



Soldiers' Tales: Two Palestinian Jewish Soldiers in the Ottoman Army during the First World War

Glenda Abramson

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Yehuda Amon and Haim Nahmias were middle-class Jerusalem Jews who were conscripted into the Ottoman army and transported to Western Anatolia with the labor battalions during World War I. They kept detailed notes of their dreadful experiences which they later extended into complete narratives. Both diaries were discovered only recently and both appear here for the first time in this English translation. In addition to the translation of the diaries, the book includes a detailed introduction which describes life in the Jewish settlement in Palestine during the war under the autocratic rule of Jemal Pasha, the Governor of Syria and Palestine. It provides insight into the Ottoman army in the Middle East and the declining years of the Ottoman Empire, as seen through the two diaries and also through unpublished letters of Yehuda Burla, another Palestinian Jewish conscript who later became a well-known Hebrew author. The book also contains a detailed description of the Yishuv during the early years of the war, including the devastating locust plague of 1915. *** "The study of the Great War has traditionally focused on the grand strategies of leaders and generals while little attention was given to the simple soldier. In this book, Glenda Abramson uncovers two war diaries by Jewish soldiers who served in the Ottoman army during the war, thus providing invaluable insights into the thoughts and experiences of those who paid the price." -- Michael Keren, Professor and Canada Research Chair, U. of Calgary *** "...Amon's and Nahmias' stories are punctuated as well by flashes of erudition and even humor (mostly irony), and valuably provides insight into sorely neglected areas of the Great War, namely the lives of lowly Amele soldiers in Western Anatolia, of Jews certainly, but also their companions in misfortune, Turks, Arabs, Kurds and Christians." -- Mark L. Blackman, The NYMAS Review, StrategyPage, October 2015 [Subject: History, World War I, Jewish Studies, Ottoman Studies]Ëœ

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