

Britain's Levantine Empire

The research project explores how the wartime itineraries of hundreds of thousands of British military personnel produced new forms of colonial rule spanning the eastern Mediterranean and an imagined geography of the Levant as a fragmented but distinct space between Europe and the Orient. The research is based on the recorded testimony over one hundred British servicemen, whose diaries, letters, and memoirs allow for the reading of their shared experience and thoughts about the cities in which they were stationed. These documents are read alongside state archival material from the UK, France, Turkey, Cyprus and Greece in order to assess the impact of occupation on the main port cities of the eastern Mediterranean. Histories examining soldiers' experiences in the First World War have almost exclusively focused on the trenches of the western front and other battlefields, neglecting their participation in complex military geographies like these away from the front lines. British and Allied occupation not only implied a new security apparatus governing the city but introduced new tensions around the circulation of traffic and town planning, provision of entertainment and nightlife and a range of other mundane urban governance issues.