

Oliver Stein

## **German Scientists in Uniform and their Research in the Ottoman Landscape, 1914-1918**

The landscape of the Ottoman Empire had been long before the First World War a focal point for western researchers of many different disciplines. While the outbreak of war interrupted the majority of research, diverse German military-initiated projects replaced them during the war. This aspect of the Great War, which has been not yet been more closely inspected, is the topic of the planned talk. Using personal testimonials, military documents and printed sources, this talk will examine all different forms of scholarly analysis of the Ottoman region by members of the German military. Additionally under its purview, the talk will investigate the intention of the research, and will carve out its particularity under the conditions of war in the German-Ottoman alliance.

When looking at the functions of the military's landscape-oriented research, three categories emerge: firstly the research that was based on direct military needs – like, for example, seeking water sources in the desert or sanitary expeditions in the malaria-stricken areas of Asia Minor. Secondly the German authorities had their own national post-war economic interests in view. Geological investigations assessing local natural resources figured significantly for the Germans, but were eyed mistrustfully by their Turkish allies. Meanwhile the military also sponsored the implementation of research that did not pursue military or economic purposes. The deployment of archaeologists in uniform, within the context of the *Deutsch-Türkisches Denkmalschutzkommando*, serves as an excellent example of this – these men were charged with documenting the historically significant monuments in Syria and Palestine.

The war offered German researchers good conditions for their work. The same scholars who had previously struggled as civilians against restrictive Turkish authorities in order to conduct their work, were suddenly granted access to the Ottoman landscape once they donned a uniform. Occasionally, the working conditions even improved because the resources of the military stood available to researchers. The archaeologists, for example, had recourse to sappers and planes, and oceanographers to ships from the German Navy. Researchers in uniform also simultaneously ensured the dissemination and popularization of their subjects related to Ottoman landscapes among stationed soldiers through articles in army journals. In this sense, these subjects reached an audience that before the war would not have been reachable.