadership also supported research propositions that lacked any relevance to the war and that were solely interested in the expansion of scientific findings. The Turkish reactions to the Germans’

activity were diverse and ranged from a desire to cooperate and admiration to mistrust and rejection. While the Germans' motives and behaviours were similarly disparate, their research measures, however, still relied far more on a cooperative approach rather than on a colonialist one.

NOTES

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3. Odile Moreau, "Les ressources scientifiques de l'Occident au service de la modernization de l'armée ottoman (fin XIXe–début XXe siècle)," in "Science, savoirs modernes et pouvoirs dans le monde musulman contemporain," ed. Francois Siino, Special Issue, *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 101–2 (2003): 54–58.
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5. Wilhelm Bonacker, "Helmuth Moltkes Beitrag zur kartographischen Erschließung des Vorderen Orients," *Erdkunde* 3 (1949): 175–77.
6. See Max Schlagintweit, *Reise in Klein-Asien* (Munich: Kriegsministerium, 1898), 36.
7. Axel Griefßmer, "Die kaiserliche Marine entdeckt die Welt: Forschungsreisen und Vermessungsfahrten im Spannungsfeld von Militär und Wissenschaft," *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 59 (2000): 61–98.

8. Jehuda L. Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe: Die preußisch-deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835–1919* (Munich: Droste, 1976), 141.
9. Friedrich Sarre, “Kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit während des Weltkrieges in Mesopotamien, Ost-Anatolien, Persien und Afghanistan,” *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 54 (August 1919): 295 and Walter Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers* (Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1988), 226.
10. Karl Heinrich Becker to Hellmut Ritter, 3 February 1915, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg (StA-Ma), 340 Hellmut Ritter no. 345; letter from the Akademie der Wissenschaften to the Bavarian War Ministry, 29 January 1916, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München (BayHStA) MKr 224; correspondence from the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen to military authorities, 1915, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Berlin (GStA), I. HA Rep. 208 A, no. 467.
11. See the personal records of Dr. Franz Babinger, BayHStA OP 4426.
12. Ernst Rodenwaldt, *Ein Tropenarzt erzählt sein Leben* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1957), 105.
13. Sarre, “Kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit,” 297–302 and Veit Veltzke, *Unter Wüstensöhnen: Die deutsche Expedition Klein im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2014), 85.
14. Hellmut Ritter, “Mesopotamische Studien: Arabische Flußfahrzeuge auf Euphrat und Tigris,” *Der Islam* 9 (1919), 21–46.
15. “Nachruf auf Arthur Schaade,” *Der Islam* 31 (1952): 69–75.
16. Albrecht Alt, “Aus der Kriegsarbeit der deutschen Wissenschaft in Palästina,” *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästinavereins* 43 (1920): 94–95.
17. See letters from General Bronsart von Schellendorff to Prof. Walter Penck, 4 April 1917, Nachlass Walter Penck, Box 865 no. 3, Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig (IfL).
18. See C. Hegler, “Drei Jahre beratender Hygieniker und Kliniker in der Sinaiwüste,” in *Vor 20 Jahren: Von den Dardanellen zum Sues–Mit Marineärzten im Weltkrieg durch die Türkei*, ed. Editorial Staff of the Deutschen Medizinischen Wochenschrift (Leipzig: Thieme, 1935), 165–82.
19. Rodenwaldt, *Tropenarzt*, 139–43, 157–58; Rodenwaldt, *Seuchenkämpfe: Bericht des Hygienikers der V. kaiserlich-ottomanischen Armee* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1921).
20. Rodenwaldt, *Tropenarzt*, 163–64, 187.
21. Ludwig A. Weickmann, “Eine vergessene Mission. Aufbau eines Wetterdienstes im Osmanischen Reich im 1. Weltkrieg” (Unpublished Manuscript, April 2006), 4, BayHStA Nachlass Ludwig F. Weickmann, no. 15; Koppe, “K. O. Wetterdienst,” *Armeen-Zeitung Jildirim*, 22 July 1918; Alt, “Aus der Kriegsarbeit,” 9–98; Ewald Banse, “Die deutsche

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 23. Vincenz Müller, *Ich fand das wahre Vaterland*, ed. Klaus Mammach (Berlin: Deutscher Militärverlag, 1963), 138.
 24. Paul Uhlig, “Deutsche Arbeit in Kleinasien von 1888 bis 1918: Versuch einer kulturgeographischen Zusammenfassung” (PhD diss., University of Greifswald, 1925), 91–102; Edgar Stern-Rubarth, *Aus zuverlässiger Quelle verlautet, ein Leben für Presse und Politik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1964), 85; and Veltzke, *Unter Wüstensöhnen*, 117.
 25. Fritz Klein, *Kriegstagebuch der Karun-Expedition*, 11 February 1915, quoted in Veltzke, *Unter Wüstensöhnen*, 117.
 26. Walther Penck, along with other German academics, was appointed to the University in Constantinople in 1915 for five years and was in service of the Turkish government there. See Klaus Kreiser, *Türkische Studien in Europa* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1998), 195–98.
 27. For more on the exploitation of natural resources in the Ottoman Empire and the relevant German-Ottoman negotiations see Ulrich Trümpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914–1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 317–51.
 28. Memorandum from Walther Penck to Privy Legation Councillor von Löhr, 3 March 1917, Papers of Walther Penck, Box 865 no. 3, IfL.
 29. See the letters from Walther Penck to the Foreign Office, 16 September 1916, printed in Kreiser, *Türkische Studien*, 200–2.
 30. General Bronsart von Schellendorf to Walter Penck, 4 April 1917, Papers of Walther Penck, Box 865 no. 3, IfL.
 31. Walther Penck to his father, 1 April 1917, Papers of Walther Penck, Box 865 no. 3, IfL.
 32. Statement from Headquarters, 13 May 1918, Papers of Walther Penck, Box 865 no. 3, IfL.
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 34. See letters from Walther Penck to Hans von Seeckt, 8 May 1918, Papers of Walther Penck, Box 865, no. 3, IfL.
 35. See letters from Albrecht Penck (Museum für Meereskunde Berlin) to the Prussian Academy of Sciences, 2 April 1917, Papers of Walther Penck, Box 865, no. 3, IfL.
 36. Diary entry from Carl Uhlig, 23 December 1917, Papers of Carl Uhlig, Box 189, no. 15, IfL. Prof. Uhlig travelled through the Ottoman Empire

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37. Ludwig Schraudembach, *Muharebe: Der erlebte Roman eines deutschen Führers im osmanischen Heere 1916/1917* (Munich: Drei Masken-Verlag, 1925), 36.
 38. For more on this concept and on the relation between research and ‘colonial ideology’, see Carsten Gräbel, *Die Erforschung der Kolonien: Expeditionen und koloniale Wissenskultur deutscher Geographen, 1884–1919* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 115–28 and Benedikt Stuchtey, ed., *Science across the European Empires, 1800–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 39. Uhlig, “Deutsche Arbeit.”
 40. Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45 and 58.
 41. Malte Fuhrmann, *Traum vom deutschen Orient: Zwei deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich 1851–1918* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 2006).
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 43. Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 317.
 44. Uhlig, “Deutsche Arbeit,” second page (without page number) and 155.
 45. See Cenap Şahabettin, *Avrûpa mektupları*, Istanbul 1335–1916/1917, 10, quoted in Nurettin Gemici, “Tekinalps Ansicht von deutschen Studenten, Wissenschaftlern und Soldaten im Jahre 1914,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 99 (2009): 133.
 46. Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe*, 186, 201, 228, 239; Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 311.
 47. Stein, “Archaeology and Monument Protection.”
 48. Martin Schede to Theodor Wiegand, 4 July 1918, Papers of Wiegand, Letters, Box 8, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Archive, Berlin.
 49. Martin Schede to Theodor Wiegand, 21 May 1917, Papers of Wiegand, Letters, Box 8, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Archive, Berlin.
 50. See the bibliography in Uhlig, “Deutsche Arbeit,” 156–73.
 51. See the decree of the military mission No. 62, 27 September 1918, BayHStA HS 2255.
 52. Newsletter of the Prussian War Ministry, 9 September 1918, BayHStA MA 95027.

53. For a comprehensive list of relevant literature in the field of geography, that was published between 1919 and 1922, see Banse, “Die deutsche Geographie,” 14–26.
54. See Stein, “‘Orientfahrten’: Deutsche Soldaten im Osmanischen Reich und der Krieg als Reiseerlebnis 1914 bis 1918,” *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 75 (2016): 335.
55. Florian Riedler, “Nationalismus und internationale Sensibilität: Transnationale Akteure und die deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit,” in *Aufbruch ins postkoloniale Zeitalter. Globalisierung und die außereuropäische Welt in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren*, ed. Sönke Kunkel and Christoph Meyer (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 2012), 251–74.



The Home and the World: War-Torn Landscapes and the Literary Imagination of a Bengali Military Doctor in Mesopotamia During the First World War

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Over one million Indians served in the First World War. For many of these men, it was a long way to Mesopotamia from their remote towns and villages across India. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Bengalis had been travelling to Britain as students of medicine, law and literature.¹ During the First World War, most of the Bengali contribution came in the form of participation as military doctors, and through the formation of the Bengal Ambulance Corps in Mesopotamia, the major theatre for most of the Indian soldiers. This chapter examines how the Mesopotamian landscape was imagined and encountered by one such Bengali doctor, Captain Kalyan Mukherji, whose meticulous letters to his mother in Calcutta vividly record his displacement from Bengal to the Middle East during the First World War.²

Mukherji was born in an upper-middle-class family in Calcutta in 1882. He studied medicine first in Calcutta and then in London and

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Liverpool, and subsequently entered the Indian Medical Service (IMS), an organisation then entirely under the control of the British. He worked first as a doctor in the North-West Frontier Province of India, and then transferred to rural Bengal to work on the prevention of malaria. When the war broke out, as a member of the IMS, he was obliged to join the army in his capacity as a military doctor—a duty with which he readily complied. He was part of the Ambulance Corps of the 6th Division of the Indian Expeditionary Force and worked just behind the firing line.

The Indian Expeditionary Force D, comprising entirely of Indian soldiers from various parts of the country, was formed mainly to guard the British oil installations around Abadan, near Basra.³ Initially, and in spite of the Ottoman alliance with the Germans established on 2 August 1914, the Secretary of State for India, Austen Chamberlain, and the former Viceroy, Lord Curzon, did not want Britain to invade Mesopotamia, in order to retain the goodwill of the substantial Muslim population in India. The instructions from Whitehall to W. S. Delamain, Brigadier-General of the 16th Brigade, were ‘to cover the landing of reinforcements, if these should be required’ and ‘to assure the local Arabs of British support against Turkey’. Only if hostilities against Turkey were to materialise, was he to occupy Basra.⁴ Meanwhile, the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge and the Commander-in-Chief of India, Sir Beauchamp Duff, devised a secret mission to transport Indian troops to Mesopotamia, to assist Delamain if the situation so arose. On 10 October 1914, the ‘A’ force set sail for Europe from Bombay. Hidden anonymously amongst the soldiers were the members of the ‘D’ force, whose destination would not be France, but Basra.

On 29 October, the Turkish Navy bombarded Russian Black Sea ports—an action which was seen as a formal declaration of hostilities against the Allies, and the first operations of the British campaign started on 6 November. The Dorsets, Punjabis and Mahrattas battalions, as well as two mountain batteries, defeated and ejected the Turks from Saihan on 15 November, and with further reinforcements, they marched towards Basra.⁵ After the successful British occupation of Basra on 22 November 1914, General Sir George Nixon took command of the British Army, and ordered Major General Charles Townshend to take charge of the Indian Division and lead the army onwards to Kut al-Amara and eventually to Baghdad.

Mukherji reached the port of Basra on 9 April 1915. General Townshend’s small army marched up the Tigris and defeated many

small Ottoman forces, until the disastrous Battle of Ctesiphon in November 1915. The commander of the Ottoman forces in Ctesiphon was Colonel Nureddin, who, along with his four divisions, comprising 18,000 men and 52 guns, had 55 days to prepare their defences. General Townshend's British force consisted of 11,000 men, and he had left some troops to guard the recently captured Kut. After a five-day encounter, both generals ordered a retreat. However, on witnessing the British retreat, Colonel Nureddin ordered his army to follow them to Kut, where he then besieged them. The infamous siege of Kut al-Amara lasted 147 days, and after ration shortages and the outbreak of a typhus epidemic among the British-Indian troops, General Townshend finally surrendered on 29 April 1916. While the latter was then treated comfortably by the Ottoman commander for the remainder of the war, the British and Indian troops were taken prisoner. Mukherji died of typhus in a prisoner of war camp at Ras el-Ain on 18 March 1917, at the age of 34.

Mukherji's maternal grandmother, Mokkhoda Debi, was a minor literary figure in Bengal.⁶ In her eighties when Mukherji died, Mokkhoda Debi published a compelling biography of her grandson, entitled, *Kalyan Pradeep: The Life of Captain Kalyan Kumar Mukherji I.M.S.* (1928), where she compiled all the letters he had written to his mother (her daughter) from Mesopotamia. The content of this book, however, is quite problematic. Not only does she write about Mukherji's childhood, his education in England, his joining of the IMS, and his experience of the war, but she also, in an attempt to trace his background, provides a political and religious history of Bengal from the thirteenth century, and offers a personal critique, which can only be deemed objectionable.⁷ In this chapter, I will concentrate only on Mukherji's writings from Mesopotamia. I will demonstrate how, as a native of India, and equipped with an English education and exposure to European cultural hegemony in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bengal, Mukherji negotiated his disappointment upon his confrontation with the war-ravaged landscape of Mesopotamia, which fell short of his pre-existing, imagined (exotic) literary landscape, fostered by readings of *Arabian Nights*.

Historian and theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the (colonised) Indian's autobiography was a 'public' exercise, which focussed on what was 'modern' and 'national', without providing a personal and confessional voice, thus providing an incomplete picture of the 'real' experience.⁸

Unlike his fellow Indian doctors who had returned from England, Mukherji never wrote an extensive autobiography or memoir of his experiences abroad, and it is not known whether he had maintained a diary about his experiences in Mesopotamia.⁹ His letters are his only existing ego-documents, and unlike retrospective autobiographies from people with similar experiences in this period, his letters were personal, giving vent to his innermost emotions, disappointments, anxieties, hope and anger. Ashis Nandy has written about how colonised Indians ‘did not always try to correct or extend the Orientalists; in their own diffused way, they tried to create an alternative language of discourse’.¹⁰ Mukherji’s Mesopotamia is an innately psychological category, built by his deep reading of *Arabian Nights* in several languages, the Middle Eastern landscape of the Bible, and the representation of the Orient in the writings of English authors. Of course, against the very real backdrop of a war, this rich jumble of mostly cultural and imagined landscapes crumbled.

In the first part of this chapter, I will examine Mukherji’s alternative language of discourse, his disappointment with the real geographical entity compared to his imaginings, and I will trace how his discourse changed from being a subtle alternative to a vehement opposition. In the second part of the chapter, I will further establish how Mukherji attempted to reconcile himself with the real Mesopotamian landscape, by offering a scathing indictment of patriotism, and condemning the colonial ambitions of the British and the French.

THE ROSES OF BASRA: LITERARY IMAGINATION VERSUS REALITY

Mukherji’s first letter home from Mesopotamia was written on 13 April 1915, right after he reached Basra. He immediately plunged into interjections of disappointment and surprise:

Arre Ram! [Dear god!] Can this be the Basra of Caliph Haroun al-Rashid? Chhi, chhi! [Shame, shame!] There is not the faintest sign of the famous roses of Basra. Rather there are [...] these little shallow creeks, which are filled with knee- or waist-deep water from the Tigris. Each of these creeks is probably home to lakhs [hundred thousand] of frogs. These frogs are small, large, and medium; most of them are large bullfrogs. They have such a terrible croak! They deafen the ears. Men cannot hear each other talk.¹¹

Evidently, like most educated middle-class Bengalis, Mukherji had grown up reading *Arabian Nights*, and for him, as for every Bengali child,

Mesopotamia was the stage where all the action of the book unravelled. In his four years of training as a medical doctor between 1907 and 1910 in London and Liverpool, Mukherji had spent only two months observing the habits of British soldiers in barracks, and, consequently, would not have been well acquainted with the appearance of battlefields during an actual war. His disappointment on first arriving at Basra and finding it very different from his childhood books is understandable. In this passage and elsewhere, Mukherji mentions Caliph Haroun al-Rashid, who was the ruler of Baghdad, and whose rich gardens would have existed in the capital city. Mukherji's continuous association of Basra with the Caliph might have been an unconscious mistake on his part. Alternatively, Mukherji might simply have been using the rich associations of the Caliph and the *Arabian Nights* to invest meaning in the situation. The unconscious mistake also drives home the reality of the uniqueness of his position: he is indeed at war, and the traumatic effect of war subtly impinges on his narration.

In his negotiation of the real wartime landscape of Mesopotamia with his imaginary literary landscape, Mukherji practices a version of Orientalism in Edward Said's terms. In his introduction to *Orientalism*, Said writes,

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing; and in a sense it *had* happened, its time was over.¹²

From the moment Mukherji landed in Mesopotamia, the tussle in his mind between the two versions of Mesopotamia was testimony to the disappearing landscape written about in Orientalist texts. The absence of rose bushes, and little creeks filled with muddy water from the Tigris, serving as a breeding ground for both mosquitoes and frogs, act as an extremely jarring image compared to the exotic Oriental landscape portrayed in books. Nevertheless, the Oriental Mesopotamia of Mukherji's childhood was not merely a figment of his imagination. It had sprung from a rich material culture, a mode of discourse derived from books, oral narratives, loan words from Persian and Arabic, imagery and style. From the early nineteenth century, several versions of *Arabian Nights* were sold in Calcutta: the most common ones were translated into Bengali, adapted and abridged from the 1811 English translation by Jonathan Scott. The adapted versions were intended for children and

young adults, while the unabridged versions were sold as cheap paperbacks (*bot tola*) for adults.¹³

Nevertheless, the application of Orientalism to Mukherji's negotiations with the Mesopotamian landscape is in itself fraught with difficulties. The epistemological distinction between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident' is a purely Western construct. The 'Orient' in itself is an individual entity that has a history and a tradition of thought. However, it is this history and tradition of thought that has established its presence in the West, and by virtue of these opposing centripetal forces, the 'Orient' and the 'Occident' support and reflect each other. On the other hand, Mukherji's mimicking of a version of Orientalism during his first experience with the 'Orient', despite being a colonial subject himself, is unintentionally ironic. This brings to mind the concept of 'colonial mimicry' as demonstrated by Jacques Lacan and Homi K. Bhabha. In his essay 'The Line and Light', Lacan writes,

The effect of mimicry is camouflage. [...] It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare.¹⁴

It is interesting that Lacan uses metaphors of warfare to describe mimicry. This can be applied very literally to Mukherji's situation in Mesopotamia. Hiding against walls, to protect himself from the attacks of the enemy, Mukherji unconsciously adopted the technique of camouflage as he sought refuge in concepts of Western Orientalism to make sense of the Middle Eastern landscape around him. Nevertheless, being a colonised subject, he remains perennially 'mottled'. For Homi K. Bhabha, 'colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable "Other", as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite'.¹⁵ For the colonial subject, the 'Other' signifies power and knowledge. Yet there always remains the dichotomy between the 'Self' and the 'Other'—remaining 'mottled' in the Lacanian sense—despite the best attempts by the colonial subject to mimic the Other. I will now attempt to demonstrate how this complex relationship comes about in Mukherji's case.

In *Orientalism*, Said draws on Antonio Gramsci's definition of the concept of 'hegemony' from his *Prison Notebooks*, as the domination of a non-totalitarian society by the ruling classes, who impose their *Weltanschauung* so that their worldview becomes the accepted norm and ideology for

that society.¹⁶ The early twentieth century was the time period of the Bengal Renaissance and the reformist movement of the Brahmo Samaj, which ushered in a new era in Bengali literature, science and philosophy. Although most of the work was carried out in Bengali, the influence of the ruling British class was immense. Middle-class Bengali households read in English about European history and literature. They travelled to Britain and Europe, wrote letters and diaries in English, and played English ballads on their pianos at homes in North Calcutta.¹⁷ In their Anglophilia, these people had begun to imitate a performance of ‘us Europeans’ versus ‘those non-Europeans’, in the way Homi Bhabha demonstrates through colonial mimicry. Recent research has shown that in the Indo-British encounter in the imperial metropole, class served as the linguistic register for determining nationality.¹⁸ The advantage of an English education and exposure to Europe had made European culture hegemonic in Bengal. Kalyan Mukherji was born at the centre of this Renaissance into a very cultured Bengali Hindu family. He had grown up reading the great Indian epics and contemporary Bengali literature. He studied medicine in Britain, while spending time in Croydon at the house of his aunt, who was married to an Englishman. After the siege of Kut, he sent a postcard to his mother, written in impeccable English. Hence, it is understandable that in Mukherji’s encounter with the Mesopotamian landscape he applied the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient.

It is not difficult to imagine the kind of landscape that Mukherji encountered when he arrived at the base camp at Kurnah in late April 1915. As Mokkhoda Debi described,

When Kalyan [Mukherji] reached Kurnah towards the end of April, he surely must have been horrified by his surroundings. Every inch of high land that had not been engulfed by water was covered with soldiers’ tents. Large tents were set up for hospitals, and stables were erected for horses. Muddy areas were covered with straw, where cannons, grenades, bombs, shells and armouries were kept. Water was the only means of transport. Overflowing canals flowed into the rivers.¹⁹

On his first day at Basra, Mukherji wrote about finding a garden full of date palm trees.

[It is] about a mile from the city. No dates on trees, no birds in sight. Signs of a recently-concluded battle can be seen scattered across every inch of the land. [...] Such mosquitoes too, and very cold.²⁰

It is ambiguous whether after his first encounter with Basra, Mukherji thinks that the world of *Arabian Nights* is merely a literary fantasy, or whether he considers that its existence has been destroyed by the ravages of war. Keeping with the argument of an Anglophile colonial subject mimicking the ‘Other’, one can also note here the parallels with Tennyson’s poem *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, with the emphasis on the gardens of Baghdad and Haroun al-Rashid, which Mukherji must have read. Tennyson wrote:

And many a sheeny summer morn
 Adown the Tigris I was borne,
 By Bagdat’s shrines of fretted gold,
 High-walled gardens green and old;
 [...] Far off, and where the lemon-grove
 In closest coverture unsprung,
 The living airs of Middle night
 Died around the bulbul as he sung;
 Not he: but something which possess’d
 The darkness of the world, delight,
 Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
 Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress’d,
 Apart from place, withholding time,
 But flattering the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.²¹

His second encounter with a similar (and typically Mesopotamian) landscape was when he had to find shelter behind a four-foot wall in a date garden. In a letter addressed to his mother from Nasiriya dated 26 July 1915, he described how he set up his own dressing station at such a spot, and took shelter when the enemy attacked later that night:

Not a breath of air behind the wall; very hot. Mosquitoes, insects and frogs were swarming everywhere. The rain of bullets started at 10 pm. Just like a hailstorm. Exactly. I am not exaggerating one bit. Shelter by the wall of a date garden. Boom, boom! Hiss, hiss! Bullets raining for half an hour.²²

His short sentences convey the urgency and desperation in his tone. Its bitterness amply depicts the contrast between a war-ravaged landscape in reality and the rich, luxurious Caliphate of Mukherji’s childhood

reading, lush with exotic fruits and birds. At the same time, his tone also begins to connect the disappointing landscape with a landscape at war. One striking note in this passage is its similarity with descriptions of the biblical plagues of Egypt. This intertextuality appears later in Mukherji's writing too, which I discuss below. Here, his words are important in achieving a Christian sense of the Middle Eastern landscape that he was trying to articulate. The real Mesopotamian landscape appeared to him to be a much more apocalyptic space than he had expected from his reading of the *Arabian Nights*, perhaps as apocalyptic as the spaces of the Old Testament. The (political) exercise of translating the Bible into Bengali and the prevalence of Bible societies in Bengal in the nineteenth century made numerous editions of the Bible accessible. It is no mere speculation to assume that Mukherji had read this text. His usage of language in this passage amply evidences how he contextualised his reading of the Bible both with reference to the Middle East and to nineteenth-century Bengal.

RIVERS OF BLOOD: RECONCILIATION WITH THE REAL

It took the war to teach it, that you were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did. The problem was that you didn't always know what you were seeing until later, maybe years later, that a lot of it never made it in at all, it just stayed stored there in your eyes.²³

In Mukherji's subsequent encounters with the Mesopotamian landscape, an attempt at reconciliation is evident. Again in the letter dated 26 July, he described the aftermath of the attack as 'rivers of blood'—the horrors of war gradually erasing the image of his first encounter with the muddy waters of Tigris from his letter three months previously, and replacing that image with blood:

Rivers of blood—red—everywhere. I am soaked in blood. Whom to leave and whom to attend. Like Dhruba from [Rabindranath Tagore's] *Visarjan* [*Sacrifice*], I feel like asking, 'Why so much blood?' Why so much bloodshed! How do I describe it? I will never forget the scene for as long as I live.²⁴

This instance of intertextuality reveals how Mukherji interpreted the Middle Eastern landscape through an Indian text: Tagore's play

Visarjan, which he had adapted from his earlier novel *Rajarshi*, was published in 1890, and is a highly symbolic play about the tussle between religious and secular power to control the state. In the same letter, Mukherji did not even attempt to describe the road to Bijit, an unidentified town, simply writing, 'What I saw is indescribable'. In his next letter, written from the village of Sunaiyat on 29 September, Mukherji described the road to the village: 'I couldn't ride my horse over dead bodies. I kept getting down and moving them. That is why I arrived here late'.²⁵

Eventually, Mukherji's observations of the landscape merged with the images of the war to a degree that makes it difficult to separate one from the other. In a letter written from Kut al-Amara on 1 October 1915, he described to his mother the way the Mesopotamian skies were lit up by the firing of cannons:

It looks rather good at night. Just like fireworks. One can see flashes of light. It is not possible to see that light in the daytime. One can see the smoke from the cannons, and the rain of bullets fall from the skies like hailstorm. As if an invisible hand from the sky is propelling little stones. That is how the bullets fall.²⁶

This image of the invisible hand, as well as that of frogs, flies, blood and lightning is reminiscent of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, from the biblical *Book of Exodus*:

If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will go up on you and your people and all your officials.—Exodus 8:1–4

The LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Let my people go, so that they may worship me.—Exodus 9:13–24

This is an instance of how 'reality' is shaped by intertextuality. Such intertextuality confirms not only Mukherji's knowledge of the Bible (and hence his affinity to the West), but also the effects of trauma.

According to the prominent trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra, trauma is ‘a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered’.²⁷ In Mukherji’s letters, the disarticulation of his self appears in the way he negotiates his disappointment with the surrounding landscape, which in turn manifests itself in the intertextuality of his writing. He did not live long enough to record the belated effects, or, to borrow Cathy Caruth’s terminology, the ‘delayed effects’ of unprocessed memory trace. Caruth describes trauma as a bridge between disparate experiences.²⁸ It is this description that best encapsulates Mukherji’s experiences in the war and in his writing. The disparate experience is the gap between his literary fantasy relating to the landscape and the reality of war.

ALL FOR A PIECE OF LAND: LANDSCAPE AND NATIONALISM

In a letter written to his mother from al-Aziziya on 20 October 1915, Mukherji wrote,

England is the teacher. The patriotism that England has taught us, the patriotism that all civilised nations revere, is responsible for all this bloodshed. That patriotism is snatching other people’s countries. Hence patriotism is building empires. The English have taught us to show patriotism by killing thousands of people all to snatch a piece of land.²⁹

Barely a few months after his arrival in Mesopotamia, Mukherji had reached a clear conclusion about the war. Against the background of a world-wide conflict, Mukherji’s insight into the nature of war was both remarkable and humbling. I would argue that it was the traumatic difference between the ‘real’ war-torn landscape and the image derived from his literary references that gave him clarity regarding the effects of war. In his criticism of patriotism, Mukherji condemned the colonial ambitions of all the major powers fighting in the war and anticipated Rabindranath Tagore’s wariness about nationalism. In *Nationalism*, published just one year before Mukherji’s death, Tagore wrote:

India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching,

and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.³⁰

It is quite possible that Tagore was aware of Mukherji's experiences in Mesopotamia. They were both part of Brahma Samaj, a small close-knit community in Bengal, although Mukherji was by no means the only Bengali serving in the war. Tagore and Mukherji took different trajectories to arrive at the same conclusion about nationalism. For the military doctor, however, the radicalism was layered. As a product of the Bengali bourgeoisie, he felt a deep affinity with European civilisation. However, in his scathing indictment of Empire, which surfaced only in the last couple of years of his life, he eventually equated imperialism with nationalist terrorism. The constant strain that is conveyed in his writing revolves around his endeavour to negotiate with two kinds of landscape—the real, war-devastated one and the literary one—and there is a certain poignancy in his ultimate failure to achieve this negotiation.

NOTES

1. Considerable research has been conducted recently on Indians in Britain, their encounters with the British there, and the circumstances and experiences of Indians travelling to Britain for higher education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880–1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Martin Wainwright, *The 'Better Class' of Indians: Social Rank, Imperial Identity, and South Asians in Britain, 1858–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Sumita Mukherjee, *Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities: The England-Returned* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Susheila Nasta, ed., *India in Britain: South Asian Network and Connections, 1858–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Ruvani Ranasingha, *South Asians and the Shaping of Britain 1870–1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
2. Santanu Das has written extensively on Indians serving in Mesopotamia and France during First World War, including on Kalyan Mukherji's letters to his mother. See "Indians at Home, Mesopotamia and France, 1914–1918: Towards an Intimate History" in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Das (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70–89.

3. For more details on the Mesopotamian campaign, see A. J. Barker, *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914–1918* (London: Faber, 1967); Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Madison, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994); Ron Wilcox, *Battles on the Tigris: The Mesopotamian Campaign of the First World War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2006); and Edward J. Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I: A Comparative Study* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
4. Barker, *The Neglected War*, 41.
5. Barker, *The Neglected War*, 41.
6. Debi is not a surname. Until recently, it was a surname used by certain married Bengali women. Hence, it would be incorrect to refer to Mokkhada Debi as simply ‘Debi’. A reference point for this is Gayatri Spivak, who, in her book *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, works on and translates the writings of the Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi. Spivak introduces her as ‘Mahasweta Devi’ the first time, and subsequently refers to her by her first name, Mahasweta. Since Devi/Debi is a Bengali word, I have transliterated it as ‘Debi’, which corresponds closest to the Bengali pronunciation. However, unlike Spivak, I have not referred to her by her first name Mokkhada, but as ‘Mokkhada Debi’ on every occasion.
7. In the preface to her book, Mokkhada Debi writes, “To demonstrate where Kalyan Kumar derived his generosity, inspiration, resilience and courage from, I have set my focus on the virtues of his ancestors, and have discussed chronologically from Bengal’s 1) Vaishnav age, followed by 2) the decline and downward spiral with the Muslim invasion, 3) new inspiration and rise with the British imperialism, and 4) the age of the Brahma Samaj. In these sections I have established how the Hindu society has been respectively inspired, affected, and influenced, and has remained resolute”. She then devotes one-third of the book to describing the Muslim invasion in India from the Middle Ages and how they systematically targeted and destroyed prevalent Hindu customs, traditions, society, and economy. All translations from Mokkhada Debi’s Bengali book are by the author. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep: The Life of Captain Kalyan Kumar Mukherji I.M.S.* (Calcutta: Privately printed, 1928), x–xi.
8. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 35.
9. Sisir Sarbadhikary, a volunteer stretcher bearer for the Bengal Ambulance Corps in Mesopotamia (hence working in the same place at the same time as Kalyan Mukherji), on the other hand, meticulously wrote down his experiences, saved it from falling into enemy hands, and published it as a memoir after the war. See Das, “Indians at Home,” 79–81.

10. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), xvii.
11. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 250.
12. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 1.
13. See Stuart H. Blackburn, *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004) and Chandrani Chatterjee, *Translation Reconsidered: Culture, Genre and the 'Colonial Encounter' in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).
14. Jacques Lacan, "The Line and the Light," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977), 99.
15. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.
16. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12.
17. See Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
18. Wainwright, *The Better Class' of Indians*, 10.
19. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 254.
20. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 250–51.
21. Alfred Tennyson, *Poetical Works Including the Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 9–10.
22. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 291.
23. Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 20.
24. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 293.
25. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 303.
26. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 314.
27. Dominic LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 41.
28. Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 7.
29. Mokkhada Debi, *Kalyan Pradeep*, 334.
30. Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1917), 106.

PART IV

Legacies of the First World War
in Landscapes



Neither Here Nor There: War Memorial Landscape in Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Emigration, 1914–1939

Aaron J. Cohen

Of all the combatants of the First World War, Russian people experienced the worst outcome. With arguably the greatest absolute number of war dead (around two million), it was certainly little consolation to millions of grieving families that Russia lost fewer soldiers relative to some countries with smaller populations. To those who fought and sacrificed so much for the Allied cause over four long years, it was maddening to lose both the war and the peace in such spectacular fashion: the popular revolution that overthrew the tsar in early 1917 was followed by a radical Bolshevik regime that surrendered to imperial Germany in early 1918, just months before the Entente emerged victorious. In the aftermath, another two million Russians emigrated to become stateless refugees, while those who remained faced civil war, political terror, social confusion, epidemics and famine, and economic collapse. The need to

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memorialise unprecedented numbers of unnatural deaths in new and unusual political, economic and social circumstances led to innovations in memorial landscapes, both in Russia and in the foreign countries where Russian émigrés resided. During the war, a new type of public cemetery was founded to accommodate the need for individual burial and national remembrance. Later, the Bolshevik leadership sought to de-nationalise memorial landscapes, while Russian émigrés tried to re-define foreign land to make it seem Russian. Russian memorial cemeteries in the interwar period were thus ‘neither here nor there’: those in Soviet Russia were not considered Russian, while those abroad were Russian but not in Russia.

In the generations before 1914, military and civilian cemeteries were separated by distance and public function. War cemeteries were conventionally located near battle sites to allow for immediate practical interment and to mark the physical landscape of battle for memorialisation. After 1812, Russian armies fought on the periphery of empire or in foreign countries, and the country’s military cemeteries were practically inaccessible to those who wished to mourn in the presence of their loved ones. For the tsarist state, military cemeteries were important because they demonstrated the strength of Russian arms and bolstered the legitimacy of the ruling Romanov dynasty. The army and the royal family made sure to publicise their efforts to organise the cemeteries of the Manchurian battlefields of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the Balkan sites of the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), and the Black Sea monuments of the Crimean War (1853–1855). Civilian cemeteries, by contrast, were designed for individual mourning; they were places near home that families visited to be close to departed intimates and to remember individual lives or family history. Most grew organically over decades (or even centuries) and, with constant turnover, were rarely well-organised landscapes. Even the largest and most famous cemeteries served primarily as collections of intimate remembrance for individuals. The tourists who today visit the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris with map in hand, for example, pay respects to disconnected individuals such as Frederic Chopin, Oscar Wilde, and Jim Morrison: in life, all were strangers, but in death, all are brought close to individual admirers through the imagination.

A new memorial landscape was made necessary by the conditions of warfare and its commemoration during the First World War. The Great

War collapsed the distance between the frontlines and the home front on an unprecedented scale. Millions of people had direct contact with the effects of the war at the front, and millions more needed medical and spiritual care far from the site of battle. The distance between home and combat collapsed literally as railways allowed for the rotation of wounded soldiers back to hospitals in the hinterlands and the quick drawing up of fresh recruits. But the distance also collapsed figuratively as the expansion of the mass media, social disruption and economic mobilisation tied the actions of combat units to non-combatants, the workers, taxpayers and future draftees upon whom a successful war effort depended. Propaganda and public relations became more important and more immediate as news of the war spread throughout the public and as politicians, the media and military leaders tried to make the war meaningful in a positive way to the population. Mourning the dead became a public act as well as a private need, and with so many casualties and so much else at stake, the need for new memorials had an urgency that could not wait.

WAR: THE MOSCOW CITY WAR CEMETERY

The Moscow city government faced unprecedented local military casualties with the coming of the Great War. One solution combined a need to provide room for personal grieving and collective war commemoration: the Moscow City War Cemetery (*Moskovskoe gorodskoe bratskoe kladbishche*).¹ This new institution was, above all, a practical response to material needs. The city needed to dispose of a large number of bodies from war casualties who had died in the city, whether from training accidents or in hospital after evacuation. But the cemetery builders also shaped it into a central memorial point, for they wanted a place where ‘it will be a consolation to relatives and us all to know the exact resting place of the heroes who have fallen in the defence of our dear motherland and to have the possibility to pray there’.² The Moscow war cemetery thus transcended its practical local utility to represent the war experience of a new people’s war to all Russians.

In October 1914, the semi-official Aleksandrovskii Committee encouraged local governments and organisations to construct war cemeteries to honour soldiers who died in hospital from wounds or illness behind the lines. In their view, to bring the dead together and memorialise them in one place would display patriotic sacrifice and ‘serve as a reminder

(*napominaniem*) to future generations about the sacrifices (*o zbertvakh*) of the Great European War'.³ Nicholas II himself gave impetus to this proposal with his personal approval: 'Read with satisfaction. Hope that war cemeteries will be built in all locales and cities of Russia to immortalise the names of fallen or deceased soldiers (*voinov*)'.⁴ Across the empire, cities made plans for First World War cemeteries with corresponding memorials. In Smolensk, for example, local authorities planned a memorial chapel (*kbram-chasovnia*) for their war cemetery.⁵ Progress, however, was often difficult. In Petrograd, authorities struggled to find an appropriate location before deciding to make space at the pre-existing Preobrazhenskoe city cemetery.⁶ By May 1916, 4,110 people had already been interred there, but it was obvious that the war cemetery needed to be enlarged and improved.⁷ The feeling that Moscow had a superior project made progress even more important: 'Petrograd, the capital and centre of administrative life, cannot fall behind Moscow in this patriotic matter'.⁸ In Kiev, the city's war cemetery was still being organised in the summer of 1917, after the imperial regime had already fallen.⁹

In Moscow, the new cemetery was created from scratch north of the city centre and soon become a great undertaking. It was proposed and sponsored by the Grand Duchess Elisaveta Feodorovna but funded and managed by the city government. The open land, located near All Saints Grove along the Petersburg Boulevard, had once belonged to the widow of a Russian general.¹⁰ This newness allowed for an efficient design necessary to accommodate the sheer volume of the fallen and their living visitors. A central avenue led visitors directly to the central memorial place, the memorial church (*kbram-pamiatnik*), and straight lines, branches and roundabouts allowed for efficient visitation between the various gravesites. Markers were indexed, labelled and grouped for visitors to follow with ease. Dedicated on 15 February 1915, it filled faster than anticipated. Five thousand dead were interred over the course of 1915 with another 6,000 in the first nine months of 1916.¹¹ In 1916, administrators realised it was 75% full and added some 10 hectares to make 26.5 hectares, enough to support 30,000 interments. From early 1915 until 1920, burials took place on an almost daily basis.¹² There were so many visitors that the city proposed in 1916 to build a new branch tram line to the cemetery 'to answer the demand of the present moment'.¹³

The inclusive nature of the cemetery reflected a war made by and for all the people. The majority of burials were of ordinary folk, mostly peasants but also Cossacks and urban dwellers (*meshchane*) from all over

the country.¹⁴ Here, the powerful could show their public respect for ordinary people; the first public funeral was for a captain (*sotnik*) and four rank-and-file soldiers; their pallbearers included notables from the church, army, central government, city council, and international consuls with the Grand Duchess and her entourage in attendance.¹⁵ The cemetery had areas ‘for the burial of officers, the rank-and-file, the Moscow garrison, members of public organisations, non-Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Muslims’.¹⁶ Also interred were local nurses who had died in the line of duty. Indeed, one of the founders of the cemetery, S. V. Puchkov, placed great importance on recognising the place of nurses as part of its function ‘as a monument of the harmonious united work of all social forces in helping victims of war’.¹⁷ In death, all people and all ranks from the military and the hospitals were together; ‘there are no differences between poor and rich in the War Cemetery’, proclaimed one writer in a Moscow newspaper in 1916, ‘and we are sorry for each and every one. The great fraternity of people in death is here complete’.¹⁸ What united all was their sacrifice for the war effort.

Administrators envisioned the place as a cemetery of national significance and a central place for the memorialisation of the war. A competition for the memorial church announced that it was to be a ‘large All-Russian’ cemetery, a ‘grandiose monument built by Moscow in honour of the heroes fallen in this war’.¹⁹ The cemetery commission envisioned the place as a testament of the present to the future: ‘the current generation, a witness to head-spinning great events, should devote itself to the creation of a monument to heroes of war who fell for the common holy cause (*delo*)’.²⁰ Local patriotism was used to promote national unity, for the commission argued that Moscow was the logical place for a central memorial site. Such an appeal had a practical significance as it allowed for national fundraising: ‘It is only proper that this monument be located namely in Moscow, the heart of Russia, where all Russia, represented by the government and rural and urban institutions, should provide the means for the arrangement of the War Cemetery and its structures’.²¹

The new landscape was initially planned to use metonymy as a memorial strategy, that is, to show its meaning through reference to specific qualities of the war. The far-off war would be made directly immanent in the metropolitan cemetery, as the announcement for the design competition suggested in 1915: ‘The very character of the furnishings of the cemetery will correspond to that which created it: around the headstones

will be guns, the cemetery will be enclosed by graves in the form of trenches; there will be something resembling forts'.²² In April 1917, Puchkov envisioned the cemetery as a comprehensive military terrain like a military camp (*voennyi gorodok*), including a war museum, cemetery, veterans' hostel, and school.²³ This total vision of the war brought to Moscow did not come to pass, but at some point, an aviators' section was added with gravestones shaped as aircraft propellers (Moscow's first aerodrome was not far from the cemetery).

Instead, the atmosphere of the cemetery avoided the war, for it also had a mission to provide consolation to grieving families. The place took on the simpler, more peaceful atmosphere of a forested zone, not one shaped by a pompous or official aesthetic or military character.²⁴ In imperial Russia, official public monuments often represented power through grandiose style, the domination of physical space and institutional links to the state and church.²⁵ Puchkov explained that the Moscow city war cemetery was a place of sorrow, not just a patriotic monument: 'in this time of grief and suffering experienced by all of us, [it] provides the greatest consolation to those of our fellow citizens from whom the motherland has demanded on its altar especially great sacrifices (*zhertvy*)'.²⁶ Contemporary photographs show graves under already existing trees, as in a quiet grove (Fig. 10.1).

The chosen central memorial in the Moscow cemetery was not a secular obelisk or sculptural monument but a Russian Orthodox church. In architecture, it reflected not the Muscovite or imperial state but the middle ages of Pskov and Novgorod before the rise of Moscow.



Fig. 10.1 Moscow City Brotherly Cemetery in 1915 (Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Moscow_City_Brotherly_Cemetery_1915.jpg)

Russian academics today suggest that this style represents a resistance to foreign invaders, one made popular in the seventeenth century after the Time of Troubles.²⁷ But this type of neo-medieval architecture also recalled simplicity, purity and intimacy of faith, and it was not unknown in the memorial style of the late tsarist period: the 1911 Saviour on the Waters church, which memorialised sailors lost in the Russo-Japanese War, was to provide ‘great consolation to the Orthodox’ through the ‘Byzantine-Russian’ style of twelfth-century Vladimir.²⁸ This northern style was replicated by the war memorial churches in the emigration (see below). In this way, the fallen rested in natural and religious harmony without the violence and power of war.

In the end, the Moscow war cemetery never became a central memorial place for the First World War in Russia; it was neglected, ignored and eventually erased by the Soviet government.²⁹ During the Civil War, the ground seems to have been viewed as enemy territory; with the Cheka (secret police) conducting executions and secret burials and White soldiers and German and Austrian POWs laid to rest there. Some Red aviators from the Civil War were, however, also interred. Later, the cemetery became a regular city cemetery, but it was closed to new burials in 1923 and turned into a park in 1925. By that time, an article in the illustrated weekly *Ogonek* could marvel at the Civil War aviators and their propeller graves yet make no mention of the cemetery’s link to the First World War.³⁰ In 1926, the leader of a historic preservation organisation hoped to save the cemetery with the argument that its existence incorporated the reality and the memory of a horrible war: ‘I find that the military cemetery with its purpose and population is a monument of the most cruel great European war. Here are no children, no elderly, who died a natural death, here lies the bloom of life, violently cut off from people’.³¹ He recognised that the need for consolation was still strong, for amongst ‘the uncounted number of *nameless* graves you see only few groups of mounds that are still not forgotten by relatives, upon which one can still see who rests there and how they gave their life’.³² Relatives could not find information about the location of the graves of their loved ones.³³ A city commission was formed in 1928 to preserve the cemetery, but that work fell away amidst the cultural iconoclasm and mobilised revolutionary enthusiasm of the early years of Stalinism. Large portions of the area were given over to buildings, public parks and a cinema. Only in the early 2000s was the area again developed into a memorial for the Great War.

REVOLUTION: VICTIMS AND HEROES ON THE FIELD OF MARS

The emergence and persistence of an internationalist revolutionary state in Russia meant that Russian war memory would differ from that of other combatant nations. The Bolshevik government rejected the First World War as a legitimate experience and did not positively commemorate it.³⁴ Party leaders understood themselves to be part of an international movement that negated the tsarist Russian past and its patriotic wars, and they built a new type of public space that focused on the representation of party symbols rather than historical memory to explain the past, present and future. Attempts to build memorials and cemeteries for the dead of the World War, the Revolution and the Civil War ran into such ideological, institutional and aesthetic barriers that they were, in practice, absent from public space, at least in comparison to Western nations. After February 1917, the Petrograd Soviet initiated the construction of a memorial complex to the fallen victims of the Revolution, but after October the Bolsheviks tried to obscure this ‘Russian’ revolutionary landscape with a Bolshevik internationalist space. In this way, the memorial cemetery on the Field of Mars (*Marsovo pole*) in Petrograd (later Leningrad, today Saint Petersburg) soon became one of the most recognised symbols of the revolutionary years (Fig. 10.2).³⁵

The commemorative practices of revolution in 1917 were about personal grief and public remembrance, akin in many ways to the war memory that had started to develop after 1914. Public calls to memorialise those who died at the hand of the police and gendarmes came within



Fig. 10.2 Field of Mars, Saint Petersburg, 2011 (Author's photograph)

days of the fall of the tsar, when some 190 people were killed and 1,500 injured. Newspapers and politicians of all political orientations proclaimed their celebration of the dead victims. These victims were celebrated for their sacrifice ‘for freedom’, in other words, for the cause of the liberation of the Russian people from tsarist oppression. A commission attached to the Petrograd Soviet ordained a series of measures for ‘a celebratory *civil* burial of the comrades who fell for freedom’ and determined ‘10 March, the first day of spring, as a day of remembrance for the victims of the Revolution and a general celebration (*vsenarodnym prazdnikom*) of the great Russian Revolution’.³⁶ The city decided that a ‘grandiose’ monument would be built at a site,³⁷ and after some back and forth, the Field of Mars was chosen. Located between the barracks of the Pavlovskii regiment, the Summer Garden and the Mikhailovskii Palace, it was a place that was associated with tsarist military power in the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, it had sometimes been used by itinerant carnivals and fairs and served as a public park, only to have the military return during the First World War. By 1917, therefore, the Field of Mars had both a military association and a history of service to the leisure needs of a broad urban public. It then gained a patriotic revolutionary meaning with its new purpose, reflected in its new formal name: the ‘Square of the Victims of the Revolution’.

In 1917, the memory of the victims of the Revolution did not belong to politicians or professional revolutionaries but to all citizens, much like the memory of the war. To widespread press attention, the burial ceremony took place on 23 March as an event for all the people regardless of social position, as the newspaper *Ruskaia volia* reported:

all understood clearly how acutely the population has felt the deaths of our brothers who died at the hands of despised tsarist servants but, still, who expected that all the experiences of the army, working class, ordinary people (*naroda*), and all segments (*sloev*) of the population would move together in such grandiose form, unprecedented, unimaginable, and indescribable?³⁸

Ordinary citizens made the space their own, often against the will of the authorities. They sought out wreaths for the graves of the ‘fighters for freedom’ despite the official disapproval of the Petrograd Soviet.³⁹ A foreign visitor reported that the Provisional Government feared it might not be able to control the masses on the day of the burial:

The government was afraid to have a funeral, because there was no police force in the city, except temporary militia, and they feared rioting. It would mean that a million people would be gathered together, and in the inflamed state of mind they were in it would have been dangerous to give them additional cause for excitement.⁴⁰

The design of the landscape became more complex, and more problematic, once the decision was taken to construct a monument. Official plans to build a large monument were devised and then abandoned several times from the beginning into the late 1920s. In March 1917, the bodies of the victims had been buried in mass graves on the Field of Mars without much thought for the future. In early April, the Provisional Government agreed to set up a commission to erect a monument, with government funds, ‘to all hero-fighters for the freedom of Russia who fell victim in this struggle’, in other words, to commemorate the Revolution and not just those buried at the field.⁴¹ The project was controversial from the beginning. In the summer of 1917, a jury attached to the Union of Architects received 11 entries in the competition for a temporary monument but decided ‘not one was worthy of realisation’.⁴² The architect L. V. Rudnev was judged to have the best proposal and given the task to create a central memorial place. He was responsible for the first (and still existing) design: a stone perimeter with openings to the surrounding space that allows passers-by direct access to individual graves and memorial inscriptions. In this way, people were brought physically close to the object of remembrance.

The February Revolution, a patriotic act for many Russian revolutionaries and ordinary citizens, was significant in the Bolshevik view as the beginning of a world revolution. The Bolsheviks accepted the general nature of the celebration but cast it in their language of heroic victims for the international revolution. Lev Kamenev, writing in *Pravda* on 23 March, made clear that ‘there are great days in the life of humanity that have stretched as a red (*krasnoi*) line, like a people’s celebration (*prazdnik*) through the long ages’.⁴³ He noted the Russian sacrifice but asserted the ceremony’s international meaning as the true one: ‘Today is the day of the burial of the heroic victims of the Revolution [...] Today the glances of the disenfranchised and the destitute of the entire world are turned to Russia, to that city where the heroic decisiveness of the workers and the disenfranchised Russian peasantry overthrew tsarist autocracy’.⁴⁴

After October 1917, the Bolsheviks accepted the non-Bolshevik revolutionary space but tried to re-purpose it as an internationalist and

Bolshevik one. The Field of Mars became a central location for general revolutionary festivals like May Day and for Bolshevik celebrations of the October Revolution. The new government used it for the burial of the first individual Bolshevik martyrs, the publicist V. Volodarskii and Petrograd Cheka leader M. S. Uritskii, assassinated in Petrograd in mid-1918. Red Army soldiers killed in the early part of the Civil War were also buried there, including, very conspicuously, those from Finnish and Latvian regiments. Slogans for the first anniversary of October in 1918 extolled Marxist internationalism over the Russian Revolution: ‘Long live the world social (*sotsial'naiia*) revolution’ and ‘The world of peoples will conclude the collapse of bourgeois domination’.⁴⁵ In 1922, an international competition was proposed for a permanent monument with financing based on voluntary donations and a mechanism to accept donations from Europe and America.⁴⁶ Anatolii Lunacharskii, the People’s Commissar of Enlightenment, wrote inscriptions for the memorial that reflected this universalist view of the fallen revolutionaries: ‘From the depths of oppression of need and ignorance you proletariat lifted yourself up achieving freedom and happiness you made happy all humanity and took it out of slavery’. His contribution showed the Bolshevik understanding of revolutionary agency: ‘Not Victims – Heroes’. A recent visitor has remarked that one is not sure from the inscriptions which revolution is actually commemorated.⁴⁷

The Field of Mars proved resistant to construction as a revolutionary cemetery. The Provisional and Bolshevik governments struggled to bring physical, social and political order to what remained a disordered landscape. Over the years, the field was battered by construction, weather and military use. In March 1917, it was a disorderly and cold landscape; dynamite was used to prepare the earth for its first burials.⁴⁸ The first bodies of the dead were interred in the centre of the field before any monument was designed or architectural plan conducted. In August 1918, Lunacharskii argued forcefully that the burial of people without proper planning was ruining the memorial function as the space itself served as a monument: ‘Since the entire site (*mesto*), the monument itself and the square occupied by it, is formed as one unitary composition, partial changes will distort the original project and the erection of new graves or monuments will bring disharmony and give the entire monument a haphazard (*sluchainyi*) character’.⁴⁹ Later designs for buildings, obelisks and large monuments required that the square be reconstructed and the bodies relocated, a change that proved difficult (and failed). Architects needed to account for the expanse of the space and

its relationship to surrounding monumental palaces and open parks; an obelisk or statue in the centre, for example, always looked very small indeed. Party functionaries and city authorities seemed not to know what to do with the square. In 1919, city workers repeated that ‘the site of the fraternal graves on Mars Field is not like a cemetery of the heroes of the Revolution but like a garbage dump. The graves themselves are extremely run down’.⁵⁰ Thousands of trees were planted on a May Day *sabbotnik* in 1920, but no one seemed to care for the place afterward, as James Von Geldern has remarked: ‘the holiday had not allowed time for careful planting of the trees, and afterward nobody came to tend them. All sixty thousand trees and bushes had died by mid-summer’.⁵¹ Later, in the 1920s, there were plans to use the site again as a place of leisure: skating rinks were set up and a planetarium envisioned.

The difficulties of creating a revolutionary memorial on the Field of Mars stemmed from a variety of physical and ideological factors.⁵² The original choice to bury victims of the Revolution on a space that had shifted often over time added an additional facet to the military, social and political uses of the past. The large open space was difficult to fill and to use for the single memorial purpose; it was difficult to decide whether it would be a political, social or natural landscape. For the new communist government, moreover, the Field of Mars was not in its origin a Bolshevik site but a reminder of a non-Bolshevik Russian revolution, and it did not seem as important once the Bolsheviks moved the capital to Moscow in 1918. They had managed to imprint their view of the internationalist revolution on the land. But a vertical monument was never built, and the existing horizontal structure that allowed for easy access to the gravesites was retained. There, an eternal flame for the revolutionaries was lit in 1957.

EMIGRATION: HOPE ALONG THE MARNE

Russian memorial landscapes of war were instead created in foreign lands. Those who had fled into emigration after the Revolution experienced a variety of social and personal dislocations: grief and homesickness, social alienation from local people, political divisions inside their community, and sudden poverty and economic deprivation. In response, émigré public figures created new institutions and cultural practices to help ameliorate the stresses of emigration and to prepare for their return

to a future non-Bolshevik Russia. They, unlike the Bolsheviks, wanted to build First World War monuments to honour the Russian people's contribution to the war effort. But they were far from Russian cities, battlefields and historic sites, and they had no legal authority to control public space in foreign countries. Their solution was to recreate the atmosphere of Russia on foreign territory in spaces where they had influence, most often in Orthodox cemeteries or cemetery spaces reserved for Russians. The builders of the memorial church (*kbram-pamiatnik*) at the Russian First World War cemetery in France, for example, wanted it to reflect Russian values as 'national, Orthodox, and military'.⁵³

Russian First World War dead lie to this day under memorials built by émigrés across Europe, the United States and the world.⁵⁴ In Prague's Olšanské cemetery, an Orthodox church dedicated to Russian fallen still stands, ninety years after its construction. Another memorial was erected in 1934 at the Orthodox cemetery in Berlin-Tegel on the initiative of Aleksandr von Lampe, head of the Central European branch of the émigré military organisation ROVS. In the 1930s, local émigré activists worked with Serbian politicians to bring the remains of Russian soldiers from distant places across Yugoslavia to an ossuary located in the Novo Groblje cemetery in Belgrade, where a large monument was constructed from 1934 to 1936. The most prominent memorial, however, was the French military cemetery for the Russian Expeditionary Force (REF), which fought on the Marne in 1917, and its successor, the Russian Legion. The French state laid to rest some one thousand dead Russian soldiers in an official military cemetery between the villages of Mourmelon-le-Grand and St-Hilaire-le-Grand in Champagne (Fig. 10.3). A pleasant day trip for the large émigré population in Paris, this cemetery, called 'Hope' (*Espérance*) in the 1920s and 1930s, received considerable media attention in the émigré press.

First World War monuments helped Russians abroad to constitute the emigration as a set of public institutions with multiple individual and community functions in a foreign culture. Their presence was an attempt to overcome the bereavement of émigrés from the homeland and from each other, and they helped to shape the Russian emigration as a quasi-national community. Individual grief was not separate but integral to the general sense of loss in this community, as one columnist observed during a visit to Champagne: 'We lost everything—family, economic



Fig. 10.3 Russian memorial church near St-Hilaire-le-Grand (Marne, France), 2012 (Author's photograph)

situation, personal happiness, the homeland. [...] Are our sufferings good to anyone? In truth—we have nothing, we have lost everything. Weep, weep'.⁵⁵ Memorials communicated a shared experience to others, which gave émigrés access to foreign audiences and a presence in public spaces in ways that Russia-focused sites of memory could not. The connection between war remembrance, institution building inside the emigration, and public recognition from those outside was made clear in a statement from a group of émigré intellectuals in 1930: 'We in a foreign land do not have a tomb of an 'unknown soldier', but we do have thousands of suffering people. They are our honour and our justification (*opravdanie*) before the world. Their wounds and suffering are for Russia'.⁵⁶ The suggestion that war remembrance proved Russia's national legitimacy to non-Russian audiences shows that such connections to host nation audiences were necessary for émigré war monuments to be built in the first place.

Only those who lived abroad could mourn loved ones at a war memorial, as such opportunities did not exist in the Soviet Union. One newspaper columnist in 1929, for example, saw a 'thin woman in black' weep and pray next to 'the surviving Russian veterans of battle in Champagne', her conviction that 'in the mass grave lies her son, an officer of the first regiment, missing in action'.⁵⁷ Another found an 'ordinary fellow'

(*batiushka*) weeping ‘loudly, uncontrollably’ under the hot sun and white stones at the cemetery in 1930.⁵⁸ Newspaper writers gave émigrés the public burden of taking up the grief of distant compatriots who were cut off from their lost loved ones. ‘Somewhere in remotest villages in the Urals or in Siberia’, wrote a columnist after his visit to St-Hilaire, ‘are living old people, fathers and mothers of these soldiers, their children are growing up, and through their tears they remember that the bones of their sons and fathers lie in foreign lands, in far France, on foreign soil that they can never reach. [...] Here is a piece of Russian sorrow’.⁵⁹ For those in France, the Russian war cemetery incorporated not only their personal needs abroad but also the war memory of Russians everywhere.

Recreating Russia outside Russia reduced the émigrés’ distance from their country by redefining foreign memorial sites as Russian land. In Orthodox tradition, connections between the living and dead are maintained through burial at one’s native place, where the deceased would be close to relations.⁶⁰ By creating physical sites that recalled Russia, émigrés could bridge the gap between themselves and the land they lost. Von Lampe, a Lutheran, made the idea explicit when he suggested in a fundraising letter that the Orthodox cemetery in Berlin-Tegel was ‘a piece of Russia’.⁶¹ The atmosphere during a religious service held at Russian gravesites near Verdun evoked southern Russia so much that a writer had to exclaim ‘just like at home!’ even as he knew the truth of distance: ‘And in this exclamation there was so much love for native fields—and grief that the eye is not resting upon those fields’.⁶² Next to *Espérance*, the recreation of a simple, rural and Orthodox Russia became elaborate. To conduct prayers for the fallen, the Orthodox Church and émigré veterans’ groups organised a hermitage (*skit*) complete with a few monks, fir trees and a nearby farm called Moscow as a ‘corner of Russia, a monument of the Russian past’.⁶³ Pilgrimages to war cemeteries closed the physical distance between émigrés and monuments and between émigrés and Russia. In 1930, the Russian Union of Officer-Combatants of the French Front called for ‘all Russian military organisations and all Russian people to unite in prayerful remembrance of our valorous fallen Russian warriors’ on their pilgrimage to the REF cemetery.⁶⁴ Organised pilgrimages to the cemetery took place almost every year in the 1920s and 1930s.

The history of the memorial church near the cemetery *Espérance* shows how the recreation of Russia could console the loss of war veterans and émigrés alike. The original plan of the memorial committee

called for the erection of a monument shaped like a cross. In 1930, however, former officers wrote to the memorial committee and argued that it should instead be a church in the Russian style. A typical monument, they suggested, would be alien to Russians and result in formalistic remembrance: a ‘cold monument-cross would scarcely stand out from hundreds of similar monuments scattered across the vast front, [and] pilgrims will only gather at its pedestal once a year and only for several years’.⁶⁵ Instead, they wanted something to sustain Russian Orthodox remembrance: ‘Our religion considers that the best that those who remain among the living can do for the deceased is to remember them as often as possible through prostrate veneration (*v proskomiddii*)’.⁶⁶ For them, the solution was a hermitage and a chapel for the consolation and protection of the living Russian people in a non-Russian world. Such a memorial would link those in exile with the historical experience of Russian people: ‘Let an eternal holy Orthodox church stand guard over the remains of our brothers and create around it a small corner of Holy Russia’.⁶⁷ Their plea for a memorial church was accepted ‘unanimously’ by the monument building committee and subsequently realised in the 1930s.⁶⁸

The separation to be overcome, however, was not to imperial Russia but to a Russia of rural villages and Orthodox people. The Orthodox aversion to figurative sculpture meant that simple crosses and grave markers dominated émigré memorials, while the design of buildings evoked the style of parish churches in medieval Pskov and Novgorod, similar to the style used at the Moscow City War Cemetery. The decision for a Pskov-Novgorod design for the church in Prague was settled upon after controversy as ‘a return to a national, more “pure” form of Russian church architecture’.⁶⁹ Such neo-medievalism was a practical way to avoid the neo-classicism associated with the autocratic imperial Russian state and the neo-Byzantinism that recalled supposedly non-Russian cultural influences in Muscovite architecture. It encouraged a feeling for homeland over state and timelessness over history. The church in Prague was designed to recall ‘far off, suffering Rus’, in other words, an Orthodox land distant in time and space yet still present in Central Europe.⁷⁰ At *Espérance*, a memorial church built in the Novgorod-Pskov style of the fifteenth century and the ‘melodic Moscow bell ringing (*zvон*) would remind the surrounding population of the great deeds of the Russian knights (*bogatyrei*) who fought heroically with their French defenders for their freedom and independence in the Great War’.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

The Great War and Russian Revolution called forth a new kind of memorial complex in Russian culture, one meant to hold public remembrance closer to home. The late imperial Russian war cemetery in Moscow and the REF cemetery in interwar France shared many qualities: both sought to honour the fallen in a natural, forested setting with easy access to large populations, promoted the consolation provided by a medieval Russian Orthodoxy shorn of links to the imperial state, and maintained a participatory sensibility of civil society that disregarded social and political distinctions. In both cases, the land was shaped to represent these values. The memorial cemetery on the Field of Mars, on the other hand, eschewed the religious atmosphere as counter-revolutionary, and the Bolsheviks rewrote its Russian space to be an international one. But even the revolutionary memorial on the Field of Mars served to bring people close to its objects of remembrance through its location and design. After the Second World War, more mass cemeteries were created in the Soviet Union, and the Field of Mars provided the flame for the country's national Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow.

NOTES

1. I translate *bratskoe kladbishche* (lit. 'fraternal cemetery', i.e., a mass-burial cemetery) here as 'war cemetery' because it was intended for those who died in service of the war effort. All translations from Russian are by the author.
2. S. V. Puchkov, *Moskovskoe gorodskoe bratskoe kladbishche* (Moscow: Gorodskaiia tipografiia, 1915), 3.
3. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv goroda Moskvy (TsGAM), f. 179, op. 21, d. 3339, l. 10.
4. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (TsGIA SPb), f. 210, op. 1, d. 728, l. 19.
5. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), f. 1284, op. 187-1915, d. 17, l. 1.
6. TsGIA SPb, f. 210, op. 1, d. 673, l. 1-2.
7. TsGIA SPb, f. 210, op. 1, d. 728, l. 15.
8. TsGIA SPb, f. 210, op. 1, d. 728, l. 39.
9. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 1784, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1-11.
10. *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 16 February 1915, 4.
11. *Izvestiia moskovskoi gorodskoi dumy* 40, no. 10 (October 1916): 4-5.

12. N. L. Zubova and M. V. Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche v Moskve 1915–1924: Nekropol'*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkii mir, 2013), 10.
13. *Izvestiia moskovskoi gorodskoi dumy* 40, no. 6–7 (June–July 1916): 26.
14. Zubova and Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche*, 10.
15. *Ogonek*, 1 March 1915, 5.
16. *Izvestiia moskovskoi gorodskoi dumy* 39, no. 6–7 (June–July 1915): 18–19.
17. Puchkov, *Moskovskoe gorodskoe bratskoe kladbishche*, 4.
18. Quoted in Zubova and Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche*, 16.
19. *Zodchii* 44, no. 30 (26 July 1915): 305.
20. *Izvestiia moskovskoi gorodskoi dumy* 39, no. 6–7 (June–July 1915): 17–18.
21. *Izvestiia moskovskoi gorodskoi dumy*, 17–18.
22. *Zodchii* 44, no. 30 (26 July 1915): 305.
23. Zubova and Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche*, 14.
24. Zubova and Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche*, 14.
25. Aaron J. Cohen, “Long Ago and Far Away: War Monuments, Public Relations, and the Memory of the Russo-Japanese War in Russia, 1907–1914,” *The Russian Review* 69 (July 2010): 390.
26. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI), f. 206, op. 1, d. 294, p. 1.
27. E. A. Rzhavskaia, “Khrām-pamiatnik Preobrazheniia Gospodnia na Bratskom kladbishche v Moskve,” in *Pervaia mirovaia voina v istoricheskikh sud'bach Evropy*, ed. V. A. Bogush (Minsk: BGU, 2014), 432 and Zubova and Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche*, 15.
28. S. N. Smirnov, *Khrām-pamiatnik moriakam pogibshim v voinu s Iaponiei v 1904–1905 gg* (Petrograd: Sovremennoe iskusstvo, 1915), xv.
29. Zubova and Katagoshchina, *Bratskoe kladbishche*, 17–22.
30. *Ogonek*, 26 April 1925, n. p.
31. Otdel pis'mennykh istochnikov, Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei (OPD GIM), f. 402, d. 351, l. 4.
32. OPD GIM, f. 402, d. 351, l. 4.
33. OPD GIM, f. 402, d. 351, l. 1.
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36. *Den'*, 7 March 1917, 2.
37. *Petrogradskii listok*, 11 March 1917, 4.
38. *Russkaia volia*, 24 March 1917, 1.
39. *Russkaia volia*, 14 March 1917, 3.
40. Florence MacLeod Harper, *Runaway Russia* (New York: The Century Company, 1918), 70.

41. *Den'*, 7 April 1917, 3.
42. RGIA, f. 794, op. 1, d. 21, l. 170.
43. *Pravda*, 23 March 1917, 2.
44. *Pravda*, 23 March 1917, 2.
45. *Severnaia kommuna*, 24 October 1918, 2–3.
46. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (TsGA SPb), f. 1000, op. 6, d. 33, l. 140–41.
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50. TsGA SPb, f. 1000, op. 2, d. 199, l. 25.
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52. Strigalev, “Pamiatnik,” 158–59.
53. *Vozrozhdenie*, 19 May 1928, 6.
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56. *Poslednie novosti*, 21 May 1930, 2.
57. *Poslednie novosti*, 2 July 1929, 3.
58. *Vozrozhdenie*, 9 July 1930, 3.
59. *Poslednie novosti*, 8 July 1930, 3.
60. Catherine Merridale, “Revolution among the Dead: Cemeteries in Twentieth-Century Russia,” *Mortality* 8, no. 2 (2003): 177–78.
61. Mariia Dmitrievna Vrangeli' Collection, Box 7, Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford University, California.
62. *Vozrozhdenie*, 4 August 1928, 4.
63. *Vozrozhdenie*, 12 June 1934, 3.
64. *Poslednie novosti*, 23 June 1930, 3.
65. GARF, f. 10231, op. 1., d. 87, l. 7.
66. GARF, f. 10231, op. 1., d. 87, l. 7.
67. GARF, f. 10231, op. 1., d. 87, l. 8.
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CHAPTER 11

Memory, Landscape and the Architecture of the Imperial War Graves Commission

Tim Godden

During a number of visits to the former Western Front throughout the 1920s, Captain H. A. Taylor catalogued the changing nature of the landscape and the loss of those distinctive features that had made up the battlefield, lamenting that ‘one finds no trace of that tangle of trenches, named after London streets’.¹ R. H. Mottram, in his collection of essays and short stories, published a decade after the end of hostilities, has the main protagonists of his best-selling *The Spanish Farm Trilogy*—Geoffrey Skene and Stephen Dormer—return to the place of their respective woundings in 1918, only to become lost in what was once a familiar landscape.² Indeed, the idea of a lost landscape is a consistent theme within the writings of those soldiers who returned to the former battlefields.

This chapter will focus specifically on the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), which became the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in 1960, approach to creating a memorial that sought to retain the spatial relationships of the battlefield that time and reconstruction had erased. It will begin with a brief overview of the

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scholarship on the subject followed by an introduction to the challenge that faced the IWGC. The chapter will then use a series of case studies to highlight the approaches taken by the IWGC and its architects to create a spatial memorial to the landscape and experience of the Great War.

The IWGC has been the subject of little academic attention. The few publications that exist provide an overview of the whole institution, namely Longworth's official history, *The Unending Vigil*, and Edwin Gibson and Kingsley Ward's *Courage Remembered*.³ Other publications focus on the key personalities, most recently David Crane's biography of the IWGC founder Sir Fabian Ware, *Empires of the Dead*.⁴ There is a similar dearth of published works with regard to the architecture of the Commission. Those that consider the architecture succumb to the cult of personality, focussing on the principal architects, and primarily on the works of Sir Edwin Lutyens. Of all the books that deal with architectural aspects of the Commission, Jeroen Geurst's study of the war cemeteries of Lutyens is the most rounded in that it recognises the wider architectural project and the process by which the project functioned.⁵ Indeed, Geurst makes reference to the group of junior architects and highlights aspects of both the workings of the IWGC architectural department and the design process. However, as is to be expected in a volume focussing on Lutyens, it is the principal architect who receives much of the attention. In all works, the accepted view in relation to the creation of the cemeteries, first outlined by Longworth, is of an architecture defined by the three principal architects. This is partnered with an acceptance that the fog of war arbitrarily determined the locations of cemeteries.

In broader studies of remembrance, memory and the Great War, the architecture of the IWGC has featured in a marginal way. Works such as Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* relegate the cemeteries to a peripheral role where they are only ever considered in terms of the commemoration of the dead.⁶ Within architectural studies and memory studies, publications relating to the architecture of the war have been undertaken in isolation from one another. Even those works that deal with the material culture of the Great War through a predominantly interdisciplinary approach, such as those by Nicholas Saunders, consider the cemeteries primarily as markers of death.⁷

This chapter begins to move the study of the IWGC cemeteries beyond the levels of either the institutional or individual personalities. It will also expand our understanding of the IWGC design principles, moving away from a focus on the equality of treatment and the retention of

burial sites as near as was possible to their original locations. Specifically, it considers the design policy and process, and the designers, within an interpretation of the cemeteries of the IWGC that brings previously absent nuance to our understanding of these sites of memory.

The IWGC was formed by Royal Charter in 1917. In the same year, following an exploration of the old Somme frontline, John Masefield, himself a former hospital orderly on the front lines and a future poet laureate, wrote:

When the trenches are filled in, and the plough has gone over them, the ground will not long keep the look of war. One summer, with its flowers will cover most of the ruin that man can make, and then these places, from which the driving back of the enemy began, will be hard indeed to race, even with maps. [...] In a few years' time, when this war is a romance in memory, the soldier looking for his battlefield will find his marks gone. Centre Way, Peel Trench, Munster Alley, and these other paths to glory will be deep under the corn, and gleaners will sing at Dead Mule Corner.⁸

Within this observation of the transience of the battlefield landscape was also the tacit recognition that future visitors, veterans or otherwise, would require way markers to identify and interpret the landscape. During the interwar period, there were a number of approaches adopted to retaining and preserving the landscapes of the Great War to enable this interpretation to take place. These retained spaces took the form of a physical enclosure of land or an implied enclosure.

At Delville Wood, Vimy Ridge and the Newfoundland Memorial Parks, it is possible to witness the intent to retain the distinct landscape of the battlefield, in order to retain the sites' specific battlefield exploits and as statements of nationhood. All three of these memorial spaces represent a single narrative related to that specific piece of the battlefield. Their inception and maintenance, in addition to retaining the battlefield landscape, was inherently connected with the establishment of their respective national identities. It was, then, of vital importance that the narrative they retained related solely to the nation in question.

In 1921, the negotiations and the purchasing of the forty-acre site that came to be known as Newfoundland Park were completed; it marked a significant change in the way the Great War would be memorialised compared with previous conflicts. Retaining important battlefields was not uncommon. Prior to the Great War, both the sites of Gettysburg

and Waterloo were maintained, but these related to discrete battles. These pieces of land were fought over once and their respective narratives and memoryscapes were linear. The decision to create a parkland memorial to the Great War required the capturing of a range of experiences and events in one area. This can be seen within the space occupied by Newfoundland Park, where the 51st (Highland) Division placed their primary memorial on the Western Front within the grounds of what is intended as a memorial to the men of the Newfoundland Regiment. In addition, those who were killed in the opening minutes of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916 and buried in the cemeteries within the park, and in close proximity to the park, represent a mixture of units and nations that betray the complexity of this memory landscape. Paul Gough's article on the contested memories of Newfoundland Park amply captures the pitfalls of attempting to impose a single narrative onto a site which contains a complex tapestry of experience and memory.⁹ It also serves to highlight the need that was felt in the years immediately after the war to preserve aspects of the battlefield landscape.

The decision taken by both the Canadian and South African governments to cordon off envelopes of land was, as the complexities of the Newfoundland Park space show, not one that could be replicated for the broader British army. Aside from the complexity of attributing battle space as specific memorial space, there was the issue of practicality. The discussions regarding the retention of the ruins of Ypres as a war memorial had been met with a great deal of local opposition.¹⁰ This highlighted another issue that was succinctly referred to in a 1916 pamphlet published by the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries (DGRE) that noted, 'France could not fence off a strip of country 300 miles long and many miles wide, and keep it up as a historical museum'.¹¹ The problem of land highlighted by the Ypres ruins question and the DGRE pamphlet did not resolve the issue raised by Masefield. The battlefields would still need to be interpreted by future visitors.

Through a series of policy and design decisions, such as the retention of battlefield nomenclature in cemetery titles, the IWGC created a range of responses to ensure that the cemeteries made reference to the wartime landscape and assisted with post-war orientation. The remainder of this chapter focuses on IWGC architecture that used the spatial relationships of the cemeteries and the battlefield to retain a layer of memory related to the landscape and experience of the Great War. The areas that will be looked are examples of direct replications of battlefield

spatial relationships, partial or implied replication, and inferred spaces of memory.

DIRECT REPLICATION

The use of direct replication refers to the process of making permanent, through architectural treatment—that being any designed element to the cemetery, such as perimeter walls, landscape features or pavilions—the temporary spatial relationships of the battlefield. With regard to cemeteries, this took two distinct forms: the inclusion of a visible remnant of the original battlefield in the design and the retention of original battlefield cemetery layouts.

During the war the DGRE—the forerunner to the IWGC—under the supervision of Fabian Ware, had been primarily concerned with the identification of individual burials. Official guides written by DGRE staff and circulated across the whole army, such as *SS456 Burials in the Battle Area: Notes for Officers*, outlined the correct procedure to follow thereafter.¹² Likewise, the practical advice regarding burial that was shared with the Divisional- and Brigade-level burial officers focused on the positioning of a burial site in relation to logistical requirements.¹³ In both instances, the information imparted was not related to the laying out or management of a cemetery. Indeed, the *Care of the Dead* instructional booklet had inferred that many of these sites would likely only be temporary and thus the primary concern should be clear and robust identification.¹⁴ This was not the case in cemeteries behind the lines, where careful laying out and management were both considered. Colin Rowntree, a member of a Graves Registration Unit (GRU), noted in his diary on 17 March 1917 that he had ‘found a new cemetery in Zillebeke village with about 50 or 60 names’.¹⁵ The entry is a clear indication that, despite the efforts of Ware and the practical interventions of GRU members such as Rowntree, the creation and development of unofficial cemeteries was still a necessary requirement of the frontline even as far into the war as 1917. It is from these unofficial battlefield sites that much of the romantic imagery of the cemeteries as war memorials arose. In design terms, the chaotic layout provided a clear visual distinction between the front line and behind the lines.

The architectural treatment of these frontline cemeteries, whether the cemeteries had been physically on the frontline or in the spatial frontline created by indirect shellfire, captures the raw urgency of their creation.

These were not places to be laid out in neat rows of crosses. They were places where if a soldier in the process of burying a comrade dwelt too long he might find himself requiring the same service. The intention of both retaining and making permanent the battlefield layout was to create a visual link between the experience and landscape of war.

The role of direct replication in the creation of a landscape memorial was so important that it was adopted at the largest of all the IWGC cemeteries, Tyne Cot. The enclosure of Tyne Cot contains both the cemetery and the Memorial to the Missing for those lost in the fighting of the Third Battle of Ypres. The memorial forms the most obvious element of the architectural treatment on the site, forming an imposing semi-circular wall at the end of the cemetery containing the names of over 33,000 missing that terminates in Neo-Classical rotundas at either end. The majority of the cemetery is made up of smaller cemeteries and individual burials that were concentrated from the surrounding fields. However, the central architecturally treated bunker was also adjacent to the original Tyne Cot cemetery, which housed the bodies of around 343 men.¹⁶ Within the rigid rows of graves that form the vast majority of the cemetery, the original cemetery sits diametrically opposed in form. Here, the original, haphazard creation of the graves has been permanently retained in the stone grave markers.

In his memoirs, Sir Herbert Baker, the principal architect of the cemetery and memorial, made reference to an interaction with King George V, in which the king is said to have suggested in no uncertain terms that the bunker should be retained. It is not clear whether King George had architectural treatment in mind, but the outcome was that, within the flagship cemetery of the IWGC, the architecture retained a physical aspect of the Great War landscape.

Baker's memoir makes the following reference to the architectural treatment of Tyne Cot cemetery:

we wished to emphasise, a pyramid of stepped stone was built above (the pillbox), leaving a small square of the concrete exposed in the stonework; and on this we inscribed in large bronze letters these words, suggested by Kipling, 'This was the Tynecot Blockhouse'. On the pyramid we set up on high the War Cross.¹⁷

Baker's subtle shift in language from 'I' to 'we', as used in earlier descriptions of his work on the design of the Memorial to the Missing at

Tyne Cot, along with other works such as the Indian memorial at Neuve Chapelle, and that of the pillbox and cemetery at Tyne Cot, suggest that the Junior Architect, John Truelove, was given the responsibility for this particular aspect of the architectural treatment. This devolution of responsibility would not be unusual in a larger cemetery, where Principal Architect involvement was often greater but focussed on key architectural features. In the case of Tyne Cot, it is more likely, owing to the inclusion of the vast memorial at the rear of the cemetery, that Truelove was tasked with what would have been considered the secondary aspects of the overall design whilst Baker focussed on the primary elements. Indeed, it is interesting to note that all the forms of retention evident at Tyne Cot Cemetery appear to have been instigated by Truelove, the junior architect, and not by Herbert Baker, the nominal architect and author of the architectural design.

Truelove had fought at the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele as it is colloquially known. In addition to the subtext of Baker's memoir, including the obvious weighting he ascribes to the design of the memorial over the cemetery, the extant architecture suggests that Truelove was responsible for the central feature of the retained cemetery and the subsequent architectural treatment of the blockhouse. Indeed, the 'pyramid' that Baker refers to does not have any specific commonality in terms of architectural vocabulary with the memorial just a few metres away. Its white block work, reminiscent of other IWGC cemeteries, such as the nearby Passchendaele New British Cemetery by Holden and Von Berg, is at odds with the dressed flint walls and Neo-Classical rotundas of the memorial.

Truelove's design of the central pillbox gave it a distinct architectural language, one that differed from that of the memorial and perimeter wall. Despite this, the pillbox functions as a fulcrum for the remainder of the design. The central axis from the lychgate entrance to the centre of the curve of the memorial wall passes directly through the position of the pillbox. The geometry of the whole cemetery is defined by the preservation within the design of a piece of the original battlefield. In addition to the architecturally treated blockhouse, Truelove's layout design chose to retain two undressed blockhouses at the opposite end of the cemetery to Baker's formal architectural intervention of the Memorial to the Missing. The retention of the three pillboxes creates a dynamic relationship between the architecture and the history of the site. In their account of the battles in and around Passchendaele in the summer and autumn

of 1917, Prior and Wilson highlight the role of pillboxes in slowing the allied advances. One particular example recounts how an ANZAC Corps attacking on 12 October 1917 became caught in the muddy, shell-holed space between pillboxes and that subsequently this ‘host of pillboxes cut them down in swaths’.¹⁸ At Tyne Cot Cemetery, the space between the two pillboxes contains the vast majority of burials, echoing the battlefield history of both the specific location and, more generally, the experience of fighting in the Third Battle of Ypres.

In his treatment of the central pillbox, Truelove also provided an interesting insight into the intention of the site within the battlefield touring experience. If, for example, we consider the role of the cemetery within a modern battlefield tour, it is often as a focal point for the result of battle. As Iles points out, guides will often pick out specific graves and draw the attention of the group to the grave or graves.¹⁹ By contrast, Truelove’s design, with its stepped sides and platforms, created a position from which to look outward, and to engage with the landscape beyond the perimeter wall.

At Ploegsteert, on the Franco-Belgian border, known to the Tommies as Plugstreet, William Cowlshaw also used the practice of direct replication to retain the authenticity of a site. At Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery, Cowlshaw created a burial space that was intended to be a central location which could absorb a number of smaller regimental cemeteries. It is interesting to consider the memorial context of Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery, in that three other IWGC cemeteries lie within a few hundred yards of it. The decision to create a new cemetery within the wood can be considered, then, as an approach by the IWGC designed to keep the other cemeteries within the wood, such as Rifle House, in their original format and to retain as many burials within the confines of the wood as possible. As the CWGC historical files outline, Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery was made by the enclosure of a number of small regimental cemeteries:

Plot II was originally the SOMERSET LIGHT INFANTRY CEMETERY [...] Plot IV, the BUCKS CEMETERY [...] Plot III contains plots (that) were known as CANADIAN CEMETERY, STRAND.²⁰

The architectural treatment of the enclosure retained not only the battlefield layout of the original plots, but allowed each plot to retain its independence within the design. The enclosure, created by the combination

of a perimeter wall and hedge, follows the shapes created by the individual cemeteries. Indeed, the perimeter wall, at one point, follows the geometry of Fleet Street trench, which passed between the Somerset Light Infantry Cemetery, the current plot II, and the unnamed cemetery that forms the current Plot I. The most noticeable aspect of the architectural treatment that sought to ensure the independence of the original burial plots, however, has been lost through subsequent alterations. The current entrance to the cemetery is from the path through the wood at a point on the eastern edge of the cemetery, which takes the visitor directly into the former Bucks Cemetery. The original entrance was on the northern edge, on the side of the Strand trench, and created an axis with the Great Cross that clearly separated plots I and III. In plan form, this distinction is still clear, although the alteration makes this less so at ground level.

It is clear from the original plan that Cowlshaw had considered how each individual burial ground could retain its own narrative within the creation of a new enclosed, larger site. The result is a cemetery design that captured the memory of multiple places in one unifying space.

PARTIAL OR INFERRED REPLICATION

The second variation of spatial replication found within IWGC cemeteries is partial or inferred. This refers to the architectural treatment of a cemetery that is informed by the historic spatial relationship of the site but which could not be retained in its original form. One such example of this form of architectural treatment occurred in another IWGC cemetery near to Ploegsteert Wood: Berks Cemetery Extension.

Shortly after the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing was completed, in 1930, the IWGC was forced to extend the cemetery to absorb an additional 480 graves into the site. The commission was unable to come to an agreement with the owner of the nearby Rosenberg Chateau that had been the site of two cemeteries since the fighting of 1914. An article in *The Ypres Times*—the magazine of the ex-servicemen's group The Ypres League—outlined the problems:

[the cemetery] stands immediately within the grounds of the former chateau (completely destroyed during the war), which the owner desires to rebuild. It is his contention that the presence of a cemetery in close proximity to his house would materially detract from the amenities of the latter.²¹

Despite strong objections from the Commission, the Anglo-Belgian Joint Committee and the Minister of the Interior, it was felt that the landowner was strictly within his rights to ask for the removal of the cemeteries according to Belgian law.

The emotive act of exhumation and reburial of the Rosenberg Chateau cemeteries, combined with public awareness of the issue, as was highlighted in an earlier edition of the *Ypres Times*, meant that the IWGC could not simply concentrate the burials into one of the open, larger cemeteries.²² There were also two practical reasons why this could not be done. First, all the larger and open concentration cemeteries were too far removed geographically from the original burial sites. This went against the principles of the IWGC of keeping men buried as close as possible to the place of their death, as laid out in Frederic Kenyon's report on how the war cemeteries were to be designed.²³ Secondly, the problem of proximity opened up another challenge in that the majority of cemeteries in the Ploegsteert area were completed and those that were designated as 'open' were intended for outlying individual graves that were discovered. In addition to the relatively small scale of many of the cemeteries in the area, those that remained open, such as Prowse Point, could not have accommodated such a significant number of reburials without a redesign of the otherwise completed architectural treatment.

Owing to a delay in the transfer of placement of the Memorial to the Missing from Armentières to Ploegsteert, the IWGC was provided with a site that was local to the original burial grounds, was as yet incomplete and was able to accommodate such an expansion. Unfortunately, the CWGC file relating to the competition for the memorial has gone missing in the intervening years and, as such, little is known about the original scheme.²⁴ However, in a 1928 volume of the *Ypres Times*, a brief article gives an overview of the plan for the memorial. Predominantly focusing on the memorial, the article also made reference to the layout of the whole site:

Facing the road, three bays of the colonnade are left open for the principal entrance, and on each of the sides are openings which conduct on the one side to the Hyde Park Corner (Royal Berks) Cemetery, where is placed the Stone of Remembrance, and on the other to an avenue which is terminated by the Great Cross.²⁵

From this brief description of the site and combined with the site plan and extant architecture, there is evidence to suggest that the IWGC,

concerned that a resolution might not have been reached with the landowner of Rosenberg Chateau, included the potential of two additional burial plots into the brief.

The approach used by the architect, Harold Chalton Bradshaw, was in keeping with other similar IWGC sites in that the axis created by the position of the Great Cross also created a visual distinction between the plots. The denoting of difference in the case of Ploegsteert meant that the two original cemeteries retained autonomy within the greater precinct. They were placed at a distance from the original Berks Cemetery Extension plot and with a clear distinction between the two Rosenberg Chateau plots. In addition, a special memorial marked five burials that were lost during wartime bombardments of the original Rosenberg Chateau plots. The use of special memorials was not unusual. However, in the case of the Rosenberg Chateau plots, the names commemorated were kept with the remainder of the original plots. The architectural treatment of the Rosenberg Chateau cemeteries displays how, even when the original layout has been lost, the principles of the IWGC ensured that as many of the original spatial relationships were retained as possible. Indeed, the policy of including the names of concentrated cemeteries within the cemetery handbook reflects, by extension, this same principle of retaining the history of the space beyond the walls of the cemetery.

INFERRED SPACE

Inferred space, the final aspect of spatial retention within IWGC cemeteries, highlights how the policy and design decisions could expand the site of memory to beyond the perimeter walls into non-architecturally treated spaces of the wider landscape. At Lancashire Cottage Cemetery, on the south side of Ploegsteert Wood, the historical information held by the CWGC does not reflect the full history of the site, stating that ‘the cemetery was in German hands from 10 April to 29 September 1918 and they made a few burials in it during that spring and summer’.²⁶ Of particular note is the mention of the few German burials that were made. This refers to the 13 German burials that remain in the extant cemetery. However, the work of Birger Stichelbaut has identified a much larger plot of German burials to the rear of the British graves.²⁷ An aerial photograph from 20 July 1918, towards the end of the period that Lancashire Cottage was in German hands, clearly shows a substantial German plot of burials.²⁸

This information, in the context of the approaches taken with Rosenberg Chateau Cemeteries, suggests that the remaining German burials within Lancashire Cottage are present through design rather than fate. As has been shown throughout this chapter, the historical context of the site was considered paramount in the design process. The history of Lancashire Cottage as a cemetery and as a wartime landscape was one that had a direct connection to the German army. The aerial photograph of July 1918 confirms the significant role of this site during the German occupation.

The design decisions of the architect, Cowlshaw, ensured that the history of the site was retained. The inclusion of the 13 German burials, all from the period of German occupation, ensured that a layer of memory of both the cemetery and the landscape was retained. Of particular interest in this respect is Cowlshaw's positioning of the German graves. Unlike the British graves, which are spaced throughout the cemetery, but at a distance from the perimeter wall, the German headstones are directly against the rear wall. This location of the headstones within a CWGC cemetery is usually reserved for those graves that are connected to a special memorial relating to a 'lost' cemetery beyond the boundaries of the site. For example, the five graves from Rosenberg Chateau that were lost in the bombardment are placed against the perimeter, set back from the graves of those physically buried in the cemetery. This design statement in CWGC cemeteries is used to show that these bodies are elsewhere in the surrounding landscape and connects the extant cemetery with those cemeteries that no longer exist. In the case of the German graves at Lancashire Cottage they create a spatial connection with the landscape beyond the rear perimeter wall and the area filled by the original German plot. At Lancashire Cottage cemeteries, Cowlshaw used architectural devices to retain aspects of the historic narrative and memory of each cemetery and the surrounding landscape that those familiar with the site during the war would have recognised.

The final aspect of the IWGC spatial memorial is that of the spaces in-between—the relationship between individual and groups of cemeteries and the landscapes within which they sit. The most common form through which the IWGC created a spatial memorial was through visual contact. One such example of this can be found near Redan Ridge on the Somme, where the series of cemeteries allows the eye to follow the path of the fighting in the landscape. In many cases, the visual connection

between cemeteries and the spaces in between is defined architecturally by the consideration of the positioning of the Great Cross. Indeed, several of the cemetery notes made by the junior architects in their design approval forms made specific reference to the function of the cross in the design. For example, Truelove, in his design notes for Quarry Cemetery, Vermelles, stated its use as a marker for visitors owing to the hidden nature of the cemetery.²⁹ At Ploegsteert Wood, however, the IWGC approach to land acquisition created a more explicit spatial connection between the cemetery sites, the original wartime landscape and the memoryscape.

Robert Macfarlane, in his exploration of the ancient ways of England, noted that paths have an ability to transcend time-based boundaries and retain memory, saying of paths that it is, ‘as if time had somehow pleated back on itself, bringing continuous moments into contact, and creating historical correspondences’.³⁰ The continuity of the path as a point of spatial retention and memorial is particularly important in the context of Ploegsteert. Many units of the British Army, including those of the Imperial forces, passed through the trenches in and around Ploegsteert at some point in the war. However, there is one unit that is particularly associated with the wood, the London Rifle Brigade (LRB). Immediately after it arrived in the Ploegsteert sector in late 1914, it began shaping the landscape of Ploegsteert Wood. It was given the responsibility for laying out and improving the communication routes from the rear areas up to the frontline that passed through Ploegsteert Wood. The LRB took on this task with great gusto and carried out extensive work throughout the wood and surrounding areas—naming each area after London street names in the process, which lasted for the remainder of the war.

The lattice work of paths and trenches, constructed and named by the LRB in the late months of 1914, are mostly lost. However, a handful do survive. Those that remain act as access points to the cemeteries—seen from above the battlescape of the Great War is identifiable by both cemeteries and the paths that cut through the woodland and surrounding countryside.

Routes such as Mud Lane and Bunhill Row still lead the visitor to the same places they did in 1914. Whilst the paths do not fall under the jurisdiction of the CWGC, part of the land acquisition process was to ensure access in perpetuity. By retaining the cemeteries within the wood, rather than consolidating them into a more easily accessible cemetery elsewhere, the wartime landscape has been retained and reinforced.

Masefield's assertion that 'Centre Way, Peel Trench, Munster Alley, and these other paths to glory will be deep under the corn, and gleaners will sing at Dead Mule Corner' was countered by the IWGC in their approach to land acquisition.³¹ At Ploegsteert, the retention of the cemeteries in their original locations, such as at Rifle House, Mud Corner and the enclosure cemetery of Ploegsteert Wood, ensured that the original spatial connections and the inherent history contained within them were retained as points of access. Rather than becoming paths *in* memory, Masefield's paths to glory became, instead, paths *of* memory.

CONCLUSION

Until now, our understanding of the cemeteries of the IWGC has been shaped by the interpretation of them only as sites of mourning. Existing scholarship has not engaged with the architecture, or the policies and designers that led to the creation of the permanent British cemeteries of the old Western Front. The lack of nuance in the discussion regarding the cemeteries has missed the broader intent of the IWGC in the creation of these memorials.

This chapter has shown one aspect of the broader intent. All the case studies have presented evidence that at both institutional and design levels the role of the architecture and cemetery was considered as much more than just a graveyard. They have shown that the architects considered the wartime landscape within their designs and that they used methods to lift the gaze of the visitor to the landscape beyond. At an institutional level, policies were adopted that would ensure that individuals were buried as close to their point of death as possible, which helped to create the authentic and connected network of memorial sites. This in turn, through the use of visible architecture and cemetery access paths to retain wartime communication routes, enabled the site of memory to extend past the perimeter wall of a given cemetery and into the spaces beyond.

Considering the architecture of the cemeteries as a memorial in its own right brings about a fundamental change in how the war cemeteries should be interpreted. It allows for an understanding of the cemeteries as sites of memory that is not simply centred on mourning, but as sites that intentionally contain multiple layers of memory. The architectural and landscape evidence shows the IWGC to have been an innovative, far-thinking organisation that recognised the role of the cemeteries in retaining the history and memory not just of those who died, but also of the landscape, experience and memory of the Great War.

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Traces of Being: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on First World War Conflict Landscapes

Nicholas J. Saunders

Landscape is a complex and ever-changing idea—a slippery concept rather than a single place in historical time. Like all landscapes, those of modern conflict are sensuous metaphors of identity which have constantly changed their meanings and significances since 1914 and continue to do so today. Landscapes are made by and for people, and those of the First World War today still conceal many of those who created them between 1914 and 1918. Here, literally and symbolically, human beings and landscape have become one.

It is a fundamental tenet in the anthropological archaeology of modern conflict that to understand landscape one has to be in it. Archaeologists and anthropologists regard historical research as a prerequisite preparation for fieldwork rather than an end in itself. Disciplinary considerations notwithstanding, how have different kinds of fieldwork added to new conceptual understandings of conflict landscapes belonging to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? What is the relationship

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between anthropology and history in our efforts to understand the landscapes of war? To explore these issues, in this chapter I will describe how a hybrid archaeological-anthropological approach has shaped our understanding of two conflict landscapes belonging to the First World War—the Western Front and the Italian Front along the Soča/Isonzo river valley. In each of these, History, Geography, Heritage and Tourism Studies have complemented anthropological and archaeological research in powerful ways and have produced a truly interdisciplinary perspective that privileges no one discipline but draws on them all.

THE WESTERN FRONT

The Western Front is a symbolic landscape for our time. After 100 years, it remains a testament to the defining human invention of the twentieth century—industrialised war. The trenches of the Western Front still scar the land from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border, and today they are increasingly integrated into a common European heritage. Since 1914, the Western Front has been shaped by war, peace, renewed conflict, and a post-1945 political reconfiguration forged, at least in part, by a transnational desire not to repeat the wars of the recent past. Today, this landscape continues to be re-invented (and redeveloped) at an accelerating pace.

Arguably, never before in human history has a landscape impressed itself onto human memory so deeply or in such myriad ways as the Western Front. Yet the human experiences of this area are equally a product of the post-war period (1919–present) as they are of the war itself. The Western Front has become a concept as well as a legacy of conflict—its multiple landscapes composed of a complex layering of human actions, experiences, emotions and memories that have mingled and reconfigured themselves for more than a century.

Until the late 1990s, investigating the Western Front was mainly the preserve of military historians, who described and interpreted the events that occurred there between 1914 and 1918. The post-war years—especially 1919–1939—have received less attention, though cultural historians have investigated aspects of battlefield tourism and commemorative monuments.¹ Since the turn of the millennium, archaeology and anthropology have increasingly engaged with this landscape, seeking out the often-hidden or unacknowledged connections between landscape, objects and people.

Anthropologists do not see the Western Front as an empty or inert background to war, nor do they regard it as a fossilised remnant of battle. Instead, they regard it as a living entity, constantly changing its shape and significance for new generations who engage with it in many different (and often unsuspected) ways. In this dynamic view, landscape is seen as proactive, stationary yet ever changing, replete with memories as well as human remains and the detritus of war, and thus open to many kinds of interpretation and representation. To understand these shifting meanings, anthropologists and archaeologists adopt an interdisciplinary approach that draws on the wealth of knowledge gained not just by themselves but by geographers, heritage and museum specialists, and historians of culture, art and the military. What emerges from this unique synthesis is a powerful hybrid approach to the multilayered reality of the Western Front today.

Landscape in this view is not a single unalterable location, but a palimpsest of overlapping places, which possess different meanings for the different groups of people who select an aspect which interests them most. Each group defines its own landscape and interacts with it in specific ways. First World War amateur historians, military enthusiasts, academics, tour operators, militaria collectors, heritage professionals and those who seek the graves of their ancestors, come to regard being in their chosen landscape as a kind of ‘belonging’—a way of reinforcing or reconfiguring their own identity. The power of landscape is such that these different groups can stand in the same place at the same time yet engage and understand something unique to them. Historical knowledge can buttress and inform these personal experiences, and anthropological engagement can unpack their in-the-moment character and importance. These post-war battle-zone landscapes are as ‘socially constructed’ as they were technologically created by four years of industrialised war.

The battlefields of the Somme and the Ypres Salient are densely packed sets of superimposed landscapes. Simultaneously, they are industrialised slaughterhouses, vast tombs for ‘the missing’, places for returning refugees (and arguments about post-war reconstruction), increasingly popular tourist destinations, locations for memorials and pilgrimage, sites for archaeological and anthropological research, places for cultural heritage development and television documentaries, and, in many instances, still deadly sites full of unexploded shells and bombs.²

The aim of anthropological investigations in these places is to figuratively unpack each of these landscapes (here referred to as layers), and

to acknowledge, interpret and preserve the various juxtaposed characters of each. It is not enough to investigate the conflict through the written sources alone, but rather to seek out and understand how that conflict created new physical and cultural layers during and after the Great War, and how this process continues apace in the present.

During the inter-war years, for example, young children around Ypres were maimed and killed while playing with unexploded bombs and shells, or while scavenging battlefields for scrap metal for their families to sell to make ends meet. The Ypres Salient for these children and their bereaved parents was a peacetime landscape of civilian trauma and loss that is seldom acknowledged or added to the cost of the war in general, or the price asked for post-war souvenirs sold to battlefield visitors. Local grief was thereby sublimated to that of tourists who, by purchasing these items, sought to validate their relationship with the war dead.

The conflicted past of a hundred years ago reaches out to the present day in other unsuspected ways. In soil poisoned by gas attacks and artillery barrages, trees grow today and prove toxic to humans because wood polluted by high levels of wartime lead are used for oak wine casks and have caused lead poisoning in northern France. Here,

The tree is an agent, sucking up toxic wartime chemicals through its roots, incorporating them in the fibre of its trunk, and releasing them into wine, where they are then absorbed into the human body. In this complex way, artefactual wartime poison is transformed and carried by natural entities (trees) for a century, then becomes embodied in humans via cultural actions of tree felling, cask making, and wine production and consumption.³

The First World War on the Western Front (and indeed in all its European theatres) destroyed largely medieval landscapes, finely balanced between architectural splendour (e.g., Ypres' Cloth Hall) and rural features (e.g., a sophisticated and centuries-old drainage system). Rich agricultural land became a factory of industrialised death, as the landscape was 'drenched with hot metal', cut by trenches, swathed in barbed wire, poisoned with gas, soaked with human blood, and disfigured by blasted trees and shell craters.⁴

These activities were conducted by men for whom the physical and psychological intensities of their experiences created a different view of the world, if not a new world entirely. As Jay Winter observed, this was

an otherworldly landscape where ‘the bizarre mixture of putrefaction and ammunition, the presence of the dead among the living, literally holding up trench walls from Ypres to Verdun, suggested that the demonic and satanic realms were indeed here on earth’.⁵ Many men, conceptually speaking, ‘were physically and symbolically folded into landscape and emerged remade’.⁶

This world was also a new wartime landscape of the senses, where vision was often denied and replaced by other elements of sensory experience, such as smell, touch and sound.⁷ Soldiers quickly developed new skills, identifying by sound different kinds of artillery shells as they travelled through the air, and recognising the tell-tale odour of a buried corpse before (or without ever) seeing it. The human body is our way of relating to and perceiving the world, and so it is not surprising that the fragmentation of human bodies and terrain joined together, as if by alchemy, to fragment reality for soldiers who fought in it (as well as for war refugees who returned to it after 1918). The reconfigured sensorium created what were, in effect, new smellscapes, touchscapes and soundscapes. These new experiential places were short-lived worlds, glimpsed today only in diaries and war poetry, and by definition invisible in the wealth of photographs and films which have survived, and which, of course, represent their own different versions and understandings of landscape.

After the war, it was evident that in the destruction of one past, many new futures had been and were being created. Over the following decades, these new landscapes would be physically and metaphorically piled one on top of the other (and often cut down into a deep archaeological past). Each of these landscapes was infused with new meanings, and while many—such as those of pilgrimage, commemoration, land reclamation and urban reconstruction—appeared quickly, others—such as the landscapes of archaeology, heritage and ethnic presence—would lie dormant for decades before they emerged. For example, in reconstructing the urban landscape and fabric of Ypres, arguments raged about which past should take precedence. Should the town be left as a ruin in honour of all those who died and as a testament to German aggression, or should it be rebuilt anew or as a replica of its medieval splendour?⁸

These developments reinforce the view that the Western Front is neither a single place nor a solely historical entity. Rather, it is like Stonehenge, the Soviet Gulags, or Gaza—a landscape that is political and dynamic, emotional and economic, technological yet spiritual, and

constantly open to renegotiation and re-presentation.⁹ These ongoing processes require anthropological analysis as well as historical evidence from the war and interwar years. In other words, investigators need to be in these landscapes today because tomorrow these places will be different again.

MODERN LAYERS

All landscapes are cultural images as well as physical places.¹⁰ Their significance comes from ideas of connectedness in the human imagination but is always grounded in the experience of ‘being in’ a place. Between 1914 and today, representations and reconstructions of Western Front battlefields have spoken with different voices, whose dissonance represents different conceptions and valuations of the world. For example, the Ypres Salient as reclaimed farmland could be inimical to its preservation as Great War heritage, the proposed construction of the A19 motorway extension around Ypres was at odds with the archaeological potential of its route, amateur digging of First World War sites has had a contentious relationship with professional archaeology,¹¹ and the idea of a respectful (if not sacred) commemoration of the war dead finds itself threatened by waves of tourists who scramble over war memorials, and sometimes clap after the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate. Similarly, while the presence of tourists stimulates the growth of hotels, cafés, private museums, chocolates, beers and kitsch souvenirs, such developments seem for many to undermine the ineffable quality of respect and remembrance.

Battlefield tourism along the old Western Front has been increasing over the last two decades and during the current Centenary has reached epic proportions. New hotels, guesthouses and restaurants have appeared, and there has been an increase in the numbers of commercial tour companies offering visitors battlefield itineraries that are themselves commercially edited landscapes of the war.¹² Perhaps the most potent of these are the ‘educational landscapes’ developed for schoolchildren, whose experiences have the capacity to create life-long attitudes towards the First World War, if not conflict more widely. It is tragically ironic that since the 2015 Islamist terrorist attacks in France and Belgium—which some see as a century-long legacy of the First World War in the Middle East—have been the only events to disrupt what was regarded as the inexorable rise of tourist numbers to the battlefields. Concerns about

terrorist threats to personal safety are clearly stopping visitors journeying to the 100-year-old sites of industrialised slaughter.

What is it that tourists come to see? In one sense, of course, they are journeying to historically well-documented sites, such as the Somme and Ypres, including the monuments to the missing at Thiepval and the Menin Gate. In this way, they are little different from visitors to the Parthenon in Athens and the Giza pyramids outside Cairo. Unlike at these sites, however, battlefield tourists knowingly and unwittingly create new experiential places by virtue of 'being in' the landscape. They participate in and accelerate the production of new kinds of personal and public memories through engaging in locations whose commercial potential is subsequently developed in the creation of 'new' sites and monuments which subsequent visitors view as part of the original wartime landscape.

Reconstructed (and sometimes completely fake) trenches have been created as tourist traps, and new and revamped cafés and café-museums have appeared, whose food and drink are sometimes themed on the Great War. Hotels, souvenir shops, bookshops and chocolate shops all participate in the production of new commercial landscapes of war remembrance, alongside images of the ubiquitous red poppy.¹³ Original and recently-made war memorabilia, badges, T-shirts, bags, and confectionery in the shape of British Tommy helmets, and, most recently, poppies, are all reifications of the tourist experience, portable objects that can be brought back to adorn the home.

One interesting difference for tourists today, compared to those during the period of the 1960s to the 1990s, is the legal reconfiguration of war landscapes as cultural heritage. Whereas in the past an integral part of a self-guided battlefield visit could include digging up battlefield debris for an authentic souvenir,¹⁴ today legal restrictions are more stringently enforced, not least because the war has become a focus of professional archaeological investigation. Archaeological excavations themselves can be considered theatres or arenas where the public can see the war re-emerge after a century beneath the soil, and can imagine the real (if unlikely) possibility that it could be their own ancestor's remains that are being recovered. Direct personal connections (however imaginary) can exist in these places in ways which would be impossible when visiting the splendours of Greece and Egypt.

A professionalised landscape of archaeological engagement with the First World War emerged, not without difficulties, during the late

1990s/early 2000s.¹⁵ Previously the domain of serious-minded amateur diggers as well as those who were little more than looters, the catalyst of changing attitudes was the aforementioned A19 Project, which saw this motorway extension outside Ypres abandoned in August 2005 due to the threat of damaging First World War heritage.¹⁶ Since then, several important investigations have taken place, with those at Ploegsteert ('Plugstreet')¹⁷ and Messines¹⁸ being prime examples. The archaeological engagement with the war added more layers of meaning and value to the battlefields, and this in turn attracted television companies keen to film investigations of the traces of war, and creating their own highly selective televisual landscapes which were broadcast around the world. Over the last twenty years, the Western Front has experienced an increasingly complex layering of landscapes—each of which embodies a different social experience and use of space.

LANDSCAPE INTO OBJECTS

Landscapes are artefacts, and possess an ambiguous relationship with other artefacts that represent them, particularly small objects that can appear as museum exhibits, souvenirs, artworks or mementos. Many of these objects were made by soldiers during the war, and returning refugees after the Armistice, and so become an extended part of the landscape they represent—embodiments of the human experience, and a material witness to war.

While there are many aspects to these objects,¹⁹ it is their effect on landscapes that I focus on here. Many of these items are souvenirs, sent home by soldiers or carried home by the bereaved on returning from a battlefield pilgrimage or visit during the inter-war years. Each object has its own 'social life' or biography that traces its course through time and space, and during which it acquires a patina of social relationships and identities. These items have the power to collapse one landscape into another by annihilating geographical and temporal distance.

Sometimes such objects come from the natural world, such as tree branches made into walking sticks, oak leaves made into photograph frames, or pieces of carved chalk or painted animal bone. More often they are the recycled metal debris of war, such as bullets, shells and shrapnel. The most obvious category of these items includes those which have landscape images inscribed or painted onto them, such as depictions of the medieval Cloth Hall in Ypres aflame in 1915, the leaning

Madonna and Child atop the Basilica in Albert on the Somme, or river scenes from Mesopotamia etched onto jewellery made from war-time scrap aluminium.²⁰ One of the most extraordinary examples is the ‘Versavel Windmill’, made by two brothers, Jules and Camiel Versavel from Passchendaele. They fled to Poperinghe in 1916 and began making trench art, one example of which commemorated Passchendaele’s windmill that had been destroyed earlier in the war. The windmill had been a dominant feature on the landscape of the Passchendaele Ridge, and the Versavel brothers’ model made from shells and bullets has kept its memory alive to the present.²¹ From an anthropological perspective, the act of manufacture and decoration ‘attaches’ people to the things they are making or decorating in acts that evoke and symbolise their wider social experiences of landscape.

For example, in 1915, a British soldier personalised an artillery shell which he had made into a jug by scratching his name and the date onto it, and adding two inscriptions ‘Souvenir of Poperinghe’ and ‘Made in Flanders by TH South’. In this way, he located himself at a particular point in the landscape—the souvenir had already become a memory object of a place and existed henceforth in his home in England.

The Australian soldier Stanley Pearl materialised his war experiences around Ypres in 1916 by making a metal letter opener. Its blade came from an artillery shell found at ‘China Wall’ near Ypres, the handle from a German bullet fired at him on the Menin Road, and a decorative French button which was ‘souveneered’ from a French infantryman at Poperinghe. This object is a miniature embodiment of the local military geography of the Ypres area, and a commentary on where Pearl was and what he did. Each component was a social experience of landscape, and the finished artefact a 3-D metal narrative of one small part of Pearl’s war.²²

Arguably more poignant is the case of the Goss family, the inventors of Heraldic Porcelain, whose son Raymond was killed in August 1915 by an exploding shell outside Ypres. He had previously sent home a brass shell case to his father as a souvenir. After Raymond’s death, the family had it inscribed ‘*French “75” Shell Case sent home by Sec. Lt. Raymond G.G. Goss 1/5th N. Staffs. Reg. (1915 killed near Hill 60 in Flanders August 1915)*’.²³ For the Goss family, the souvenir symbolically became their son, and signified a very different ‘experience’ of the Ypres Salient landscape than that of Stanley Pearl.

Conflict landscapes are not only unstable in this metaphysical sense, but also travel through time, affecting those who had no direct

experience of the war. Such was the case recorded in *Auntie Mabel's War* by Marian Wenzel and John Cornish, where a decorated French artillery shell case seemed to dissolve time as it 'released' the memory of Auntie Mabel (a wartime nurse in France) in the mind of her niece, Mrs Turner who had inherited the object. During the authors' interview, Turner pointed to the item and said:

Yes, that thing by the fireplace with the flowers on it is really a shell case. [...] She brought that back from France for her parents; I thought it was an awfully morbid thing. [...] It got to Granny's house and then it came here. [...] I often look at it and wonder how many men its shell killed.²⁴

Here is a presencing of the past, where matter could embody differing notions of distance, stretching or conflating the experience of time through its ability to move history into private time by juxtaposing it with a personalised present.²⁵

Such experiences are not confined to the Western Front (or indeed the First World War), and occurred on the Eastern Front and Italian Front as well. The dominance of the Western Front in conceptualising and understanding different landscape layers and experiences is due solely to the greater number and accessibility of sources concerning, and familiarity with, the war in the west, though this is slowly changing.

THE SOČA/ISONZO FRONT

The Soča/Isonzo Front along the border of modern-day Italy and Slovenia shares many of the characteristics of the Western Front, but is also fundamentally different in significant respects. The fighting here was some of the bloodiest of the First World War, with no fewer than 12 battles between May 1915 and October 1917.²⁶ These actions created a palimpsest conflict landscape which preserves a unique anthropological and archaeological record of a multinational and multi-ethnic war waged across a topographically diverse terrain.²⁷

The 1918 annexation of the Soča Valley by Italy enabled Mussolini to remobilise the Italian war dead and create a commemorative landscape of Fascist monuments during the interwar years, such as the ossuaries at Kobarid (Italian *Caporetto*), Redipuglia and Oslavia. Within this landscape, further militarisation occurred before and during the Second

World War, and then again under Communist rule in Yugoslavia. In other words, post-1918 conflict landscapes have been embedded within those of the First World War, creating a complex layering of modern warfare and enduring legacies as along the Western Front.

Between 2009 and 2013, investigations along the Soča Valley began the process of documenting and analysing the area's conflict landscapes, and included historical research, field reconnaissance, excavation, topographic assessments and ethnographic interviews at various locations. Such is the complexity of a century of conflict events in the area that in order to capture as much evidence as possible, the landscape was initially conceptualised as having 13 layers, each being a distinct social experience of place characterised by an equally distinct configuration of material culture.

While this research is in its initial stages, and nowhere near as mature as on the Western Front, it provides the framework for more detailed and nuanced investigations in the future. A detailed description of these layers is given elsewhere,²⁸ but a brief account—in essence an annotated list—here demonstrates the approach, and highlights the similarities and differences to earlier work on the Western Front.

Layer one is composed of Austro-Hungarian Army presence before 1914, and is represented by, for example, the 1882 construction of Fort Kluže,²⁹ and the 1907 army barracks in Tolmin.³⁰ Layer two, from 1914 to May 1915, saw new fortifications built at the Vršič Pass, in the upper Soča Valley, and trenches, shelters and military roads on Mengore Hill.³¹ The third layer includes the battlefield remains of the 11 large-scale Italian offensives between 1915 and 1917,³² with the fourth layer belonging to the successful combined Austro-Hungarian and German attack on 24 October 1917 ('The Battle of Caporetto') and its aftermath—a rapid 18 km advance on the first day, and the withdrawal of the last Italian forces on 28 October to the Piave River some 100 km west of the Soča Valley.³³

The fifth layer belongs to the immediate post-war era of the 1920s, when refugees began returning to large swathes of the battle-devastated valley.³⁴ It was created as they cleared traces of war and started rebuilding their ruined homes—two processes which were actually one, as houses, farms and outbuildings were often constructed with recycled materials taken from the battlefields. This changed the area irrevocably, as removing, burying and recycling the elements of the war layers meant

that pristine battlefields largely ceased to exist, or at least were mixed with the new—a crucial fact to be acknowledged in order to understand the complex processes of landscape formation in this region.

The sixth layer, distinct yet contemporary with the fifth, was that formed by moving the ‘remembered dead’ from their battlefield cemeteries (or just the battlefields where they had fallen) to larger more accessible consolidation cemeteries and ossuaries along the valley. While these activities created a new mortuary landscape, they also bestowed ambiguity on the previous small battlefield cemeteries because while many of these were cleared, others were not, or at least not totally. It is curious but significant that officially the wartime mortuary landscape shrank, as at war’s end there were approximately 2,591 (or 2,876, sources vary) battlefield cemeteries, but only 349 after the clearance and consolidation (of which today only 64 have been restored).³⁵

Arguably the most visually salient (and politically influential) feature of this sixth layer was the appearance of monumental ossuaries for the Italian dead who were transferred from their (often individually named) battlefield graves to the anonymising charnel houses at Kobarid, Redipuglia and Oslavia.³⁶ These ossuaries became the focus for mass Fascist rallies during the interwar years, and in a sense, therefore, the Italian war dead had been remobilised for a political cause.

A seventh layer partly overlapped with the sixth during the later interwar years, from the 1930s up until 1943, though only in some remote areas of the upper Soča Valley. This was a new militarisation by the Italian Army which took the form of a fortification system known as the Alpine Wall (*Vallo Alpino*).³⁷ In some locations, it overlaid or was incorporated into remnants of the First World War conflict landscape, such as the system of concrete extensions to the tunnel that leads to Fort Hermann above Fort Kluže.³⁸

The Second World War created an eighth layer, and though this was less extensive than previous ones, it sometimes had an intimate relationship with them. For example, German troops dug trenches around their small ossuary of First World War soldiers near Tolmin, using it as a fortified position, and also altered some elements of Fort Kluže.³⁹ The ninth layer was post-1945, and was composed of new cemeteries and memorials to the partisans and the national liberation movement—a visible reminder of the guerrilla war and counterinsurgency activities of 1941–1945, when Italians, Germans, local Fascists and Yugoslav partisans engaged in a protracted struggle for the control of the landscape.

During the 1980s, First World War layers of the Soča Valley re-emerged as a nascent heritage landscape with the conservation of commemorative sites and renovation of some of that war's military cemeteries. These activities added a tenth layer, characterised by a patchwork where some sites were altered, and others not. These changes were (and remain) obvious to local people, but not always to later visitors or investigators who can all too easily consider them as all equally conserved, renovated, or perhaps even in their original state. After Slovenia's independence in 1991, interest in the First World War gathered momentum, and another, 11th, layer, took shape with the activities of militaria collectors. They cleared the battlefields (especially at high altitudes) of remaining *matériel* and debris both for sale at militaria fairs and for adding to private collections and museums. In this way, the old battlefield landscapes were emptied of objects and new museological landscapes were created. When combined with the effects of battle-zone clearance and recycling of materials of the 1920s, it is clear that such areas today are mostly not pristine survivals from 1915 to 1918, but the result of a century's selective alteration.

In more recent years, a 12th layer has been added with modern heritage-related activities. In 2000, the 'Walks of Peace' Foundation was established and began selectively restoring First World War military features and memorials.⁴⁰ So far, six open-air museums have been created, including those at Kolovrat and Mrzli Vrh,⁴¹ while at other sites restorations have been problematic, for instance at the Austro-Hungarian cemetery at Dutovlje on the Kras.⁴²

The power of the present to rejuvenate and re-inscribe the past is shown by an even more recent trend to hold commemorative events at certain First World War locations, and thereby, arguably, create a 13th layer. Such activities are widespread on the Western Front in France and Belgium,⁴³ and probably will become more so in Slovenia and Italy as well. Along the Soča, these events are mostly attended by re-enactment groups which identify with some of the war's military units, especially those that included significant numbers of Slovenian soldiers. The Slovenian Army is present at some of these events, and so there is an interesting mix of amateur enthusiasts and representatives of the nation's professional military forces.

All of these layers of conflict and post-conflict activity from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present reveal the diversity and complexity of the Soča/Isonzo Valley as a modern conflict landscape.

Even if, eventually, the total number of proposed landscapes is reduced, it is nevertheless clear that this analytical tool of conceptualising layers has shown that any single discipline is insufficient to investigate and make sense of such a confusing array of landscape features and strata.

For the Western Front and the Soča/Isonzo Front, conflict landscapes were not simply produced during the war years, but have a longer cultural biography influenced and shaped also by history, politics, economics, ideology, identity, ethnicity, heritage and tourism (as well as anthropological and archaeological research). The scale and diversity of research knowledge and skills required to document and analyse such places is a potent argument for adopting an interdisciplinary approach which capitalises on disciplinary strengths and combines them in a powerful, synergistic way.

NOTES

1. See David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919–1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998); Jennifer Iles, “Encounters on the Fields: Tourism to the Battlefields of the Western Front,” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 6, no. 2 (2008): 138–54; and Stephen Miles, *The Western Front: Landscape, Tourism and Heritage* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2017).
2. Nicholas J. Saunders, “Matter and Memory in the Landscapes of Conflict: The Western Front 1914–1999,” in *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place*, ed. Barbara Bender and Margot Winer (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 37–53.
3. Saunders, “Bodies in Trees: A Matter of Being in Great War Landscapes,” in *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality and Transformation*, ed. Paul Cornish and Saunders (London: Routledge, 2014), 33.
4. See Saunders, “Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War 1914–2003,” in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, ed. Saunders (London: Routledge, 2004), 5–25.
5. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 68–69.
6. Saunders, “Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War, 1914–2003,” in *Matters of Conflict*, ed. Saunders, 9.
7. David Howes, “Introduction: ‘To Summon All the Senses’,” in *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*, ed. Howes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 3–21; Melanie Winterton, “Signs, Signals and Senses:

- The Soldier Body in the Trenches,” in *Beyond the Dead Horizon: Studies in Modern Conflict Archaeology*, ed. Saunders (Oxford: Oxbow 2012), 229–41; and Matthew Leonard, “Assaulting the Senses: Life and Landscape Beneath the Western Front,” in *Modern Conflict and the Senses*, ed. Saunders and Cornish (London: Routledge, 2017), 43–60.
8. Saunders, “Matter and Memory,” 42–43 and B. Vermeulen, “Ieper is a lie,” in *Flanders Fields Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1999): 9–11.
 9. Bender, “Stonehenge: Contested Landscapes (Medieval to Present-Day),” in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Bender (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 276.
 10. Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, “Introduction: Iconography and Landscape,” in *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed. Cosgrove and Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.
 11. Saunders, “Excavating Memories: Archaeology and the Great War, 1914–2001,” *Antiquity* 76, no. 1 (2002): 101–8.
 12. Miles, *The Western Front*, 27–45.
 13. See Saunders, *The Poppy: A History of Conflict, Loss, Remembrance, and Redemption* (London: One World, 2013).
 14. See John Laffin, *Battlefield Archaeology* (London: Ian Allan, 1987).
 15. See Saunders, “Matter and Memory” and Saunders, *Killing Time: Archaeology and the First World War* (Stroud: Sutton, 2010), 1–30.
 16. Saunders, *Killing Time*, 155–61.
 17. Martin Brown and Richard Osgood, *Digging Up Plugstreet: The Western Front Unearthed* (Yeovil: Haynes Publishing, 2009).
 18. Tom Rowley, “In Flanders Fields, the Largest Ever WWI Excavation,” *The Telegraph*, 9 November 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/11216997/In-Flanders-fields-the-largest-ever-WWI-excavation.html>, accessed 9 May 2017 and Simon Verdegem, Jasper Billemont, and Sebastiaan Genbrugge, *Archeologisch onderzoek Mesen Aquafin Collector* (Ghent: ADeDe, 2013).
 19. See Saunders, *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).
 20. Saunders, *Trench Art*, 2nd ed. (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2011), 61 and 87.
 21. Saunders, *Trench Art*, 2nd ed., 57–59.
 22. Saunders, “‘Pearl’s Treasure’: The Trench Art Collection of an Australian Sapper,” in *Sappers and Shrapnel: Contemporary Art and the Art of the Trenches*, ed. Lisa Slade (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2016), 13–27.
 23. Lynda Pine and Nicholas Pine, *William Henry Goss: The Story of the Staffordshire Family of Potters who invented Heraldic Porcelain* (Horndean: Milestone, 1987), 137.

24. Marian Wenzel and John Cornish, *Auntie Mabel's War: An Account of her Part in the Hostilities of 1914–18* (London: Allen Lane, 1980), 8.
25. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 138.
26. John R. Schindler, *Isonzo: The Forgotten Sacrifice of the Great War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); Mark Thompson, *White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front. 1915–1919* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008); and John Macdonald and Zeljko Cimprić, *Caporetto and the Isonzo Campaign: The Italian Front 1915–1918* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2011).
27. Saunders et al., “Conflict Landscapes of the Soča/Isonzo Front, 1915–2013: Archaeological-Anthropological Evaluation of the Soča Valley, Slovenia,” *Arheo* 30 (2013): 47–66.
28. Saunders et al., 47–66.
29. Marko Simić, *Po Sledeh Soške Fronte* (Ljubljana: Založba Mladinska Knjiga, 1998), 106.
30. Vasja Klavora, *Koraki skozi meglo: Soška fronta: Kobarid, Tolmin 1915–1917* (Celovec: Mohorjeva družba, 2004), 15.
31. Klavora, 26–31.
32. Schindler, *Isonzo*, 241–65.
33. Schindler, 243–65; Simić, *Po Sledeh*, 178 and 226.
34. Darja Piriš, “Kam so vsi ti fantje šli...,” in *Tolminsko mostišče II*, ed. Petra Svoljšak, Piriš, Damjana Fortunat Černilogar, and Lovro Galič (Tolmin: Tolminski muzej, 2005), 38.
35. Černilogar, “Kje stoji jim grobni križ?,” in Svoljšak et al., 94.
36. Černilogar, 95.
37. Anon., *A Guide to the Fortifications of the Italian Alpine Wall in Eastern Alps and Carso (1920–1943)*, http://www.valloalpino.com/index_en.htm, accessed 1 August 2017 and Alessandro Bernasconi and Giovanni Muran, *Il testimone di cemento: Le fortificazioni del ‘Vallo Alpino Littorio’ in Cadore, Carnia e Tarvisiano* (Udine: La Nuova Base, 2009).
38. Simić, *Po Sledeh*, 303.
39. Klavora, *Plavi križ: Soška fronta: Bovec 1915–1917*, 2nd ed. (Celovec: Mohorjeva družba, 2000), 47; Simić, *Po Sledeh*, 303.
40. Tadej Koren, *The Walk of Peace: A Guide along the Isonzo Front in the Upper Soča Region*, trans. Branka Klemenc (Kobarid: The ‘Walks of Peace in the Soča Region Foundation’, 2008).
41. Koren, 103–5 and 140–45.
42. Saunders et al., “Conflict Landscapes of the Soča/Isonzo Front,” 55.
43. Saunders, *Killing Time*, 85–89.

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