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# The Sinai Bedouins and the Ottoman army in World War I

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## ABSTRACT

Though forming having taken an active part in the Sinai and Palestine campaigns of the World War I, the Bedouin tribes are rarely mentioned. This is due in part to the scarcity of documentation, especially having none from the Bedouins themselves. This article seeks to fill in some of the gaps in the research on the war in the Sinai Peninsula and southern Palestine, and to examine the contribution of the Bedouin tribes in that area to the Ottoman military campaign. It argues that the Ottoman perception of the Bedouins as a fighting force changed during the war from being seen as force multiplier to being employed only in scout and reconnaissance roles.

**KEYWORDS** Bedouins; Ottoman Empire; World War I; Palestine; Egypt; Britain; Sinai

Three themes emerge in the study of World War I in the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine: the military campaign of the Egypt-based British Expeditionary Force (BEF),<sup>1</sup> the effects of the war on the local population in Palestine,<sup>2</sup> and the campaign of the Ottoman army in this theatre of war.<sup>3</sup>

Though taking an active part in these campaigns, the Bedouin tribes are rarely mentioned. This is due in part to the scarcity of documentation, especially the lack of any documentation from the Bedouin themselves. By way of filling in some of the gaps in the studies on the war in the Sinai Peninsula and southern Palestine, this article examines the contribution of the Bedouin tribes in that area to the Ottoman military campaign. It argues that while the Bedouins took part in the initial battles, their contribution to the Ottoman war effort diminished over time because of the geography and the nature of the campaign in that theatre of war. It examines how the Ottoman or (British-controlled) Egyptian governments perceived the Bedouin tribes before the war, and explores how the tribes were utilised in Ottoman propaganda. Much can be learned from documents on the war in Sinai and the Bedouin role in it. In addition, the article examines how the

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Bedouins themselves explained their wartime role on the basis of interviews conducted with them in 1920 and during the 1930s.

## The Bedouins between Egyptian, Ottoman, and British rule before the war

During the first half of the nineteenth century Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769–1849) tried to integrate the Bedouin tribes in the Sinai Peninsula into Egyptian society and government. Reuven Aharoni argues that in 1805, after his rise to power in Egypt, the Pasha began to establish relations with the prominent sheikhs and the larger tribes in order to use the Bedouins as a military force and to prevent them from undermining his ambition to establish a centralised government in Egypt. In his account, Muhammad Ali sought to harness the sheikhs in three ways: by creating a common ideological ground; bribing them with land and money; and using coercion and punishment. The sheikhs used the financial benefits to enhance their personal status inside their tribes, to try to increase their influence on other sheikhs, and in future negotiations with the central government. Aharony concluded that the Bedouin sheikhs joined Muhammad Ali's various civilian or military endeavours when it served their own interests'.<sup>4</sup> Following the wars (1831–33, 1839–41) between Ali's newly-created Egyptian army and the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan granted a decree (*Firman*) making Ali Pasha and his descendants rulers of Egypt on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. This did not, however, include the Sinai Peninsula and the Bedouin tribes living in it.<sup>5</sup> In 1892 there was a failed attempt, probably by both sides, to redefine the status quo in the peninsula.<sup>6</sup> Sinai and its inhabitants came under Egyptian-British rule on 1 October 1906 following the Aqaba crisis and the signing of the boundary agreement between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>7</sup> During the Aqaba crisis, the Director of Operations in the British Army General Staff reported that:

The Tribes are bound together by various offensive and defensive alliances, and the men are all armed with swords and many with Remington rifles, as well as with more primitive firearms. The attitude of the greater part, in event of a Turkish invasion would probably be one of loyalty to the Egyptian government, which they show no inclination to exchange for Turkish rule.<sup>8</sup>

In a report submitted to the Committee of Imperial Defence, in 1906, the British army assessed that an invasion from east of the Suez Canal was absolutely impossible' because of logistical factors.<sup>9</sup>

After signing the agreement in 1906 and establishing Egyptian-British rule over the Sinai Bedouins, the civilian authorities implemented a policy of paying the sheikhs to keep their tribesman under control. The authorities also granted certain autonomy to the tribes, including the continuation of the

exemption from the military draft. They also established a network of informers.<sup>10</sup> In 1912, the Committee of Imperial Defence tasked the army to defend the Canal against attacks from the east.<sup>11</sup> Another report warned that if the Bedouins were to join the invading Ottoman army, this force 'might assume formidable proportions. It is impossible to estimate the number of Beduins [*sic*] who might come forward'.<sup>12</sup>

In southern Palestine, the Ottomans tried to increase their sovereignty over the tribes in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1872, the district (*Sancak*) of Jerusalem became an autonomous district (*Mutasarrıflık*) directly subordinate to the central government in Istanbul due to the city's increased diplomatic and economic importance.<sup>13</sup> The establishment of the new town of Beersheba in 1899, in the Negev nomadic region, was intended to facilitate the collection of taxes and to enhance the sense of belonging to the empire.<sup>14</sup> The site chosen by the Ottoman government was well-supplied with water and close to the road that connected Gaza and Hebron; it was also close enough to the border with Egypt to serve as a trading post. In 1906, the central government began to build the basic infrastructure for another new town near the Egyptian border in Auja al-Hafir, which would be part of the newly-created Beersheba District (*Kaza*).<sup>15</sup>

Before the war, neither the British nor the Ottomans knew how many Bedouins lived in Sinai and Southern Palestine. In 1906, the Director of Operations in the British Army General Staff estimated some 30,000 Bedouins, divided among seventeen different tribes in Sinai alone.<sup>16</sup> The official history of the war by the Turkish General Staff gave a much lower figure for the Sinai Peninsula of 10,000 inhabitants, among them 5,000 Bedouins.<sup>17</sup> A report from December 1914 indicates that the British headquarters in Cairo had no estimate of the number of the Sinai Bedouins and their intentions.<sup>18</sup> A recent study argues that before the war there were some 55,000–72,000 Bedouin living in southern Palestine.<sup>19</sup> The lack of definitive numbers indicates that prior to the war, the Bedouin tribes were neglected by both governments for various reasons. The main one, with regard to this article, is that the Bedouins were not an ethnic group or a military force that needed special attention by the administration.

## **The Bedouin tribes at war, 1914–17**

### ***The first attack on the Suez Canal (1915)***

On the eve of the war neither side was prepared for active warfare in Palestine. In 1914, the British army sent two officers, Leonard Woolley and TE Lawrence, to conduct a field survey in Sinai and southern Palestine to determine where the Ottoman army would likely assemble.<sup>20</sup> The British

army in Egypt was preparing to defend the Suez Canal from the western bank, so civilian and military personnel left the peninsula.<sup>21</sup>

In November 1914, when the Ottoman Empire entered the war as an ally of Germany, the Minister of the Navy, Djemal Pasha, was appointed commander of the newly established Fourth Army and Governor of the Levant. At that time, the Fourth Army consisted of two corps: the VIII Corps, based in Damascus, was intended for the offensive on the Suez Canal; the XII Corps was dismantled and its units – the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth Divisions, were sent to other theatres of operation.<sup>22</sup>

The Ottoman army did not have an operational plan for war with the British army in Egypt.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War, ordered several graded steps for the conquest of Sinai and the Suez Canal. Ali Fuad Erden, head of the operations section of the Fourth Army, noted in his memoirs:

The first step of Enver Pasha's plan was to concentrate the Ottoman forces along the border with Egypt, in order to take control of the Sinai Desert, and to harass the enemy; the second, to occupy positions on the eastern side of the Suez Canal and use them for reconnaissance; the third, to threaten the canal by artillery fire; the fourth, to prevent ships from sailing through the canal; and the fifth, to establish a bridgehead on the western side of the canal.<sup>24</sup>

There were two aspects to Enver's plan: the first was to seize the Sinai desert from the British to allow the main force to advance without having to fight. In August 1914, Enver sent Mümtaz Bey, one of his aides in the Tripoli war, and a few other officers to take command of Bedouin fighters. This force was to include Bedouin volunteers and other desert inhabitants, who would be paid by the Ottoman army.<sup>25</sup> According to Aref Abu Rabi'a, the volunteers came from the tribes loyal to the Ottoman government.<sup>26</sup>

A Bavarian officer, Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, chief of staff of the VIII Corps, was quite sceptical of Bedouin capabilities as part of a regular army, as well as the ability of Mümtaz Bey to lead them. Von Kressenstein did consider the Bedouins to be good scouts, albeit undisciplined and unreliable.<sup>27</sup>

On 3 November 1914, the regiment and its subordinate Bedouin units received the order to advance towards Rafah. A day later, the Bedouins started to send reconnaissance into the desert. On 7 November, Mümtaz received orders to prepare to advance into Sinai. The town of El Arish was taken without a fight, and the Bedouins advanced to the south to take Kal'at an-Nahl and then proceeded west on the coastal road.<sup>28</sup> After that, Mümtaz's Bedouin force stayed in Bir al-Abed in northwest Sinai.<sup>29</sup> The British retreat from the peninsula also meant that the Bedouin informant network was partially broken leading the British army to rely on aerial and naval patrols.<sup>30</sup>

Accounts of the Bedouin advances were printed in the Hebrew press in Palestine. On 6 November 1914, *HaHerut* reported that 'the Arabs crossed the border to Egypt and already began to attack and to storm the English army. The Bedouins advance towards Cairo'.<sup>31</sup> A week later, *Hapoel Hatz'air* stated that there were 'hundreds of thousands of Bedouins in the desert and the wilderness'.<sup>32</sup> While *Moriah* reported on 29 November that 'because of the successful advance of the Bedouins and the Arab army towards the Egyptian border, the British government moved its administrative offices to the city of Suez, and from Ismailia and Port Said to [unknown word], which is 60 km from the canal'.<sup>33</sup>

The second aspect of the gradual occupation of the Sinai Peninsula was the advance of the main Ottoman force intending to break through the British defences. Responsibility for preparing the operational plan was given to von Kressenstein, who set out to study the area in southern Palestine and Sinai.<sup>34</sup> His plan anticipated four logistical problems: the lack of assembly areas close to the Suez Canal, the inadequate roads, the absence of supply points and bases, and the scarcity of water.<sup>35</sup> Ali Fuad Erden noted that the distance between Sebaste (in Samaria) to the Suez Canal was 450 km, which Ottoman soldiers were forced to traverse on foot.<sup>36</sup> In view of these difficulties, movement towards the canal was planned as two waves of advance that included more than 18,000 troops and 10,000 animals. In the first wave, the main force began to move from Beersheba towards the Suez Canal on the night of 14–15 January 1915; a few days later, the secondary force moved from El Arish to the Canal town of Kantara, and an additional force moved from Kal'at an-Nahl to the Suez Canal.<sup>37</sup> Before entering Sinai, the troops rested in Auja al-Hafir. While there, von Kressenstein noted in his memoirs, the commanding general and Muslim clergy passed each tent and asked the soldiers to swear on a holy banner. Even the German officers were impressed with the enthusiastic exhortations of the preachers.<sup>38</sup>

The Bedouin force under Mümtaz was attached before the attack to the Ottoman army 23<sup>rd</sup> division that was part of the Ottoman decoy effort in the northern flank of the offensive, ordered to invade Egypt and sabotage the railways.<sup>39</sup>

The attack on the Suez Canal began on 2 February 1915, starting with the British posts on the western side of the canal on the Bitter Lakes. The next night, an additional attempt to cross the canal failed, while the British began to land troops on the eastern bank. On 4 February Djemal Pasha ordered the Ottoman forces to retreat east towards Beersheba. Ottoman losses were not particularly heavy nor were those of the British.<sup>40</sup> The Bedouins, in the first attack on the Suez Canal, were employed as a military force in three roles: reconnaissance, advance guard, and regular soldiers. Thus, the Bedouin force was an integral part of the Ottoman advance and occupation of the Sinai

Desert in the first month of the war, participating in the first attack on the Suez Canal, where they had no relative advantage over the regular soldiers.

Between the February 1915 attack on the Suez Canal and the second attack in August 1916, the Ottoman army in Palestine focused on establishing infrastructure and logistical centres in preparation for the second assault.<sup>41</sup> Simultaneously with the effort to amass men and matériel, Djemal created the Desert Command, whose aim was to foil attempts by the mobile British Expeditionary Force to hinder construction of the infrastructure.<sup>42</sup> Von Kressenstein was appointed the commander, and he focused on harassing raids against the British who had begun to establish their presence on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. Ottoman raids, laying of mines, and artillery attempted unsuccessfully to sink ships passing through the Canal. In these operations, the Bedouins played an active role as scouts and guides, as well as gathering intelligence probably from both banks of the Canal. They also led the way to wells or other water sources and served as an early warning screen for the Ottoman forces. Bedouin units were placed at the following points:

- (1) In the north Between Bir al-Abed and Katya;
- (2) In the centre of the peninsula near Bir Gafgafa;
- (3) In the south near Ain Sadr.

Another camp was established south of Ain Sadr. The Turkish official history of the war mentions the El Arish Bedouin company led by Sheikh Riza, which managed to expel a British cavalry force.<sup>43</sup>

While most of the tribes sided with the Ottomans at the beginning of the war, they continued to supply information and intelligence to the British army. The British also used the tribal networks of alliances to influence other tribes to work with them. Some tribes switched allegiances during the war or, like the aleiqat tribe on the eastern bank of the canal, remained loyal to the British throughout the war.<sup>44</sup>

For most Turkish and German officers and soldiers, this was the first encounter with the Bedouins and their different way of life. Falih Rifaki Atay shows that while the Turks were curious about the Bedouins, they were also patronising. For Atay, a journalist before the war, this was his first time in Palestine and Sinai. He was impressed by the Jewish villages while noting the poverty of their Arab counterparts. In his opinion, both Jews and Arabs living in Palestine were traitors to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>45</sup> He found the Bedouins poor but polite. 'Every tribe has a sheikh', he wrote. 'The sheikhs are noble, brave and generous'.<sup>46</sup> He also deemed the Bedouin to be only loyal to themselves: '[When a] sheikh asks who are you? Are you English? Long live England! Are you Turkish? Long live Turkey!'<sup>47</sup> Likewise, 'the Bedouin steal a horse from the British lines and sell it to us, and in return steal our horses and sell them to the English'.<sup>48</sup>

Atay thought that the Bedouins' relative advantage over the Ottomans and the British lay in their knowledge of the location of wells and other water sources.<sup>49</sup> Fuad Erden and Atay in their works didn't discuss the qualities of the Bedouins as fighters, only remarking that they were overdressed and carried too many firearms.<sup>50</sup>

Another aspect of discovering the desert and its inhabitants revolved around the Ottoman colonial discourse.<sup>51</sup> In 1915, the Ottoman Fourth Army, in order to create infrastructure hubs in Palestine, built in Beersheba a hospital, a veterinary hospital, a weapons workshop, a medical depot and ammunition warehouse, and bakeries. The Fourth Army also built warehouses and bakeries in Auja al-Hafir. Furthermore, in November 1915 Djemal inaugurated a railway line and station in Beersheba. The Ottoman army workers, either by forced labour or by using civilian contractors, laid 187 km of rail tracks to connect the Hijaz railway to Beersheba. The following year, the German engineer Meissner Pasha, who oversaw the project, extended the railway to the desert.<sup>52</sup>

The Ottoman authorities featured the infrastructure project in their propaganda, using newspapers like *Harb Mecmuesi* and the Ottoman Fourth Army newspaper *Musavver Çöl* to inform their readers about the progress the war had brought to the empire's rural areas.<sup>53</sup> Eyal Ginio, who researched *Harb Mecmuesi* argues that

The Bedouins were at this point defined as backward and, therefore potential targets for a civilizing mission that would bring education, healthcare, communication, transportation and authority. The Ottomans were the bearers of technological progress in these fields.<sup>54</sup>

David Kushner, who researched *Musavver Çöl*, wrote that 'the struggle to defend the empire was not only for the purpose of conquest and control, but also a sacred duty to spread civilization in the area it controls'.<sup>55</sup> Both papers focused on Ottoman internal public opinion and depicted not only the war but the changes to the desert and its inhabitants in 1915–17.<sup>56</sup>

Despite Djemal's efforts, the Ottoman Fourth Army failed to assemble enough manpower and supplies to push back the British forces from Sinai and to break through to Egypt.<sup>57</sup> In the second attack, the Bedouins did not play a significant role.

In short, during the desert years the Ottoman army employed the Bedouins to gather intelligence, scout, guide, and serve as an early warning screen. The British also used the Bedouins for intelligence and information gathering, yet neither side fully trusted them or the information they supplied. In the two years the Ottoman army spent in Sinai, it was the first exposure for most officers to the Bedouins and their different way of life, and the military publications showed the progress on the battlefield and the civilising mission.

## From Sinai to Palestine (1916–17)

The Ottoman Fourth Army's order to retreat specified that the Bedouin units were to be relocated because of the fear that the British would harm them.<sup>58</sup> Some Bedouins were allocated to different army units: the Sheikh Zawid and Hilal units were attached to the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade, deployed near Khan Yunis. The Bedouin company of Kal'at an-Nakhl was attached to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade positioned near Auja al-Hafir.<sup>59</sup> In January–March 1917, the Bedouins continue to fight alongside the Ottoman army forces, mainly as scouts and raiders.<sup>60</sup>

Bedouin forces are not mentioned in the Ottoman Order of Battle for the first battle of Gaza on 26 March 1917. In the second battle on 19 April a company of Bedouin volunteers employed as scouts is mentioned.<sup>61</sup>

After the first two battles of Gaza, the Ottoman army employed the Bedouins behind the British lines. On 8 May 1917, a Venezuelan volunteer, Rafael de Nogales Méndez, was appointed the Ottoman governor of Sinai and tasked with harassing the British forces in rear areas in order to draw as many troops as possible from the front lines. This was probably done by the El Arish Bedouin company Led by Nogales Bey, named in the General Staff official history and paid by the army through the Bedouin directorate in Jerusalem. For more than a month it raided and sabotaged the British rear area.<sup>62</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how accurate Nogales Bey was in his accounts, or how many British units were actually drawn from the front lines. Before the third battle of Gaza (1–2 November 1917), a British intelligence report stated that the Ottoman army had warned the Bedouins living near the front that they would be shot if captured. The British believed that the Ottomans feared that these Bedouins were part of the great Arab Rebellion.<sup>63</sup>

## Bedouin accounts of their war activities

The Bedouin history of the war consists of oral accounts by the sheikhs. This article uses the definition of oral history of Jan M. Vansina whereby 'expression of oral tradition applies both to a process and to its products. The products are oral messages based on previous oral messages, at least a generation old'.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the message and the narrative should be examined across several generations. To do so, the article examined the 126-page archival report of the *Hevrat Hachsharat Hayeshuv* (Palestine Land Development Company) from 1920. The report is based on conversations with permanent Bedouin sheikhs after World War I. Two stories will be compared with the Bedouin narrative in the book written by Aref al-Aref in 1931 about the history of the city of Beersheba and the Bedouin tribes living in the areas.

The Zionist *Hachsharat Hayishuv* report aimed to identify what part of the Negev areas were held (not legally owned) by the Bedouin tribes, and who the holders of the land were. The report contains five kinds of data:

- The land's legal status: the report states that none of the tribes were legal owners of the land and had no title deeds. Hence the stories of the Bedouin sheikhs cannot be taken at face value.<sup>65</sup>
- Demographic information about the different tribes.<sup>66</sup>
- Tribal affiliations and subtribes.<sup>67</sup>
- History of the tribes in general, and account of actions in the war in particular.<sup>68</sup>
- Geographical data about the land inhabited by the tribes, listing, for example water cisterns and wells.<sup>69</sup>

Regarding the War (1914–18), the report contains a description of the Bedouins' participation, focused on two criteria: a very brief report on what they did during the war; their past and current relations with the Hussein ibn Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, as well as with the short-lived Arab government in Damascus headed by Hussein's prominent son Faisal. The report indicates that the Azazme, Tarabin, and Tiyaha tribes took an active role in the war in the Sinai.

The report also indicates that Azazme tribe members fought against the British with the other tribes, then changed sides and joined Hussein's British-propped anti-Ottoman revolt.<sup>70</sup> The Tiyaha tribe, spelled Tahaya in the report, contributed 2,000 fighters to the Ottoman effort to defend Gaza in the first and/or second battle for the city.<sup>71</sup> Research made in 1918 by an unknown author claims the same number of tribesmen from the Tiyaha tribe volunteered to the Ottoman services.<sup>72</sup> The Tarabin tribe seems to have been the most active tribe in the war:

At the beginning of the war the TARABIN [*sic*] threw its lot with the Turks. It gave large number of volunteers, camels and horses to the Turkish expedition to the Suez [ . . . ] Later when the Turks were driven back & the star of the Sherrif appeared on the sky the tribe joined the sheriffian forces. It supplied the Sheriff with camels and horsemen, SHEIKH KHAMED ILSOUFY [*sic*] at the head of 1500 man attached the Turkish forces in TAFILAH (Trans-Jordania).<sup>73</sup>

The report also indicates that the three tribes mobilised some 5000 fighters to assist the Sharif forces to seize the town of Amman. Eventually they were not needed.<sup>74</sup> Finally, the report indicates that the Jabarat tribe 'served as communicators between Transjordanian tribes and the Southern Palestine Bedouins'.<sup>75</sup>

Aref el aref's work on the Bedouin tribes in Beer Sheva has more details on the Bedouin part in the war. According to him, during October and

November 1914, the Ottoman authorities recruited volunteers from the Bedouin tribes in Southern Palestine, gaining 1,400 recruits divided into four battalions:

- (1) The Khanjara and Tarabin Battalion, assembled on the banks of Wadi Shalala;
- (2) The Tiyaha Battalion, assembled at the grave of Abū Hurayrah;
- (3) The azazme Battalion, assembled at El-Halasa (modern day Halussa);
- (4) The Jabarat Battlion, assembled at Wadi e-Hasa (see map 2).

The Bedouin forces were attached to the 80th Infantry Regiment of the VIII Army Corps, under the command of Mümtaz Bey, whom he recognised as an adjutant of Enver Pasha. For their services they were promised the loot they could take except cannons and machine guns. According to aref el-aref, the first battle of the Bedouin forces were in Qatia, where Bedouins engaged two British companies, one from the Indian army and the other from Sudan, overwhelming them. According to George Macmunn and Cyril Falls, however, some 200 Bedouins encountered 20 soldiers from the Egyptian Camel Corps and attacked while the soldiers were waving a white flag.<sup>76</sup> He states that after the first attack on the Suez Canal the Bedouin didn't take an active part in the war.<sup>77</sup>

From the description of the Bedouin sheikhs after the war it seems that the Bedouin tribes were coordinated in their war efforts. All three tribes took an active part in the first expedition to the Suez Canal. There is a void in the recorded oral history as to what happened in 1915–16. In 1916, at the beginning of the British-propped 'Arab Revolt', the three tribes helped the British cause by sending men and supplies to the rebel forces in Transjordan.

## Conclusion

When comparing the official narrative and the oral history, it is clear that the Bedouin tribes in southern Palestine played an active role in World War I, which diminished over time. They were perceived by the Ottomans at the beginning of the war as a force multiplier because of their knowledge of the desert. In the years the Ottoman army remained in the desert, the Bedouin role narrowed to intelligence gathering, scouting, and early warning, most likely because of their ineffectiveness against regular troops. When the British army advanced towards Palestine, the Bedouins were pushed aside by the Ottomans. In the meantime, the Bedouin tribes helped the British by supporting the 'Arab Revolt'. Key to the participation of the Bedouins in the Ottoman war effort were the Sheikhs who were responsible for bringing their tribes and leading them to battle under an Ottoman army officer. The Sheikhs' motivations were diverse, ranging from religious loyalty to the Sultan, to

greed, to personal and tribal prestige. However, the Sheikhs also came to understand that the tides of war were turning and they needed to start working with the British and their associates. Thus, from 1916 onwards the Bedouin tribes assisted both sides.

The Bedouins also played a role in the sphere of public opinion: at the beginning of the war, they were part of the Ottoman effort to show their successes on the battlefield. Later, they were held up as the receivers of modernity from the Ottoman army in the form of technology, medicine, education, and infrastructure.

## Notes

1. For example, Sheffy, *British Military*.
2. For example, Berelovich and Kark, "First World War," 47–68.
3. For example, Berelovich and Kark, "Missing Element," 153–72.
4. Aharoni, *Pasha's Bedouin*, 206–216.
5. Ben-Bassat and Ben-Artzi, "Collision of Empires," 25–36.
6. British National Archive (Henceforth NA), Evelyn Baring, *Memorandum Respecting the Rights of Egypt to the Sinai Peninsula*, CAB-37-83-44, April 30, 1906.
7. For the diplomatic correspondence between the Ottoman and British governments see: NA, FO 371–61; for the Ottoman point of view, see Heyd, "Gulf of Elath Crisis," 194–206. For the text of the agreement, see Wade, *Report*, 3–4.
8. NA, Director of Operations, *Strategical Notes on Sinai Peninsula*, FO 371–61, 18 April 1909, p. 2.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Jarvis, *Yesterday and Today*, 46–59; Storrs, *Memoirs*, 121.
11. NA, Committee of Imperial Defence, Considerations on which the existing arrangements for the defence of Egypt are Based, CAB-38-20-11, May 1912, p. 5.
12. NA, Committee of Imperial Defence, CAB-38-20-15, May 9, 1912, p. 6.
13. From 1888, the remaining districts were subordinated to the province (*Vilayet*) of Beirut. See also Kushner, "Ottoman Governors," 274–90.
14. Solomonovich and Kark, "Bedouins," 189–212.
15. Al-Aref, *Tarikh Bir al-Saba*, 26; Ben-Arieh and Sapir, "Reshita shel Be'er Sheva," 6, 174–176; Avcı, "Application of Tanzimat," 969–983; Luz, "Re-making of Beersheba," 163–178.
16. NA, *Strategical Notes on Sinai Peninsula*, FO 371–61, April 18, 1909, p. 2.
17. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Genelkurmay Başkanlığı (henceforth TCGB), *Sina-Filistin Cephesi* (Ankara: IV ncü Cilt İlk, Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1979), 30.
18. NA, "Translation of a report dated the 9th December 1914 from Mr. Gorgi el Khoury to the G.O.C the British Forces," FO 141–732, 9 December 1914, pp. 1–2.
19. Frantzman, Levin, and Kark, "Counting Nomads."
20. Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence*, 5–20.
21. Macmunn and Falls, *Military Operations Egypt and Palestine*, 1: 15.
22. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Genelkurmay Başkanlığı (henceforth TCGB), *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi: Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Siyasi ve Askeri*

- Hazırlıkları ve Harbe Giriş*, I Cilt, 71–9;) Görgülü, *On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu*, 139.
23. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1979), 95.
  24. Erden, *Süriye Hatıraları*, 2–3 and 8–9.
  25. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım, p. 110.
  26. Abu Rabi'a, *Bedouin Century*, 14–15.
  27. Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken*, 62–63.
  28. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım, p. 132.
  29. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım, p. 202.
  30. Sheffy, *British Military*, 47–55.
  31. “Last Telegrams,” *Ha-Herut*, 6 Nov. 1914, p. 2.
  32. “In our country,” *Hapoel Haz'air*, 13 Nov. 1914, p. 3.
  33. *Moriah*, 29 Nov. 1914, p. 1.
  34. Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken*, 43–44.
  35. *Ibid.*, 59–60, 62–9; Ali Fuad Cebesoy, *Kayfa*, 65; Pasha, *Memories*, 151–3; Erickson and Uyar, *Military History of the Ottoman*, 250; Koral, *Birinci Dünya Harbi İdari*, 92–3.
  36. Erden, *Süriye*, 3–4.
  37. Cebesoy, *Kayfa*, 64; Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken*, 85–90; Mckale, “German Intelligence Activity,” 119–23.
  38. Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken*, 82.
  39. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım, p. 224.
  40. Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken*, 91–99; Wavell, *Palestine Campaign*, 23–30; Djemal Paşa, *Memoirs*, 154–9; TCGB, *Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk, 203–239.
  41. For details about the preparations, see Berelovich and Kark, “Missing Element.” 162–163.
  42. Djemal Paşa, *Memoirs*, 163–64.
  43. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım, pp. 272–74, 299–317, 346–360 and korki 16; Erden, *Süriye*, 74–76, 81–83 and 111; Atay, *Ateş ve Güneş*, 72–82.
  44. Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, 263–264; Winston, *Diaries of Parker Pasha*, 57, 66–69, 86–90; Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence*, 69–73.
  45. Atay, *Zeytinadağı*, 32, 46–48, 70–72.
  46. *Ibid.*, 122.
  47. *Ibid.*, 88–89.
  48. *Ibid.*, 89.
  49. *Ibid.*, 130.
  50. Atay, *Ateş ve Güneş*, 72; Erden, *Süriye*, 83.
  51. For further reading on this subject, see Herzog and Motika, “Orientalism *alla turca*,” 139–195; Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” 768–779; Deringil, ““They Live,”” 311–342; Kühn, “Shaping and Reshaping,” 315–331.
  52. Berelovich, “Eretz Israel ve-ha-Milhama,” 45–49.
  53. For further reading on this subject see, Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda*.
  54. Ginio, “Presenting the Desert,” 58.

55. Kushner, “*Musavver Çöl*,” 143.
56. *Ibid.*, 146–148; Ginio, “Presenting,” 59–60.
57. For further details, see Berelovich, and Kark, “Missing Element,” 163–165.
58. TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi’nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İlk Kısım, p. 436.
59. *Ibid.*, 439.
60. *Ibid.*, 450–513.
61. *Ibid.*, 516–517, 535, 592–610, 630.
62. Nogales, *Four Years*, 357, 362–363; TCGB, *Birinci Dünya Harbi’nde Türk Harbi Sina-Filistin Cephesi*, IV ncü Cilt İkinci Kısım, p. 19, 130.
63. Australian War Memorial (AWM), *Intelligence General Headquarters Egyptian Expeditionary Force*, item number 1/8/17, October 1917, p. 7.
64. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, 3.
65. CZA, Hachsharat Hayishuv report, “Azazmeh, Beersheba District 1920–1921, L 18–6289,” 1–4.
66. *Ibid.*, 1.
67. *Ibid.*, 3–4.
68. *Ibid.*, 2 and 4.
69. For an example, see *ibid.*, 2–3.
70. *Ibid.*, 4.
71. Hachsharat Hayishuv report, *Tahaya Beer Sheva District 1920–1921*, L 18–6289, 6.
72. Israel State Archives (henceforth ISA), *Private collections-Yitzhak Ben Zvi*, 1901/29 -p, (1918), 2.
73. CZA, Hachsharat Hayishuv report, *Tarabin*, Beer Sheva District 1920–1921, L 18–6289, 6.
74. *Ibid.*
75. CZA, Hachsharat Hayeshuv report, *Idjbarat*, Beer Sheva District 1920–1921, L 18–6289, 1–4.
76. Compare between Aref al-Aref, *Tarikh Bir al-Saba*, 251 and Macmunn and Falls, *Military Operations Egypt*, 1: 20.
77. Aref al-Aref, *Tarikh Bir al-Saba*, 252.

## Disclosure statement

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