



The Air War in the Southern Caucasus (Eastern Ottoman Provinces) 1916-1917

Unique aerial photographs of the Armenian Highlands

by Peter Dye

This article came about through the chance purchase of a dozen prints from aerial photographs taken in the Ottoman Empire's Eastern Provinces during the First World War.

Researching their history has revealed new details of the fighting between the Ottoman and Russian armies, rarely mentioned in popular histories of the First World War, and of the tragedy that befell the Armenian communities of the Eastern Provinces. Many of the images show abandoned villages, their roofs missing and the population either killed or deported. The scale of the destruction is sobering, as is the

rugged beauty of the landscape, dominated by high mountain ranges, steep-sided valleys, and swift flowing streams. Winter comes early to the Armenian Highlands and lasts deep into Spring. There are few roads or large towns, but numerous small settlements can be found, scattered across the valleys and high plains. The area is dominated by the Euphrates River and its tributaries that flow west from the mountains, north of the Taurus, before turning south towards Syria and Iraq. It is difficult to believe that a war was fought here or that these photographs represent the very first aerial views of this remote and inaccessible region, providing a unique record

