

Food and Nutrition (Ottoman Empire/Middle East)

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Summary

This article examines the central role of food management in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The focus is on food shortages, food regulations, intentional and unintentional deprivations, and competition over access to food that dominated, as it did in all belligerent states, the everyday life experience of both Ottoman civilians and soldiers. The article – highlighting the role of food in the context of the massive mobilization of men and the simultaneously orchestrated civilian sacrifices – exemplifies the great potential of food as a site of analysis, discusses present historiographical limitations and suggests further lines of inquiry.

Table of contents

- [1 Introduction](#)
- [2 The Potential of Food as Site of Analysis](#)
- [3 Feeding the Ottoman Army](#)
 - [3.1 Eating at the Front](#)
- [4 Feeding the Home Front](#)
 - [4.1 State Intervention](#)
 - [4.2 Civilian Suffering and Survival](#)
 - [4.3 Civilian Relief and Survival](#)
- [5 Conclusion](#)
- [Notes](#)
- [Selected Bibliography](#)
- [Citation](#)

Introduction

Death by Famine lacks drama...Horrid though it may be to say, multitudinous death from this cause...regarded without emotion as a spectacle, is until the crows get at it, the rats, and kites and dogs and vultures very dull.¹

In times of war, the unglamorous demise due to starvation, as Lizzie Collingham has argued, is often overshadowed by the drama of bloody deaths on the battlefronts. Maimed bodies of soldiers and bomb victims make the news, while the slowly emaciating body is seldom the

subject of headlines. Scholars have come to regard food and access to it as the heart of the war experience, whether on the battlefield or in belligerent cities, towns and villages.² Food, no doubt, was *the* everyday concern shared by soldiers and civilians alike. Indeed, hunger, starvation, malnutrition and its associated diseases were far more deadly than the bullets and shells of the enemy. World War I, like most other conflicts, was marked by various actors' constant struggles and negotiations over the procurement of food supplies. During the Great War, food was the subject of state policies and legislation, parliamentary debates, public discourse, and everyday social interactions in all belligerent states. The [Ottoman Empire](#) was no exception. This article demonstrates how historians now regard food as central to two aspects of "[total war](#)"; first, massive mobilization of armed men and second, the simultaneous orchestration of civilian sacrifice.³ The goal of this article is to pose new questions to enhance our understanding of World War I in the Middle East and inspire further research on the subject.

The Potential of Food as Site of Analysis

"Food" as a unit of analysis has great potential for social and cultural historians alike. Essential to survival and entangled in a web of power and capital, food plays a vital role in any society's social and economic organization. Even during war, when all too many social, cultural, and economic activities come to a halt, the various social interactions necessary to eat continue, albeit in altered form.⁴ Thus, food consumption and its various meanings in times of war inevitably draw our attention to the individual's experience of "everyday" violence, highlighting an "intimate connection between the social person and the biological organism" impacted by the availability or lack of food.⁵

It is here that war may be written about as a "bodily set of experiences," where micro-level social and cultural processes are exposed.⁶ It is here that differences between soldiers and civilians are erased and social cleavages simultaneously invented, aggravated, and politicized. Moreover, issues concerning production and distribution of food in times of conflict expose short- and long-term shifts in the relations between consumers, civil society, and the state. Likewise, it is important to remember that World War I occurred in the context of a global food system, the disruption of which meant the collapse of the international market, industry, and businesses, giving rise to [economic nationalism](#).⁷ Food, therefore, is part and parcel of revealing historical processes on both macro-and micro levels.⁸

Despite their analytical potential, the linkages between fighting a "total war" and the distribution, provisioning and consumption of food – in contrast to the western [historiography](#)

of the Great War – remain relatively unexplored in the context of the Ottoman Empire. They have yet to be the subject of a synthesizing study.⁹ Instead, Ottoman food management has been treated most often without specific analysis and as a side note to narratives focused on diplomatic, military, and political histories.¹⁰ The significance of food has only been recognized in recent years; historians have just begun to explore its legislative dimensions, such as the regulation of production and distribution,¹¹ as well as the military reforms that followed the logistical disaster of the [Balkan War \(1912-1913\)](#).¹²

A number of historians have paid attention to the effects of the large-scale starvation of soldiers and civilians on society and family structures, “collective” memory, and its long-term influence on the political processes of the post-war period.¹³ [Urban](#)-centered studies have highlighted how food questions and supply problems dominated the social realities and everyday experiences on the Ottoman home front, addressing among other things the relation between food and class, the effects of hunger on popular culture, and the governmentality of municipal agencies.¹⁴

Still, all of these areas beg further research. Discussion on the cultural, emotional, and psychological dimensions of food and eating as a ritual are entirely missing.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the most recent research, which has placed food at its center, promises to greatly enrich our understanding of World War I in the Middle East.

Feeding the Ottoman Army

The mobilization of more than 2 million men into the Ottoman army required the distribution and movement of vast material resources.¹⁶ The Ottoman state – at first under the guise of “armed [neutrality](#)” – issued the general call to arms on 2 August 1914. Setting in motion an [empire](#)-wide requisition of provisions, supplies and animals, the [Ottoman government](#) sought to ensure that its troops would be properly fed and clothed should it come to war. The [logistical](#) disasters of the Balkan conflicts were to be avoided at all costs. The key legislative measure facilitating the large-scale mobilization of resources was a modified version of the “Law on the Method of the Imposition of War Taxes” from January 1913.¹⁷ According to this measure, commissions consisting of Ottoman provincial civilian and financial officers, and representatives from the military, local administrative councils and municipalities would be formed to collect war taxes at the first signs of an international confrontation. In theory, the commissions were to estimate civilian needs, confiscate any surplus, and issue receipts to the owners. The value of goods was based on lists drawn up by representatives of local

administrative councils, municipalities, and chambers of commerce. Accordingly, merchants and producers paid taxes in kind depending on the quantity of merchandise and products in their possession, while salaried workers were to render a tax based on their income.¹⁸

The law prohibited unnecessary requisitioning and dictated strict discipline to prevent abuses. The realities on the ground, however, were very different. Eyewitnesses warned of the grave insecurities that accompanied the transportation of goods; running into military and state officials could mean that “food and mules were confiscated.”¹⁹ Excess requisitioning was not limited to goods with obvious military uses. At times even women’s silk stockings, children’s shoes, lightning rods, and printing presses were included in what the journalist [Ahmet Emin Yalman \(1888-1972\)](#) referred to as the “requisition mania.”²⁰ Moreover, civilians complained that all too often officials failed to issue proper receipts; they feared that the promised reimbursements – as after previous conflicts – would not be forthcoming. Abuses were widespread, and, as [Yigit Akin](#) asserted, “the boundary between requisitioning and looting became increasingly blurry.”²¹ The Ottoman authorities were not blind to the exploitations. Indeed, cabinet members, having either witnessed or heard reports, moved to amend the law to include harsh punishments to forestall further abuses. Still, misuse continued, in particular when, at times out of desperation, military commanders circumvented civilian authorities and took it upon themselves to provide for their units. For Ottoman civilians, this often meant multiple instances of uncompensated requisitioning, sometimes carried out with brute force.

Eating at the Front

The logistical focus of post-Balkan military reforms and excessive requisitioning, however, did not mean that soldiers were well fed as they marched into battle. On the contrary, in light of underdeveloped transportation networks, shortages of train engines, and not least the physical distances between battlefronts and food-producing areas, Ottoman officials faced great difficulties in providing adequate food and nutrition to their soldiers. Reports that supplies destined for troops were “consumed behind the front and never reached the fighting units” reveal that it was not simply a matter of transport difficulties but also of the carelessness of military commanders, some of whom worried little whether their men’s stomachs were filled or not.²²

Hunger eventually became a widespread epidemic in the Ottoman military, as rations were small and the nutritional value of food minimal. An active young man needs 2,800 to 3,000 calories a day to function; a soldier in training should consume at least 3,429. Adding weather conditions, the caloric need increases to 4,238 in extreme cold and to 4,738 in

hot/tropical conditions.²³ Peacetime daily rations of Ottoman soldiers in training included 900 grams of bread, 600 grams of biscuits, 250 grams of meat, and 150 grams of bulgur plus some butter and salt. These rations more than met the required energy amount.²⁴ Salim Tamari suggested that for some conscripts, joining the army was a potential escape from sure starvation, especially after famine struck areas in Greater Syria in 1916. Living in army camps, the men entered “into a cycle of disciplined work, and experienced the luxury of three meals a day, consuming meat, *buqsumat* (army biscuits) and jam.”²⁵ Soldiers, as long as they were stationed in more easily accessible training camps, were fed regular, albeit meager meals. A Turkish reserve officer described the food during training as tea with a few slices of bread and sometimes olives for breakfast; for lunch and dinner cabbage stew or fava bean soup, and once a week green beans with meat. Not fancy meals, but in training no one would starve.²⁶

During the war, however, such rations were hardly – if ever – met, and as a general trend rations decreased over time. Bread rations at the Palestine front were officially reduced to 500 and then 400 grams in 1916.²⁷ On the Caucasus front, food supplies were sparse and “everyone was given 100 grams of flour each day, and that was all.”²⁸ Under extreme circumstances, soldiers periodically had to survive on less than half rations, at times not exceeding sixty grams of grain a day.²⁹ Soldiers in some instances “received almost no meat, no butter, no sugar, no vegetables, no fruits” and instead were fed the same thin “flour soup for months after months,”³⁰ or were forced to bake “flour wetted with snow” into bread.³¹ The situation seemed worse for men conscripted into “volunteer labor battalions.” Serving to build up supportive infrastructure, members of these “compulsory work gangs” – mainly made up of non-Muslims, peasants, and the poor – often starved to death, while Ottoman officers “stole their rations.”³²

It was not only humans whose stomachs’ shrunk and grumbled in agony. The Ottoman army relied heavily on pack and draught animals to move supplies and provisions. The hundreds of thousands animals, while indispensable, added significant pressure on the food supply. Often soldiers had to sacrifice to keep their horses, oxen, donkeys, and other livestock alive. For example, running out of oats, soldiers in an ammunition supply unit were ordered to feed their own rations of army biscuits to the camels. The beasts grudgingly chewed the dry powder under strict supervision of the unit’s officers – preventing soldiers from repossessing their crackers. Where it was available, animals fed on forage, but rarely did the feed amount to the necessary caloric value.

Small rations with miniscule nutritional value, the intentional food deprivation of unarmed labor battalions, and the added pressure on supply by animals meant that malnutrition and starvation were nearly universal. The result was demoralized, physically and mentally exhausted troops, and a high number of deserters, who cited hunger and fear of starvation as their primary motivation for absconding from their units.³³ A fear that was not unwarranted, since malnutrition surely contributed to the deaths of nearly half a million soldiers, whose bodies could not withstand the onslaught of cholera, typhus, typhoid, dysentery, and other diseases.³⁴

Feeding the Home Front

Shortages on the Ottoman home front undoubtedly resulted from the urgent need to fuel an all-consuming, non-producing, i.e. “parasitic” army.³⁵ The effects of reckless commandeering, monopolization of transportation, and harsh conscription policies, however, were aggravated by an Entente maritime blockade halting almost all external food trade, and uncontrollable wartime profiteering. Local producers – in particular tribal chiefs from grain-producing areas – and merchants hoarded supplies, drove up prices, and often refused to sell their products for depreciated paper currency, demanding precious and robust gold instead.³⁶ In some areas of the empire, extreme heat, hot winds, lack of rain and recurrent locust plagues destroyed the harvests, adding to the food problem.³⁷

State Intervention

Diminishing food supplies would justify unprecedented state intervention into civilians’ everyday life. The exigency of World War I – as Geoff Eley has pointed out in the general context of war – meant increased state interference in the form of restrictions ([censorship](#), emergency legislations, etc.) while at the same time legitimizing the voice of certain groups, who would eventually demand entitlements from the state.³⁸ Negotiations over access to food on the home front were central to this dual process. In the Ottoman context this process first manifested itself at the local level and took on national dimensions with the “centralization” of food management in 1916.³⁹ Local authorities, such as Ottoman provincial governors, administrative councils, and municipalities were the first to take on the project of feeding their cities, towns, and villages.

Beginning in mid-November 1914, local leaders sought to regulate all aspects of the grain supply chain, by negotiating with military personnel over access to trains, publishing price lists in the local press, instructing bakers as to the weight and size of bread, and devising

rationing systems of flour and bread.⁴⁰ Provisioning cities like Istanbul and Beirut relied on local police and bakers, who were to supervise and carry out the distribution of bread for municipal ration cards. In theory, civilian rationing systems are “designed to prevent hoarding and to ensure the fair and equal distribution of food.”⁴¹ Amartya Sen has argued that if applied successfully, rationing guarantees the food entitlements of the entire population. In the Ottoman context, this was far from being the case. Besides the fact that the size and quality of rations was inadequate, the lack of personnel and uncontrollable corruption made it almost impossible to enforce regulations. Even harsh punishments for selling above price and out the back door did not prevent the black market from flourishing. Police were corrupt and merchants and bakers committed food fraud on a daily basis. Some mixed sawdust, sand, and even unbecoming substances like daniel into wheat and flour to increase profits.⁴²

Another attempt at managing food supplies were government-sponsored grain merchant syndicates. Local state representatives promised guaranteed access to transportation to merchants who joined the syndicates. In exchange, syndicate members had to adhere to a set profit margin. For example, in Istanbul the interior minister put food management into the hands of the head of the tradesmen’s union, [Kara Kemal \(-1926\)](#). Practically creating a food monopoly, Kemal provided transportation and assured merchants a sizable profit through large state subsidies. Besides trying to regulate the market, Kemal’s scheme, it has been argued, was part of the government’s attempt at creating a Turkish national economy by replacing non-Muslim Greeks and Armenian traders, who had dominated the empire’s regional and international trade, with a “set of Turkish merchants.”⁴³ Still, despite all efforts, government subsidies could not compete with black market prices, and merchants quickly abandoned the confines of the syndicates.⁴⁴

Overall, local efforts at food management utterly failed. By 1916, food shortages turned into famine in parts of the empire.⁴⁵ Faced with food calamity on an unprecedented scale that made international headlines, the Ottoman state intervened and centralized civilian provisioning through statewide legislative measures. First, the Ottoman cabinet officially sanctioned municipal grain confiscation, rationing, and price controls, and it tightened its grip by passing the “Provisional Grain Act” in July 1916.⁴⁶ The law divided the empire into three provisioning zones, prohibited transfer of grain between zones, and stipulated a new government agency, supervised by the interior minister. Moreover, it empowered the agency’s local branches to directly intervene in the procurement of grain, surveying harvests, estimating individual producers’ household needs, setting prices, and distributing it among the needy at a low price.

These policies, while increasing the state's extractive capacities, ruined small farmers. Government agents often underestimated subsistence requirements, paid low prices and failed to pay cash. Peasants responded by hiding parts of their harvest, selling on the black market, bribing local officials, and at times smuggling their goods into adjacent zones where grain prices were higher.⁴⁷ The new law was deemed a failure. In 1917, Ottoman authorities – amending the legislation – placed the mandate of provisioning into the hands of the minister of war and limited peasant producers' contributions to the war effort to a 12.5 percent tithe. While this alone would have been an improvement, the law reserved the right of local military officials to demand an additional two-tenths of the harvest to be sold to them at government prices. Only after that could peasants sell their remaining grain in the open market. While benefitting some large landholders, the policy was futile for small farmers. Not only were they still not paid cash, but they were also compelled to deliver their grain to the collection centers. Given the requisitioning of draught animals, this alone was a great burden for many.⁴⁸

The epitome of the state's infringements upon everyday life was the "Provisional Law of Agricultural Services" of 1917. Inspired by the steady decline in agricultural production, the law determined the length of peasants' work day and the amount and variety of crop to be grown, dictated the size of plots to be cultivated, forbade any slaughter of animals deemed useful by state representatives, and granted military exemption to large landholders and their workers – now considered essential to the war effort.⁴⁹ Men of labor battalions, women, and everyone above the age of fourteen were ordered into the fields.

Civilian Suffering and Survival

Despite the state's efforts to manage food supplies and agricultural production, a large number of Ottoman civilians went hungry. The extent of civilian deprivations varied from region to region, and it is impossible to generalize. In general, rural areas suffered less, considering individuals' proximity to cultivatable land. However, some [rural areas](#) in the later half of the 19th century had shifted to more profitable non-consumable items like cotton, silk, and tobacco, and hence had become net importers of food. This shift in agricultural production rendered these areas particularly vulnerable to the war-induced disruptions in the regional and international market. For example, in Mount Lebanon this change, combined with the above-mentioned factors contributing to shortages, caused a famine that cost the lives of approximately a third to half of its population.⁵⁰ Other rural areas such as the grain-producing Hauran did not lack food and attracted many starving migrants from surrounding regions. It is equally difficult to generalize about the availability of food in urban areas. It

seems that coastal cities reliant on food imports via the Mediterranean, such as Istanbul, Haifa, and Beirut experienced worse supply shortages compared to interior cities with easier access to grain-producing areas.⁵¹

In addition to regional differences, suffering was differentiated according to socio-economic status and dictated by ethnopolitics. For one, food scarcity highlighted class differences; it was first and foremost the poor who starved, while wealthy Ottomans could leave the country or cope with price hikes. Unequal access to food no doubt aggravated class differences. Appeals in the press emphasizing the moral obligation of the community toward the poor in times of need and urging merchants' moderation highlight the social cleavage.

The population groups experiencing the worst deprivation, however, were those targeted for annihilation by the Young Turk regime. A combination of Entente and Ottoman naval blockades on import and export goods, military commandeering, requisitioning and outright confiscation of food and all possible means of transportation to service the Ottoman military, the conscription of farm labor, the confiscation of draught animals, and not least environmental factors such as recurrent locust plagues and lack of rainfall caused the famine affecting the Arab population in Greater Syria. Rather than being an intentional famine crime, the food shortages here were the outcome of wartime interruptions of trade and an inadequate Ottoman supply strategy, aggravated by an overall administrative chaos and marked by corruption and cronyism. In contrast, elsewhere one saw the intentional withholding of food. As part of an orchestrated effort to rid the empire of its non-Muslim minorities, the government deported thousands of [Armenians](#), Greeks, and Assyrians from the Anatolian provinces. The convoys were intentionally deprived of security and provision, ending in concentration camps in the Syrian Desert. Here the situation was dire, "as for food and supplies, no provision had been made to provide the deportees."⁵² Prolonged hunger inflicted on the deportees had devastating physiological and psychological impacts. An eyewitness reported on the Armenians in Aleppo: "If one takes them food it appears they have forgotten how to eat. Their stomachs weakened by months of hunger can no longer bear food. If one gives them bread, they put it aside, indifferently."⁵³ The government here used food as a weapon in its larger project of ethnic homogenization.⁵⁴

Civilian Relief and Survival

The human tragedy – generated by food scarcities – triggered relief efforts from multiple sides. The Ottoman government set up soup kitchens and workshops to feed the urban poor and the soldiers' families. However, these generally were poorly run and fraught with corruption. Local charitable organizations and religious communities initially distributed food

and money to community members, but as the war progressed, these organizations saw their donations dry up. Foreign missionaries and international humanitarian organizations, like the American [Red Cross](#) and the American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief, sought to aid both victims of famine and genocide.⁵⁵ The Ottoman government, however, perceived the organized and efficient efforts of these foreign relief agencies as a threat to its legitimacy, since they highlighted the state's ineptitude in providing for its own civilians. Consequently, Ottoman authorities, at least in some areas, prohibited foreigners from distributing aid to their citizens.⁵⁶ Overall, the work to alleviate civilian suffering was only marginally successful

Left largely to their own devices, civilians in their everyday life employed a number of survival strategies, in particular changing consumption patterns. This ranged from substituting cheaper barley for wheat to stretching flour with ground legumes, chickpeas, lentils and potatoes. Potatoes, however, never gained the same popularity as in [Germany](#), since they turned bread into "white talc that was like a white glue."⁵⁷ Sugar was substituted with grape molasses in Syria, and coffee made out of roasted chickpeas. Some food items shunned before the war and used only for animal feed, like lupine beans and bitter vetch, became part of the everyday diet.⁵⁸

Conclusion

In summary, the Ottoman war effort was significantly handicapped by the state's inability to secure food for combatants and civilians alike. Despite, and at times because of, increased state intervention aimed at securing and regulating food supplies and increasing agricultural production, hunger and starvation were an everyday reality for the majority of Ottoman soldiers and civilians. An underdeveloped and dependent economy, rudimentary infrastructure, and limited administrative and enforcement capacities were the primary reasons for the food catastrophe. There is no doubt that the Ottoman Empire's failure to feed its citizens by and large contributed to the military defeat and an overall delegitimization of the Ottoman state.⁵⁹

The extraordinary role of food during the conflict is undeniable and begs further research. While there has been some discussion of the impact of food – or more precisely the lack thereof – on gender and class dynamics in rural and urban settings, center-periphery and state-citizen relations, consumer behavior, everyday survival, and public discourses, food has not been the central focus of research. A systematic application of food as an analytical category would not only further enhance our understanding of these shifting social, economic, and political relations, but would also allow us to ask questions that enter much deeper into the cultural and social fabric of a society at war. What were the emotional

responses of civilians and soldiers to limited or repulsive food? How did rituals of eating change in the homes, at the front, and in public spaces? Most importantly, were reported changes short-term adaptations generated by the war, or long-term transformations of government policies, food production, and not least individual habits?⁶⁰ The goal for scholars interested in this field should be to work toward comparisons not only between the diverse regions and multiple cities of the empire itself, but also with the experiences of other belligerent nations.

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Notes

1. Lizzie Collingham introduced her work with Ian Stephens' solemn commentary on the Bengal Famine of 1943. See Collingham, E. M.: *The Taste of War. World War II and the Battle for Food*, London 2011, p. 1. ↑
2. See for example Trentmann, Frank / Just, Flemming (eds): *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars*, Hampshire 2006. ↑
3. I use "total war" here in the most general sense, i.e. describing a process that moved toward the total mobilization of a state's resources for the war effort. For a discussion on the concept of total war see Chickering, Roger / Förster, Stig (eds.): *Great War, Total War. Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918*, Washington, D.C. 2000. ↑
4. It is only in recent years that historians have begun to study war and food comparatively. The geographical focus here is Europe; the Ottoman Empire generally remains outside the scope of these studies. See for example Zweiniger, Ina / Duffet, Rachel / Drouard, Alain (eds.): *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe*, Farnham 2011 and Collingham, *The Taste of War* 2011. A welcome exception to the otherwise Eurocentric literature on war and food is Cwierka, Katarzyna J.: *Food and War in Mid-Twentieth-Century East Asia*, Farnham 2013. ↑
5. Duffet, Rachel: *The Stomach for Fighting and the Soldiers of the Great War*, Manchester 2012, p. 10. ↑
6. Sylvester, Christine: *Experiencing War*, London 2011, p. 3. ↑
7. Trentmann / Just, *Food and Conflict* 2006. For Turkish economic nationalism see for example Toprak, Zafer: *Nationalism and Economy in the Young Turk Era (1908-1918)*, in: Thobie, Jacques / Kançal, Salgur (eds.): *Industrialization, Communication et Rapports Sociaux en Turquie et en Mediterranee Orientale*, Paris 1994, pp. 160-66; Toprak, Zafer: *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat [Turkish National Economy] 1908-1918*, Ankara 1982; Ahmad, Feroz: *War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-1918*, *Review* 11/2 (Spring 1988),

pp. 265-86. ↑

8. Cwiertka, Food and War 2013, p. 5. ↑
9. A number of historians have focused on the home front, and in particular urban provisioning. The research sites were, for the most part, the European capitals Paris, Berlin, London, and to a lesser extent Vienna. See for example Davis, Belinda: Home Fires Burning. Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin, Chapel Hill 2000; Barnett, Margaret: British Food Policy during the First World War, Boston 1985; Lih, Lars T.: Bread And Authority in Russia, 1914-1921, Berkeley 1990; also Bozon, Thierry: Consumption and Total Warfare in Paris (1914-1918), in: Trentmann / Just, Food and Conflict 2006; as well as a number of essays in the two volumes by Winter, J. M. / Robert, Jean-Louis (eds.): Capital Cities at War. Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919, Cambridge 1997. ↑
10. See for example Özdemir, Hikmet: The Ottoman Army, 1914-1918. Disease and Death on the Battlefield, Salt Lake City 2008; Erickson, Edward: Ordered to Die. A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War, Westport 2001; Zürcher, Eric J.: Between Death and Desertion. The Experience of Ottoman Soldier in World War I, Turcica 28 (1996), pp. 235-58. ↑
11. Pamuk, Şevket: The Ottoman Economy in World War I, in: Broadberry, S. N. / Harrison, Mark (eds.): The Economics of World War I, New York 2005, pp. 112-36; Shaw, Stanford J.: The Ottoman Empire in World War I, Ankara 2006, pp. 203-338. ↑
12. Beşikçi, Mehmet: The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War. Between Voluntarism and Resistance, Leiden 2012. ↑
13. Thompson, Elizabeth: Colonial Citizens. Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon, New York 2000; Akin, Yiğit: The Ottoman Home Front During World War I. Everyday Politics, Society and Culture, Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University 2011. ↑
14. Mazza, Robert: Dining Out in Times of War. Jerusalem 1914-1918, Jerusalem Quarterly 41 (2010), pp. 52-58; Tamari, Salim: Years of Delicious Anarchy. Crowds, Public Space, and New Urban Sensibilities in War-Time Jerusalem 1917-1921, Institute of Jerusalem Studies (2008); Schulze-Tanielian, Melanie: The War of Famine. Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon (1914-1918), Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley 2012. ↑
15. For a discussion see Duffet, The Stomach 2012, pp. 1-26. ↑
16. Yalman accounted for 2,998,321 men enrolled in the four years of war. See Yalman, Ahmet Emin: Turkey in the World War, New Haven 1930, p. 252. ↑
17. Akin, Ottoman Home Front 2011, p. 77. ↑
18. According to the law, legitimate war taxes could reach up to 25 percent of "livestock and foodstuffs in the hands of merchants – including items such as potatoes, beans,

- chickpeas onions and butter.” Akin, *The Ottoman Home Front* 2011, p. 99. ↑
19. Ajay, Nicholas: *Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut, 1914-1918. The War Years*, Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University 1973, pp. 161-65. ↑
 20. Yalman, *Turkey* 1930, p. 106. ↑
 21. For a more detailed discussion see Akin, *Ottoman Home Front* 2011, passim. ↑
 22. Yalman, *Turkey* 1930, p. 251. ↑
 23. Collingham, *Taste of War* 2012, p. 8. ↑
 24. Beşikçi, *Ottoman Mobilization* 2012, p. 260. ↑
 25. Tamari, Salim: *Year of the Locust*, Berkeley 2011, p. 9. ↑
 26. Özdemir, *Ottoman Army* 2008, p. 206. ↑
 27. Özdemir, *Ottoman Army* 2008, p. 39. ↑
 28. Özdemir, *Ottoman Army* 2008, p. 213. ↑
 29. This was the case for soldiers in Syria, according to the German General Otto Liman von Sanders (1855-1929). See Schilcher, Linda: *Famine in Syria, 1915-1918*, in: Spagnolo, John P. / Hourani, Albert (eds.): *Problems of the Middle East in Historical Perspective. Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, Reading 1996, p. 230. ↑
 30. Yalman, *Turkey* 1930, p. 251. ↑
 31. Özdemir, *Ottoman Army* 2008, p. 213. ↑
 32. Beşikçi, *Ottoman Mobilization* 2012, p. 134. ↑
 33. Zürcher, *Between Death and Desertion* 1996, pp. 235-58; Beşikçi, *Ottoman Mobilization* 2012, pp. 247ff. ↑
 34. There are no reliable statistics as to how many soldiers and civilians died of starvation and prolonged malnutrition. Numbers are vague and do not account for the entire army. For example, General Liman von Sanders accounted for 17,000 Ottoman soldiers dead by starvation in Syria alone in the winter and spring of 1917-1918. See Liman von Sanders, Otto Viktor Karl: *Fünf Jahre Türkei*, Berlin 1919, p. 307. The historian Hikmet Özdemir suggested that throughout the war somewhere around 654,468 soldiers were admitted to military hospitals, the majority due to the ‘chronic problem of malnutrition, which could not be eliminated despite all efforts.’ See Özdemir, *Ottoman Army* 2008, p. 34; Erickson, *Ordered to Die* 2001, p. 240. ↑
 35. Moore, Aaron William: *An Insatiable Parasite. Eating and Drinking in WWII Armies of the Asia-Pacific Theatre (1937-1945)*, in: Cwiertka, *Food and War* 2013, p. 110. ↑
 36. Schilcher, *The Famine* 1996, p. 239. ↑
 37. Tanielian, *War of Famine* 2012, pp. 19-49. ↑
 38. Eley, Geoff: *War and the Twentieth Century State*, *Daedalus* 124/2 (Spring 1995), pp. 155-74. ↑
 39. Yigit Akin referred to the legislative measures as “centralization.” For a detailed account

see both Tanielian, War of Famine 2012, pp. 19-49 and Akın, Ottoman Home Front 2011, pp. 76-120. ↑

40. For example, an okka (1.28 kg) of sugar cost three piasters in July 1914, sixty-two piasters in January 1917, and 140 piasters in January 1918. The price of wheat in Beirut rose from 625 piasters per qintar (about 256.4 kg) in October 1916 to 1,200 piasters in December 1916. See Beşikçi, Ottoman Mobilization 2012, p. 144; Tanielian, War of Famine 2012, pp. 47, 122, 133. For rationing in Istanbul, see Yalman, Turkey 1930, p. 119-34. ↑
41. Collingham, Taste of War 2011, p. 11. ↑
42. "Darnel is a grass plant that grows plentifully in the Greater Syrian region and is found alongside and within wheat fields. It is often referred to as false wheat because of its similar appearance. The consumption of darnel causes feeling of drunkenness and in some cases may even result in death." Tanielian, War of Famine 2012, p. 62. ↑
43. For a more detailed account of provisioning of the capital see Yalman, Turkey 1930, pp. 119-34. ↑
44. Schilcher, The Famine 1996, p. 237. ↑
45. In Eastern Anatolia, the deportation of Armenians – the majority of whom were peasants – crippled food production. Parts of the Greater Syrian provinces, in particular Mount Lebanon, also suffered from famine. ↑
46. The law was passed in July 1916 and implemented in September 1916. ↑
47. Pamuk, Ottoman Economy 2005, p. 124. ↑
48. Akın, Ottoman Home Front 2011, pp. 117f. ↑
49. Yalman, Turkey 1930, p. 134. ↑
50. Thompson, Colonial Citizen 2000, p. 21. ↑
51. However, we do not have comprehensive studies – this comparative assessment is based on cursory knowledge. Damascus, for example, seemed to have survived the war fairly well until the Arab revolt made shipping supplies to the city more difficult as of February 1918. Kévorkian, Raymond H.: The Armenian Genocide. A Complete History, London 2011, p. 675. ↑
52. Kévorkian, Armenian Genocide 2011, p. 671. ↑
53. Kévorkian, Armenian Genocide 2011, p. 640. ↑
54. See Akçam, Taner: A Shameful Act. The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility, New York 2007. ↑
55. Tanielian, War of Famine 2012, p. 136. ↑
56. Tanielian, War of Famine 2012, p. 136. ↑
57. Habash, Yūsuf Emil: Jihād Lubnān wa istishāhadā, [Lebanon's Jihad and Martyrdom] Beirut 1920, p. 106. ↑

58. Tanielian, War of Famine 2012, p. 62. ↑
59. Pamuk, Ottoman Economy 2005, p. 131. ↑
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Citation

Melanie Schulze-Tanielian: Food and Nutrition (Ottoman Empire/Middle East), in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer D. Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.10322](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10322)

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[Middle East](#) > [Ottoman Empire](#)

Thematic Section(s)

[Home Front](#)

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[Economy](#) > [War economy](#) > [Black market, smuggling](#)

[Economy](#) > [War economy](#) > [Food and nutrition](#)

[Society](#) > [Crime and discrimination](#)

[Society](#) > [Everyday life, civilian war experience](#) > [Famine and starvation](#)
[Society](#) > [Everyday life, civilian war experience](#) > [Rationing and shortages](#)
[Society](#) > [Everyday life, civilian war experience](#) > [Relief organisations](#)
[Society](#) > [Everyday life, civilian war experience](#) > [Substitutes](#)
[Society](#) > [Social groups](#) > [Minorities](#)
[Warfare and the military](#) > [Soldiers, experiences and attitudes](#) > [Everyday life](#)

Author Keywords

Food; Nutrition; Famine; Relief; Rations

GND Subject Headings

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LC Subject Headings

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Key Person(s)

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[Aleppo](#); [Beirut](#); [Damascus](#); [Haifa](#); [Constantinople \(Istanbul\)](#)

Title

Food and Nutrition (Ottoman Empire/Middle East)

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