

WORLD WAR I TURKISH PRISONER-OF-WAR BEADWORK¹

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Drawing on the rich tradition of textile crafts in the Ottoman Empire, Turkish soldiers incarcerated in British prison camps in the Middle East during and immediately after World War I made a variety of beadwork items to relieve the boredom of their prolonged imprisonment and to barter or sell for food and other amenities. Best known are the bead crochet snakes and lizards, but the prisoners also used loomed and netting techniques to produce necklaces, belts, purses, and other small items.

INTRODUCTION

Turkish soldiers captured by British, Australian, and French troops in World War I used Bohemian glass seed beads to create a unique group of war souvenirs for their captors. Unfortunately, there is little historical documentation on these pieces. The chief surviving sources of information are family legends of a relative's war service passed down to later generations and inscriptions on individual pieces.

British and Australian soldiers who served in the Middle East brought prisoner-made beadwork purses and necklaces home for their sweethearts and wives and beadwork snakes as toys for their children. The first catalog of the Imperial War Museum in London published in 1918 has a section, "War Toys and Mascots," with a photograph captioned "Snakes made, with coloured beads by Turkish Prisoners of War" (Imperial War Museum 1918:28)(Fig. 1).

WORLD WAR I CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

To investigate the origins of these beadwork pieces, it is useful to review the history of World War I conflicts in the Middle East. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers against the Allies in the fall of 1914, the British launched major campaigns to preserve their pre-war trade routes to Russia through the Dardanelles and to India through the Suez Canal. Turkish forces were successful in routing British, Australian, and French troops at their first major encounters at Gallipoli and in the Dardanelles in 1915. The Allies successfully secured the Suez Canal

in 1916. Other major campaigns, including those made famous by Lawrence of Arabia, resulted in British victories at Jerusalem and Baghdad in 1917 and at Damascus in 1918. Accurate records of captured Ottoman soldiers were not kept, and estimates of prisoners of war taken by Russian, British, and Commonwealth troops vary from 150,000 to 250,000 (Erickson 2001:238; Ferguson 1999:295).

Prisoner-of-War Camps for Captured Ottoman Soldiers

The Russian army sent some 50,000 soldiers captured during the 1915 Turkish invasion into the Caucasus to prison-of-war camps in Russia. British, Australian, and French troops sent Turkish soldiers captured in the Gallipoli and Dardanelles campaigns in 1915 and 1916 to camps at Salonika, on Cyprus, and several islands in the Aegean.² Initially housed in tents encircled by barbed wire, most prisoners were eventually transferred to camps in Egypt (Figs. 2-3). The Allied victory in 1916 for control of the Suez Canal resulted in the capture of 3,950 Turkish soldiers who joined other prisoners at camps near British and Australian military bases in Egypt. By July 1917, there were about 14,000 Turkish prisoners in Egypt, 14,000 in India and Burma, and 5,000 in Cyprus "with a few in England, at Malta, at Aden and in Mesopotamia" (Hansard 1917). Prisoners captured in the Mesopotamian campaign in 1917 were sent by boat or rail to Basrah and then transported to prison camps at old British military bases in India and Burma. British victories in Jerusalem and the Sinai in 1918 netted approximately 70,000 prisoners who were sent by rail to prisoner-of-war camps near Cairo.

A variety of existing and new buildings housed Ottoman prisoners for the duration of the war. For example, the facilities at Maadi Camp near Cairo consisted of "old buildings originally erected as a school of music and subsequently used as a factory... and barracks built recently for prisoners of war" (International Committee of the Red Cross 1917:18). Many of the camps came to resemble semi-permanent villages with a variety of services provided by the prisoners for each other as well as those furnished by camp authorities.

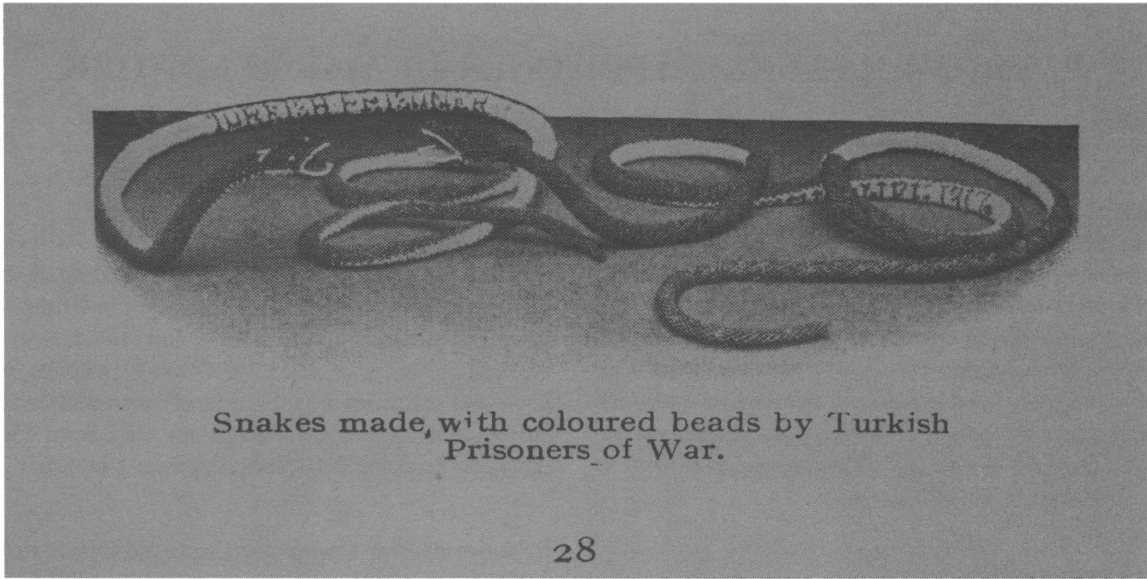


Figure 1. Beadwork snakes in the collection of the Imperial War Museum, London, 1918 (photo: Imperial War Museum).



Figure 2. Turkish prisoners at Seddul Bahr captured during the 1915 Dardanelles campaign (photo: British War Department).



Figure 3. Turkish prisoner-of-war camp near Cairo, Egypt, ca. 1918 (photographer unknown).

Crafts in Prison Camps

To relieve the boredom of prison life and to give the prisoners an opportunity to earn money for food, clothing, cigarettes, and other amenities, prison authorities provided materials for prisoners to make craft pieces for sale or barter to prison guards, to soldiers billeted near the camps, and for sale in local curio shops.³ Turkish prisoners incarcerated at Salonika, on the island of Cyprus, and at various prisoner-of-war camps in Egypt made a wonderful array of objects from glass seed beads.⁴

The diaspora of Ottoman prisoners of war captured in Allied campaigns in the Middle East during World War I is illustrated in Fig. 4 (Krause 2002:46). I have added circles to represent prisoner-of-war camps where beadwork was made. The size of each circle is proportionate to the amount of beadwork estimated to have been made in that area.

INSCRIBED BEADWORK SNAKES

Made in lengths from 33 cm to 550 cm, inscribed beadwork snakes are among the most interesting pieces made by Ottoman prisoners of war. Because many of them were brought home as toys for children, vigorous play has resulted in damage ranging from missing beads to severance of heads and separated sections of bodies. The backs of the snakes were crocheted with seed beads in zig-zag and

diamond patterns (Pl. IA, top). Most prisoner-of-war snakes were made with 2-mm seed beads. The Kettlewell snake (see below) is unusual in that it was made with 1.0-mm beads.

The colors used were black, white, amber, dark green, light green, sage green, dark blue, light blue, red, pink, and yellow. Adele Recklies (2005:36-42) describes the techniques used in making these snakes. Inscriptions were usually worked into the bellies of the snakes (Pl. IA, bottom). More unusual are inscriptions such as SOUVENIR worked into the pattern on the back. The snakes were stuffed with a variety of materials, the most common being cotton string, yarn, thread, or small pieces of cotton cloth. Inscriptions on surviving snakes are sometimes flanked by British or French flags or by a variety of abstract designs. Some snakes have beaded tongues, and most have either a triangle or an “A” design on their chins. Both designs may signify Allah, the triangle being an abstraction of the letter A (Pl. IB, top).

Almost all inscriptions are in English because Turkish prisoners made them for British and Australian soldiers to take home as war souvenirs. The most common inscriptions are TURKISH PRISONER or TURKISH PRISONERS with or without a date. Less common inscriptions include a place name or SOUVENIR. Rare examples inscribed PRISONER DE GUERRE were probably made by prisoners captured by the French at Gallipoli because the inscriptions on the two examples I have seen include the date 1916. Rarer yet are snakes with Turkish inscriptions in Arabic script.

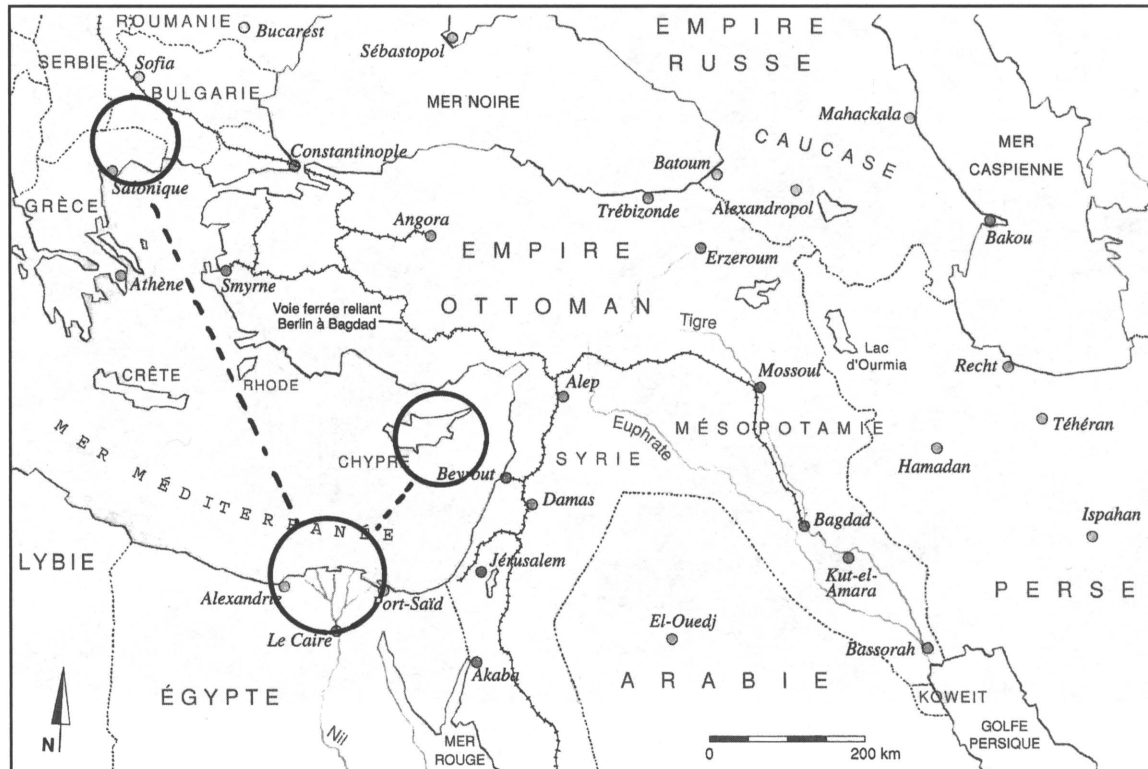


Figure 4. Map of the Ottoman Empire during WWI. The circles represent the locations in which Turkish prisoner-of-war beadwork was made (drawing: Jean-François Krause).

As almost no Ottoman prisoners could write English and many were illiterate, it is interesting to speculate about how the prisoners produced the inscriptions on the snakes they created. Camp authorities probably provided generic inscriptions such as **TURKISH PRISONERS** on slips of paper to those interested in making beadwork souvenirs (Flora Book 2007: pers. comm.). When a soldier wanted to commission a special snake, he would have to provide a customized inscription for a prisoner to copy in beadwork. Few snakes were inscribed with the names of the prison camps in which they were made, with particular military campaigns, or with the names of individual soldiers who commissioned them. Most inscribed prisoner-of-war snakes were made at Salonika, on Cyprus, and in Egypt.

Salonika and Cyprus

Some inscribed snakes have family provenance and inscriptions to confirm they were made at Salonika and on the island of Cyprus from 1915-1918. The Kettlewell snake is a very rare early Turkish prisoner-of-war beadwork piece with family provenance. It was a gift from a Turkish prisoner to Maurice Kettlewell, a British army cook in a prisoner-of-war camp at Salonika, in gratitude for Kettlewell's concern

for the welfare of the prisoners. The snake has **TURKISH PRISONERS 1915 on the white belly**. The date and the location at which it was made indicate this snake was made by a prisoner captured in the Gallipoli or Dardanelles campaigns. Kettlewell brought his snake, which is 145 cm long, home when he returned from the war and displayed it proudly on the sideboard in his drawing room in Yorkshire. His children were allowed to play with it gently under strict supervision, and it has survived today largely intact (Pl. IB, bottom).

Very few snakes are inscribed with the names of military campaigns or battles. The inscription on one snake, **TURKISH PRISONERS DARDANELLES ASHIRABA CYPRUS 1916** (Pl. IC, top), puzzled me for a long time until I realized that **ASHIRABA** was meant to be **Achi Baba**, a hill on the Gallipoli Peninsula that the Ottoman army defended several times from attacks by British troops. The Turkish soldier who made this 180-cm-long snake was probably captured at Gallipoli and sent to a prison camp in Cyprus where he made it in 1916.

A beadwork snake made on Cyprus in 1918 was brought home to northeast England by Ernest Hislop who served in the Collingwood Battalion of the Royal Naval Division at Gallipoli. He then served in the Howe and Hood Battalions

of the Royal Naval Division and afterwards in France. There he received the Military Medal and shrapnel wounds in both legs for his part in clearing German snipers from the French village of Niergnies near Cambrai as part of the offensive to capture the Hindenburg Line in 1918. Like most soldiers, Hislop would not talk about his war experiences even to his wife and children. The snake he brought home was probably bought from a British or French soldier in France and was tucked away for years with his military papers and other war souvenirs in an attaché case. Measuring 176 cm in length, it has TURKISH PRISONERS CYPRUS 1918 on the belly (Pl. IC, bottom).

Egypt

Most inscribed Turkish prisoner-of-war snakes and other beadwork pieces were made in Egypt at camps near Cairo. In January 1917, a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross visited several British prisoner-of-war camps in Egypt to describe the excellent conditions under which the English held Turkish prisoners in the hope of obtaining assurance from German authorities that British prisoners of war would be treated equally well. The published reports of their visits provide interesting contemporary views of prison-camp life (International Committee of the Red Cross 1917).⁵ Although descriptions of individual camps concentrated on living quarters, clothing, food, hygiene, and medical care, they sometimes included information on recreational activities available to the prisoners. Only the report on Maadi camp, located 16 km south of Cairo with a population of 5,556 Turkish prisoners, refers to “articles of coloured beads—handbags, purses, necklaces, bracelets, etc —which show considerable artistic taste... and sell readily in curiosity shops at Cairo.” One section of 1,200 prisoners netted 2,500 francs in a single fortnight from the sale of their beadwork pieces (International Committee of the Red Cross 1917:25).⁶

Major British victories in 1917 and 1918 swelled the populations of the prisoner-of-war camps near Cairo. Instead of establishing new camps for the thousands of Ottoman soldiers captured in the Palestine and Sinai campaigns, British authorities transported them by rail to established camps in Egypt. Heliopolis Camp, northeast of Cairo, housed 3,906 prisoners at the time of the Red Cross visit in January 1917, but the prison population had increased to 30,000-35,000 prisoners by 1918 (Pye 1918:134). A snake made there is inscribed SOUVENIR OF 1914.15.16.17 in black beads on the back, while the white belly bears the wording T. PRISONERS OF W. HELIOPOLIS. It is 165 cm long (Pl. ID, top).

In January 1917, when the Red Cross delegation visited Bilbeis Camp 65 km northeast of Cairo, they reported a population of 540 prisoners. Prisoners from the Suez Canal and Palestine swelled the camp population and by 1918, the camp held an estimated 35,000-40,000 Ottoman prisoners (Pye 1918:156). A rare prisoner-of-war snake with a Turkish inscription SOUVENIR OF THE OTTOMAN PRISONERS in Arabic script as well as an English inscription TURKISH PRISONER 1917 was presented to a British officer in 1917. It has survived with an accompanying note:

Bead Snake Made by Turkish Prisoners of War captured in the Sinai Campaign 1917 for Capt. J.P. Williams, Adjunct, Belbeis [sic], Egypt (P of W Camp) and presented by them to him on relinquishing the post to be invalided home in September 1917.

A Nottingham coal miner brought home a 217-cm-long beadwork snake inscribed SYRIAN PRISONER 1918 (*see cover*). A prisoner captured in Palestine probably made it in a prisoner-of-war camp in Egypt.

Some inscribed snakes were commissioned by individual soldiers in Egypt. Leslie Burrowes, an Australian soldier in the 10th Light Horse Regiment, enlisted on October 20, 1914, and was wounded in the jaw and face at Gallipoli. When he recovered in 1916, he was sent to the Western Front in France where he was wounded again. In 1917, he was sent to the Middle East where he was wounded once more. Burrowes was hospitalized in Cairo for a chronic illness and, while he was recuperating, commissioned a large beadwork snake with a lizard in its mouth from a Turkish prisoner of war at a nearby camp. The snake is beaded in a diamond design with green, turquoise, and pink beads, with black borders on an amber bead background with a white belly inscribed TURKISH PRISONER 67 L. BURROWES.⁷ Sadly, after the war, Burrowes' facial disfigurements precluded the resumption of a “normal life” for this brave soldier, and family members remember him as a wandering individual who would show up sporadically for brief visits (Leslyanne Hawthorne 2007: pers. comm.).

Thomas Scott Hake was a private in the Australian 8th Light Horse. He had eye problems that sent him to hospital at Cairo in 1917 and 1918, where he probably commissioned a large beadwork snake from a prisoner in one of the camps near Cairo. The inscription includes his name and regiment: TURKISH PRISONER 1918 TPR. T. S. HAKE 8TH L. H. This snake is very long: 342 cm (Pl. ID, bottom).

The Australian War Memorial has a collection of World War I prisoner-of-war beadwork pieces brought back by Australian soldiers.⁸ Several of the snakes have unusual

patterns and were probably made in prisoner-of-war camps near Cairo.

Many snakes and other beadwork pieces inscribed with variations of TURKISH PRISONER (with or without a date) were sold in curio shops and by street vendors in Cairo and in Alexandria and Port Said, the ports from which most British and Commonwealth troops serving in the Middle East were repatriated after the war. One such seller, adorned with several beadwork snakes, is dressed in an old British uniform, possibly discarded from a local military hospital (Fig. 5).

Although the repatriation of captured Ottoman soldiers held in British and Australian prisoner-of-war camps began in 1919, some prisoners were not returned to their countries of origin until 1921, and inscribed prisoner-of-war beadwork pieces continued to be made through 1920.

A short, unattributed newspaper article, “The Turkish Serpent,” with a photograph of a Turkish beadwork snake, was published in either 1919 or 1920 (Fig. 6):

The brilliantly-marked snake seen in the accompanying photograph is not quite what it appears to be. Concerning it a nautical reader writes: “The snake measures almost five feet in length, and is curled up as though in readiness to strike, but is actually quite harmless, being *made entirely of coloured beads*—about fifty thousand of them—cunningly strung together! This exquisite piece of work was done by a Turkish prisoner-of-war during his spell of captivity in Egypt (1916-1919). Apart from being a craftsman, he must have possessed amazing patience and industry, for this spare-time job kept him occupied for over two years!

Some time after the Armistice, in 1918, I happened to be serving on board the vessel which took him, along with hundreds of others, from Alexandria to Constantinople for repatriation. During the voyage I spent about an hour each day with him, bargaining for the serpent; which I greatly admired. Priced ‘hardened,’ as they say on the Stock Exchange, while the ship was passing through the Dardanelles, but shortly before coming to anchor near the Golden Horn we reached an agreement, and the bead snake became my property in return for the sum of ten shillings and a few packets of ‘Woodbines.’

The Turkish soldier grossly exaggerated the time it took him to make the snake, and the sailor made a good deal when he exchanged it for ten shillings and some cigarettes.



Figure 5. Street vendor displaying his Turkish prisoner-of-war beadwork, ca. 1918 (photographer unknown).

Great Britain

About one hundred Turkish prisoners (mostly civilians) were interned at Knockaloe Camp on the Isle of Man. Island lore passed down through local families suggests that a few beadwork snakes might have been brought to Knockaloe by Turkish prisoners or made there and given or bartered to local civilians (Yvonne Cresswell 2007: pers. comm.).

Frank C. Quayle (1990), a local historian, commented that:

Turkish prisoners with a detailed knowledge of wild life in their native land, produced a great variety of beaded snakes.... So realistic were these snakes in execution and colouring that I have seen people back away from them as if they were alive.

He does not, however, specifically mention beadwork snakes being made at Knockaloe Camp, and I have not been able to document with certainty that snakes or other prisoner-of-war beadwork was made on the Isle of Man.

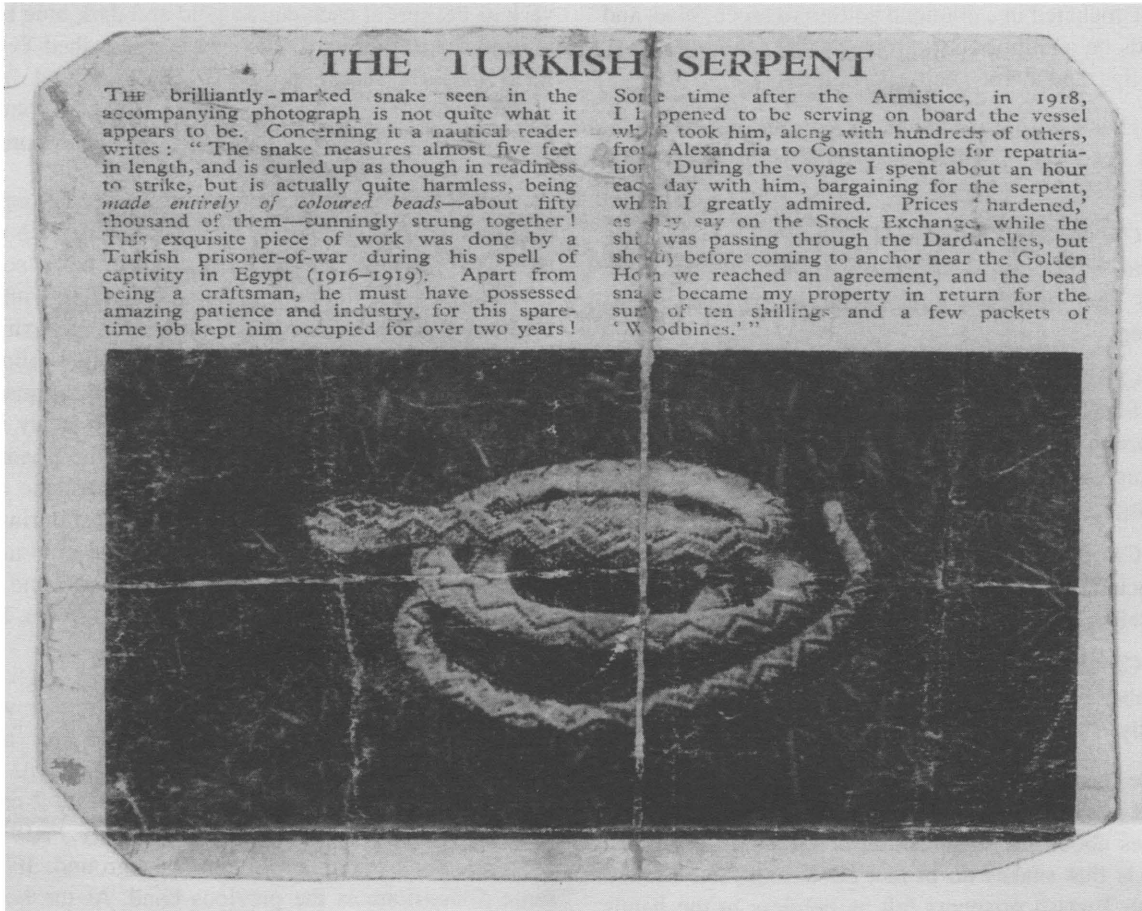


Figure 6. Newspaper article about "The Turkish Serpent" (photographer unknown).

Two published sources that describe the extensive crafts program at World War I prisoner-of-war camps on the Isle of Man do not mention or illustrate any beadwork from Knockaloe (Baily 1959; Cresswell 1994). Many craft pieces made in the prisoner-of-war camp at Knockaloe are inscribed with the name of the camp, but no snakes with Knockaloe inscriptions have been found.

It is possible that Manxmen brought home the snakes associated with families on the Isle of Man as gifts for their loved ones. Manxmen answered the call for army service in great numbers proportionate to the population of the island and served in the British army with the Cheshire Regiment at Salonika and as medical doctors in Egypt at hospitals near Cairo (Sargeant 1920:45-56). Many war souvenirs were not appreciated by the families to whom they were given and were often consigned to attics or basements where they languished for decades. By the time house clearances brought them to museums or to the antiques market, specific details of their origins had been forgotten.

My extensive collection of World War I war souvenirs includes many identified pieces from other British prisoner-of-war camps but no beadwork pieces.

OTHER TURKISH PRISONER-OF-WAR BEADWORK

Crocheted beadwork lizards, glass bottles covered with crocheted beads, loomwork beaded bands, necklaces and belts, and netted and loomwork beadwork purses are other interesting pieces made by World War I Turkish prisoners of war.

Among the most endearing beaded objects are the crocheted lizards, each of which has a personality of its own. They are primarily decorated in diamond patterns but examples with zig-zag decoration and spotted backs also exist. Most examples are not inscribed, but some bear dates from 1916 to 1919 on their bellies. Six examples are shown in Pl. IIA, top. From left to right:

1. Crocheted in a diamond pattern in green, blue, and pink beads on an amber background with green eyes, pink and blue lips, and a green belly; 12 cm long.

2. Crocheted in a diamond pattern in amber, white, and black beads on an amber background with a white belly inscribed 1919; 15 cm long.

3. Crocheted in a diamond pattern with pink, blue, white, and amber beads on a green background with red eyes and blue lips. The white belly is inscribed 1917; 17 cm long.

4. Crocheted in a diamond pattern with pink, green, red, and black beads on an amber background with a zig-zag pattern in red and green on the sides. The rear legs and tail are missing. The white belly bears the date 1917; 14 cm long.

5. Crocheted in a zig-zag pattern in blue beads on an amber background with red and white eyes, black lips, and a white belly; 18.5 cm long.

6. Crocheted with a spotted back in turquoise beads on an amber background with white eyes, blue lips, and a white belly; 19 cm long.

Some beadwork lizards found their way into the mouths of beadwork snakes (Pl. IIA, bottom). There are two hypotheses about the juxtaposition of these two creatures. The first is that snakes do in fact eat lizards. The second is that the Turkish prisoners felt as helpless in the hands of their British captors as the captured lizards were in the mouths of the snakes.

Glass bottles covered in crochet beadwork were made in Greece before, during, and after World War I. The bottles illustrated in Pl. IIB were made at Salonika during the war. They are inscribed *SOUVENIR SALONIQUE*, and one is inscribed with a 1916 date. Both are decorated with flowers and crossed flags with geometrical borders at the top and bottom. They were probably made by Turkish soldiers captured by the French at Gallipoli who were sent to a prisoner-of-war camp at Salonika. The bottles are 21-23 cm high and 6 cm in diameter.

Turkish prisoners also made loomwork beaded bands, necklaces, and belts with inscriptions similar to those found on the snakes. Some pieces include strands of beads as additional decorative features.

The upper beaded belt in Pl. IIC (top) is decorated with diamonds within a zig-zag pattern with diamonds at each end. The center exhibits small diamonds and is inscribed *TURKISH PRISONERS 1916*. It is 65 cm long (excluding the tassels) and 5 cm wide. The other belt is decorated with

various designs at each end in gold and dark blue beads on a turquoise background. The center is inscribed *TURKISH PRISONERS*. Three beadwork tassels depend from the bottom of the belt. It is 65 cm long (excluding the cotton ends) by 15 cm wide (including the suspended decorations).

An elaborate belt executed in variously colored beads exhibits two British flags as well as an American one (Pl. IIC, bottom). There are also depictions of birds, some sort of quadruped, possibly a lizard, and a building with a cross above it, perhaps a church. The central portion exhibits the wording *TURKISH 1917* above *PRISONERS* followed by what appears to be the Arabic date 1333 which equates with 1915 in the Gregorian calendar. The discrepancy in dates is uncertain. Perhaps 1915 was the year the prisoner was captured. The American flag is also problematic as there were no American troops in the Middle East during World War I. While it may be that the belt was commissioned by a British soldier to give to an American friend, it was, nevertheless, collected in Britain. It is 60 cm long by 5 cm wide.

A band with light and dark blue borders with the inscription *PRISONER TURKISH 1916* on a green background is shown at the top of Pl. IID (top). It is 35 cm long (excluding the loops at each end) by 2 cm wide. The central band is inscribed *TURKISH PRISONERS 1916* in black letters on a pink background. It has the same dimensions as the previous band. At the bottom of Pl. IID (top) is a necklace in blue, turquoise, and light blue beads with a turquoise border. It is inscribed *TURKISH PRISONER* in pink, bronze, and translucent off-white beads. Three beadwork embellishments in turquoise, amber, and black beads dangle from the bottom edge. The piece is 38 cm long by 13 cm wide (including the hanging decorative beads).

Netted beadwork purses were made in a variety of colors. Most have a loomwork band near the top inscribed with some variation of *TURKISH PRISONER OF WAR* with or without a date. Two examples are shown in Pl. IID (bottom). The one on the left is executed in blue and pink beads with a loomwork band at the top inscribed *I P of WAR 1918* put on upside down. There are two netted triangular projections at the top in amber and pink beads with cotton-thread tassels and a handle in green and white beads. The item is 18 cm high (excluding the handle) by 15 cm wide. The purse on the right is done with green and amber beads with a loomwork band at the top inscribed *T P of WAR 1918*. The netted triangles at the top are in green and amber beads and the handle is in green and amber beads. The purse is 20 cm high (excluding the handle) by 13 cm wide.

Loomwork beaded purses provide canvases for various beadwork images. Some depict birds and other animals. One example shows two birds eating berries from a tree on a black background inscribed **TURKISH PRISONERS 1918** in turquoise beads at the top and a band of beads ending with a snake-like head in green, white, black, and turquoise beads at the bottom. The handle is made from black and pink beads. The purse measures 24 cm high (excluding the handle) by 15 cm wide (Pl. IIIA, top, left).

Another purse exhibits a Scottish lion rampant in amber beads with pink lips and a mane of dark blue beads. Inscribed at the top on the obverse is **1918 TURKISH** and **1918 PRISONERS** is on the verso. The purse is 16 cm high (excluding the tassel and handle) by 14 cm wide (Pl. IIIA, top, right).

Worked in crimson and gold beads, a peacock and another bird facing each other adorn yet another purse. This side also bears the wording **SOUVENIR 191[6]** (Pl. IIIA, bottom, left). The verso is in light and dark blue beads and shows a Greek cross along with the inscription **TURKISH PRISONER** (Pl. IIIA, bottom, right). The piece is 14cm high by 14 cm wide.

A depiction of a building, possibly a prison or a hospital, outlined with blue beads adorns the purse on the right in Pl. IIIB (top). It bears the inscription **1918 and TURKISH PRISONERS**. Netted triangles of white, amber, and green beads with crochet thread tassels decorate the opening. The handle is made of blue, amber, and white beads. The piece is 17.5 cm high (excluding the handle) by 14.5 cm wide.

A purse decorated with a ship may have been one that transported prisoners from Salonika and Cyprus to prison camps near Cairo (Pl. IIIB, top, left). The ship is done in white beads with amber and red accents and sits on a sea of light and dark blue beads. The large white border at the top exhibits two crosses and the inscription **TURKISH**. The verso depicts the figure of a large black dog with a blue muzzle and the wording **PRISONERS 1918**. This image puzzled me for a long time before I realized it was a war dog with a primitive gas mask made from a blue French uniform. A French soldier with a war dog wearing a similar mask is shown in Pl. IIIB (bottom). The purse is 17 cm high (excluding the handle) by 16 cm wide. The handle is formed of amber beads.

Another purse with a nautical theme depicts a dreadnought battleship (Fig. 7). It has an Arabic inscription thought to include the date 1915 and may be associated with the Dardanelles campaign. Worked in black and white beads with red flags, it is 10.5 cm high and 8.5 cm wide. Both sides are the same.



Figure 7. Loomwork purse depicting a dreadnought warship with an Arabic inscription including the date 1915; H: 10.5 cm (photo by author).

WOODEN OBJECTS INLAID WITH BEADS

Some Turkish prisoners used small glass beads to decorate wooden objects. An opium pipe in the form of a sphinx engraved **TURKISH PRISONER** on the bottom was doubtless made in Egypt (Fig. 8). Small turquoise beads form the eyes. It is 11 cm long by 4.5 cm high by 2.5 cm wide.

A carved wooden walking stick depicting snakes with lizards in their mouths is decorated with nails and inlaid small white and turquoise seed beads (Fig. 9). It is inscribed **TURKISH PRISONER SALONICA 1919**. It is 93 cm long.

CONCLUSION

Turkish beadwork was unique among all the prisoner-of-war objects made during World War I. Using traditional folk-art techniques, Turkish prisoners near military bases in the Middle East were able to better their lives in captivity by selling popular beadwork souvenirs in the form of snakes, lizards, purses, beadwork bands, necklaces, and belts for British and Australian soldiers to take home as war souvenirs. The pieces that survive today are a moving tribute to the brave Ottoman soldiers who created a wonderful array of beautiful objects in the midst of their crumbling empire.



Figure 8. Wooden opium pipe in the form of a sphinx with inlaid turquoise beads for eyes; L: 11 cm (photo by author).

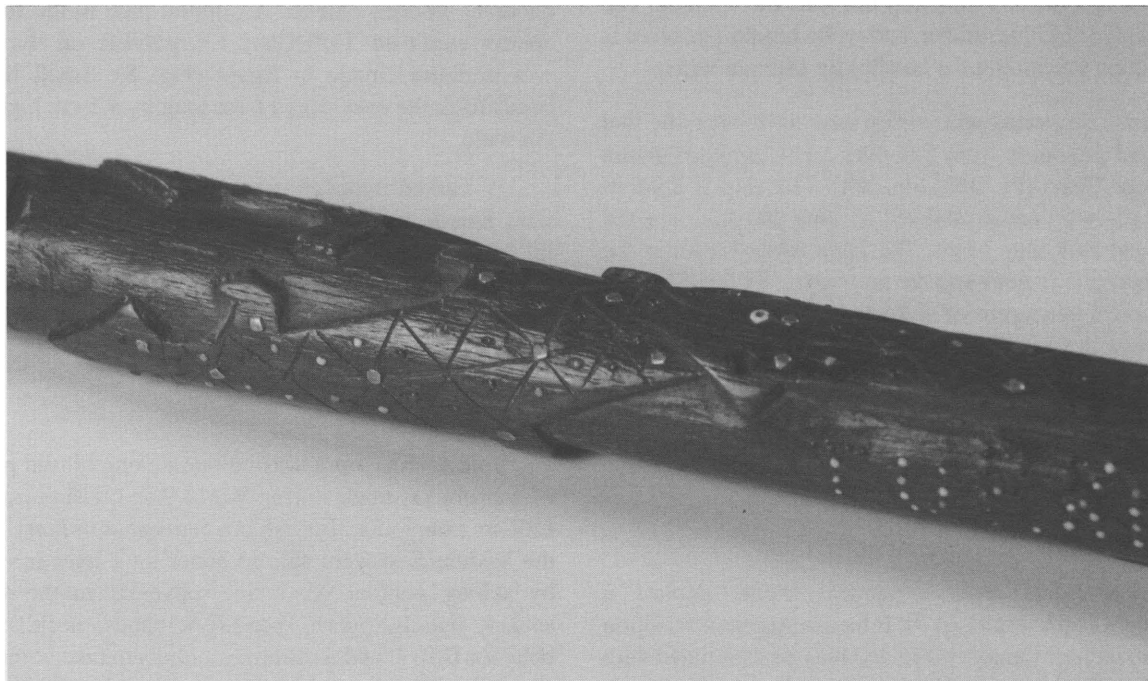


Figure 9. Detail of a wooden walking stick carved with images of snakes swallowing lizards. Inlaid with turquoise and white beads; L: 93 cm (photo by author).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENDNOTES

1. A shorter version of this paper was published by Rezan Has Museum in the proceedings of the International Bead & Beadwork Conference held November 22-25, 2007 at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, Turkey (Kimball 2007).
2. In the Aegean, Turkish prisoners were incarcerated at Mudros on the island of Lemnos and on Rhodes, Imbros, Tenedos, and Chios.
3. Prisoner-of-war handicrafts date back at least to the Napoleonic Wars, when French prisoners in Britain developed an active cottage industry producing objects from bone, straw, and wood. The Great War spawned prisoner handicrafts on a much larger scale. Belgian soldiers and civilians interned in Germany, British soldiers, sailors, and civilians interned in Germany and Holland, German civilians interned on the Isle of Man, and German soldiers in various camps on the Western Front made a variety of handicrafts. Examples of these and Turkish prisoner-of-war beadwork and other crafts are illustrated in *Trench Art: An Illustrated History* (Kimball 2004).
4. Turkish soldiers imprisoned in World War I in different areas developed their own craft specialties. Prisoners in Russia and at Salonika carved small wooden tobacco boxes. Ottoman soldiers captured in Mesopotamia were transported to camps in Burma and India where they made a variety of objects from scrap aluminum.
5. The delegation visited prisoner-of-war camps at Heliopolis, Maadi, the Citadel in Cairo, Ras-el-Tin, Sidi Bishr, Hospital No. 2 at Abbassiah, and the Egyptian Red Cross hospital at Cairo.
6. A large number of soldiers in this camp were captured during the Gallipoli Campaign. Twelve hundred Ottoman soldiers captured near the Suez Canal in the Sinai Peninsula were also transported to Maadi Camp.
7. A photograph of the Burrowes snake was included on David Pickler's website "Beadwork Snakes and Lizards" (<http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/beadworksnake/index.jhtml>) which unfortunately no longer exists.
8. A selection of Turkish prisoner-of-war beadwork pieces held by the Australian War Memorial can be seen on the Memorial's website: (<http://cas.awm.gov.au/>). Search the "Collection Database" under "Turkish beadwork." More information on Turkish prisoner-of-war beadwork prepared for an exhibition on Lawrence of Arabia can be found at: <http://blog.awm.gov.au/lawrence/?p=156>.

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