

## **Military History Consortium (MHC)**

**University of Amsterdam, Sciences Po Aix, University of Calgary, Lancaster University,  
Stellenbosch University**

**Online PhD Seminar**

**Wednesday 15 March 2023**

**1700-1900 (UK Time)**

### **Programme**

#### **Reexamining Karboghā's defeat at Antioch (28/6/1098): Tactical or Logistical failure?**

*Presenter: Thomas Brosset, Lancaster University*

*Discussant: Dr Samuël Kruijzinga, University of Amsterdam*

June 28, 1098, the Crusader army sallied out in great strength to engage Karboghā's forces and liberate themselves from Turkish siege. Despite being outnumbered, lacking fighting horses and starving, the Crusaders achieved a major victory ending Karboghā's entire campaign. Historians have traditionally discussed Karboghā's tactics to explain the outcome of the battle, accusing the Turkish leader of dreadful military skills. However, such an explanation ignores major factors that lost the battle before Karboghā designed his tactical approach. This paper explores those logistical and structural issues that vitally ruined the entire campaign from its beginning until the critical engagement that ended it. The campaign was ill prepared, and bad decisions endangered its logistics. The army stopped by Edessa to besiege it, losing time and supplies without taking the city. They arrived in front of Antioch whose surroundings had been depleted of food during the Crusader siege that lasted for months. Consequently, Turkish forces had to rely on buying their own supplies from local Muslim centers – Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Shayzar. The cost of these purchases was troops' responsibility. Troops were mostly Turkmen volunteers and mercenaries that expected booty. They obtained none, whereas their expenses risen unexpectedly. The Crusader army was certainly in a precarious position when engaging in a large-scale sally. Therefore, historians have not assessed enough the Turkish force's situation. They were on the verge of implosion. Syrian princes and emirs had little interest in seeing Karboghā's influence expand in Syria if he was successful against the Crusaders. Troops had no will risking their lives in a battle while spending more money that they could obtain from potential booty and began to desert the army in mass. The rest of them were on the verge of turning back in the Jazīra.

## **1914-1915, International Year of Peace: An American Attempt at Promoting Peace Caught in the Opening of the First World War**

*Presenter: Joris Ammerlaan, University of Amsterdam*

*Discussant: Dr Sophie Thérèse Ambler, Lancaster University*

Between 1910 and 1915 three American Presidents, Roosevelt, Wilson and Taft, along with all major business leaders of the era, and a whole host of other members of civil society, worked to promote the cause of worldwide peace. Their chosen project was the commemoration of a century of peace between the United States and Great Britain, which they planned to make an example of to the world. These were the men expected to set foreign policy, but what actually was the influence on this of the American Committee to Celebrate One-Hundred Years of Peace Amongst English-Speaking Peoples? During the first fifteen years of the 20th century, the U.S. peace movement attracted strong support from political and business leaders. As such it was at the peak of its influence and respectability. The committee at the heart of this study in particular represents this trend, by being formed out of this new breed of peace activists and specifically appealing to men at the very top of US society. And yet, their influence, if any, is hard to trace. Part of this project therefore is an ongoing computerized network analysis of the membership of this pacifist organization likely to give insight into the influence of their ideas and personal endeavours. Despite its roster being replete with names of famous and influential men, the committee this project studies does not show up in current historiography of either the peace movement, U.S. foreign politics, or studies of the run up to the First World War. Only an art-historical paper from 2009 looked at an exchange of statues that was supposed to be a secondary outcome of their efforts (Anthony Hutchinson, "'All the Men of Great Affairs': The Barnard Statue, Manchester Liberalism, and Lincoln Intellectual History"). And yet these efforts might well have contributed greatly to bringing about the historical rapprochement between the US and UK. This project further suggests that — despite the ostensible world-spanning ideals of the organizers — their primary contribution was to strengthen Anglophilliac tendencies among American elites, and to harden their hostility towards other groups of immigrants, particularly Germans and Irish. The importance of this in light of the approaching First World War is clear. Using archival sources collected from the personal archives of these organizers, deposited at Ivy League universities, their other philanthropic institutions (such as the Carnegie Foundation), and the Library of Congress, this project is currently reconstructing the story of this American Peace Celebration Committee.

## **'Fight as we train' – The 2<sup>nd</sup> South African Infantry Division's Wartime Training Preparations Prior to Their Deployment to North Africa: September 1939 – June 1941**

*Presenter: Jean-Pierre Scherman, Stellenbosch University*

*Discussant: Professor Timothy Stapleton, University of Calgary*

On 16 March 1940, the newly appointed commander of the British Middle East Command, Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Wavell, arrived by air in the Union of South Africa. The purpose of the visit was to allow Wavell the opportunity to inspect military training and other establishments that the Union Defence Force were engaging in prior to the deployment of the South Africans to the battlefields of east and north Africa. On his return to Cairo, Wavell recorded his impressions for General Ironside, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, "I was impressed by what I saw of the South African Defence Forces. They seem to be making a big effort to produce a military force out of very little, and doing it very efficiently. I believe that... South Africa would fight her 'all out' anywhere in Africa." The 2<sup>nd</sup> South African Infantry Division would spend more than a year within South Africa, training and preparing, before they too would be sent to North Africa in June 1941. This paper will consequently examine the divisions training scheme in order to determine if Wavell was correct in his assumption that the Union Defence Force was conducting its training efficiently in order to prepare its soldiers to fight their 'all out' anywhere in Africa.

## **The Operational Efficiency of Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance in the Early Italian Campaign**

*Presenter: Victoria Sotvedt, University of Calgary*

*Discussant: Dr Evert Kleynhans*

Canadian divisional armoured reconnaissance regiments had no practical experience or concrete doctrine when Canada joined the Second World War in 1939. The doctrine of these regiments therefore was mostly experimental and revolved around mobility, operating both as reconnaissance and as a mobile strike force that filled the role between infantry and tanks. This focus on mobility worked well in Northwest Europe, but struggled in the rugged Italian terrain. This resulted in a much less mobile role which negatively impacted the overall effectiveness of reconnaissance operations when compared to similar engagements in France, Belgium, and Holland. While much has been written about the difficulties of the Italian Campaign, none of it examines the unique challenges faced by reconnaissance regiments who had trained as a mobile fill-the-gap force. By examining war diaries, training documents, memoirs, and message logs, we can begin to understand how Canadian reconnaissance regiments struggled to fulfill an essentially impossible role. Although divisional reconnaissance regiments achieved some success and maintained a minimum standard of effectiveness, primarily in conjunction with large offensives, they failed to achieve the same importance and independence as in Northwest Europe, in large part because of

their inability to fully move away from the doctrine of mobility. By examining these successes and failures, we can begin to understand more of how Canadian forces under fire adapted—or failed to adapt—to difficult situations in the Second World War and evolved from their much more limited interwar predecessors.