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Genuine diamonds or false stones? Mercenary loyalty in the Army of Muhammad Ali's Egypt¹

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Whether Pharaoh's *Sherden* with their iconic horned helmets, medieval Italian *Condottiere* or "Hessians" from the American Revolution, mercenaries have long connections to the history of warfare. Their employment provided poor men with an income, and princes with free-lance martial talent, willing to fight foreign *and domestic* foes. Today, although they would rather be called Private Military Companies, the mercenary tradition is alive and well on several continents, and you can still join the French Foreign Legion².

Does the Legion come to mind when thinking about "soldiers-of-fortune?" Or maybe Swiss palace guards for Enlightenment monarchs, with a detachment still serving the Vatican in 2020? How about Xenophon's hoplites making their "march to the sea", or the Grand Catalan Company?³

¹ Madame Sawzan `Abd al-Ghani, former deputy director of the Egyptian National Archives, made this article possible. She uncovered General Dembiński's misfiled papers in 1996 and was helpful in many other ways. Her many acts of kindness constantly remind me of the Egyptian proverb "One hand doesn't clap" (ش.ش.فقستام تندح او دي). Another hand came from the late Dr. M.K. Dziejwanowski, who sent me a copy of his "Polska misja wojskowa w Egipcie", *Bellona* 29/3 (1947): 47–51. Finally, the two reviewers provided exceptional advice on how to improve the first draft of this article, while the editor encouraged me to present a paper that got me started. If you find value, please note the many helping hands; if you see flaws, they are sole property of the writer.

² Much has been written on 21st century "Private Military Companies", like Blackwater. For a start, see *From Mercenaries to Market: The Rise and Regulation of Private Military Companies*, ed. by Simon Chesterman & Chia Lehnardt (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

³ On the Legion see Douglas Porch, *The French Foreign Legion: Complete History of the Legendary Fighting Force* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992). For Swiss mercenaries try, John McCormack, *One Million Mercenaries* (London: Leo Cooper, 1993). See also *The Catalan Expedition to the East*:

Probably few would imagine French, Polish, Italian or American Christians helping create a powerful military machine for 19th century Egypt. Yet such men helped Muhammad Ali create his *Nizam al-jadid* (New Organization). Why did “the founder of modern Egypt”, hire these freelancers? What did these men accomplish? Did they provide loyal and valuable service?⁴

Answering these questions requires us to start with events that cast military talent onto the world market. First, the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars ended employment for those too closely connected to the former emperor, or others whose seniority was insufficient to avoid peacetime demobilizations. Five years later, failed revolutions in Spain and the Italies created additional military émigrés. Then Poland’s November Insurrection was crushed by Russian forces in 1831, leading to the “Great Emigration”. This cast upwards of 6,000 Poles across the globe. Many were political leaders and soldiers, fearing Tsarist retribution or seeking haven to rebuild their strength for a new uprising⁵.

Some of these men were experienced senior officers, and even their junior colleagues had marketable skills. Mercenary employment was an option, especially in nations seeking to revamp their armed forces. Egypt is a good example. Technically a province of the Ottoman Empire, but nearly independent under Muhammad Ali, after he emerged victorious in struggles against Mamluks, Ottoman rivals, and an 1807 British invasion.

Appointed *Vali* (“governor”) in 1805, Muhammad Ali embraced Sultan Selim III’s *Nizam – i cedid* reforms – a package that focused on educational, diplomatic, financial, and military modernization⁶. Egypt’s *Vali* considered the last his most pressing need. Throughout much of Muhammad Ali’s rule, improving the Egyptian armed forces was a priority⁷.

from the ‘Chronicle’ of Ramon Muntaner, ed. by Robert Hughes and N.D. Hillgarth (Suffolk: Barcino-Tamesis, 2006); M.A. Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis, or the Expedition of Cyrus. Oxford Approaches to Classical Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴ “Founder of modern Egypt?” Muhammad Ali (Mehmet Ali if you wish to recall his Albanian origins) and his intentions for 19th century Egypt generates historical discussion to this day. To learn more, see Khaled Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali: From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008); or for a different view, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁵ Old but useful histories of the Great Emigration include Arthur P. Coleman, “The Great Emigration”, in *Cambridge History of Poland*, eds. W.F. Reddaway, J.H. Penson, O. Halecki and R. Dyboski. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941), Vol. II, pp. 311–323; Lubomir Gadon, *Wielka Emigracja w pierwszych latach po powstaniu listopadowym* (Cracow 1901–1902). See also Robert Stites, *The Four Horsemen: Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶ Romanized from Ottoman Turkish, *Nizam-i cedid*; from Arabic, *Nizam al-jadid*.

⁷ Selim III’s administration is well covered by Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016). For Selim’s military interests, see Stanford J. Shaw, “The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-I Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III”, *The Journal of Modern History* 37/3 (1965): 291–306.

Coming to power amidst the chaos of early 1800's Egypt, Muhammad Ali was keenly aware of military power. His *Arnauts* ("Bashi Bazouks"), Balkan Muslim mercenaries, could destroy local opposition, like their dramatic ambush of *Mamluk* leaders in 1811, but were old-fashioned warriors. Egypt's new governor had witnessed the power of both the French Army, and their British opponents during Bonaparte's invasion. He saw European training, discipline, and tactics, as vital for improving his military power⁸.

This presented challenges as few of his lieutenants had the skills needed to supervise a transition. Some were even hostile to the notion. This became very clear after *Arnauts* mutinied and attempted to kill him in 1815. Their rebellion resulted from Muhammad Ali's efforts to force *Arnauts* to embrace European drill and uniforms. Loyal troopers, the massive walls of Cairo's Citadel, and strategic bribes restored order in a few days, but forced the Governor to seek a different source for his westernized army⁹.

Egypt's peasant farmers, the *fellahin*, were more amenable to discipline, but who would supply leadership? Muhammad Ali turned to veterans of the Napoleonic Wars. There were hundreds of possible hires, and Muhammad Ali expected trouble. He told a confidant, "I know that of fifty men who come from Europe to offer me their services, forty-nine are like false jewels, but without trying them, I cannot pick out the one genuine diamond which may perhaps be among them"¹⁰.

Joseph Anthelme Sève was a diamond. Former powder monkey in the French navy, then cavalry trooper, he rose to the rank of captain by 1815. Siding with Bonaparte during the "100 Days" he was on half-pay a year later. Hearing Muhammad Ali was looking for military talent, Sève arrived in Cairo "with 27 francs and hope"¹¹. He was hired as an instructor in 1819¹².

Assigned to teach French tactics to officer cadets, he faced challenges due to his foreign origins, Christian religion, and demanding attitude. When musketry practice allowed some to take pot shots at their teacher, he supposedly ran through the smoke, sword in hand, offering to fight one or all right on the spot. Cowed by the former hussar, his students promised to behave. Sève then converted to Islam, removing one obstacle to acceptance by locals. This was significant, as Ottoman Egypt had centuries of tradition that gave legal and social precedence to those who embraced

⁸ See Khaled Fahmy's superb, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, his Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 1997).

⁹ For details on Muhammad Ali's *Arnaut* problem, see John P. Dunn, "Clothes to Kill For: Uniforms and Politics in Ottoman Armies", in *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 2/1 (2011): 85–107.

¹⁰ Puckler-Muskau, Prince [Herman], *Egypt under Mehemet Ali*, transl. H. Evans Lloyd, Vol. I (London: Henry Colburn, 1865), 49.

¹¹ H. Lauverge, *Souvenirs de la Grèce* (Paris: Avril de Gastel, 1826), 566.

¹² Renée-Paule Guillot, *Soliman, un Lyonnais généralissime des armées égyptiennes* (Versailles: Via Romana, 2011); Aimé Vingtrinier, *Soliman-Pacha, Colonel Sève Généralissime des armées égyptiennes, ou Histoire des guerres de l'Égypte* (Paris: Librairie Firmin Didot et Cie, 1886).

Islam. Christians were second-class subjects of the Sultan. Sève, now Suleiman al-Faransawi (“Solomon the Frenchman”), avoided this stigma¹³.

Rapid promotion followed, Suleiman rising to the rank of general, while Muhammad Ali also granted him the aristocratic title of *pasha*. The ex-powder monkey provided useful training, then joined the staff of Ibrahim, Mehmet Ali’s favorite son and commander of the Egyptian Army. Sève/ Suleiman ended up with a wife, a Cairo mansion, a generous pension, and descendants who married into the Egyptian royal family¹⁴.

Another success story was the American Marine officer, George B. English. A contemporary of Sève, he commanded the artillery sent with Egyptian forces invading the Sudan in 1820. Like his French counterpart, English embraced Islam, and was possibly the first white American to do so voluntarily. He published an account of his adventures in 1822, then moved to Istanbul, acting as a confidential agent for the American government¹⁵.

Sève and English had specific skills needed for converting fellahin into soldiers. Their experience at the company level was valuable, while conversion to Islam smoothed over local prejudice. Numerous European mercenaries followed in their footsteps, although few became “renegades”, by abandoning one faith for another. They rarely commanded troops in battle. Most were involved in training junior officers or creating a general staff¹⁶.

Religion became a pressing issue in 1824, as Muhammad Ali sent Ibrahim to crush Greek Christians attempting to break away from the Ottoman Empire. Land and sea units under Ibrahim’s command included European mercenary advisors. Sève had no problem with this arrangement. He might have agreed with Statoski, a Pole, who was asked why he was fighting fellow Christians. “For forty years I have bared my arm for liberty and never gained a para”, answered Statoski¹⁷.

¹³ Muhammad Ali recognized the importance of this conversion with a promotion. British Consul Salt claimed the ceremony was purposely scheduled for 25 December “to expressly outrage the religion he [Sève] had renounced”. Salt to FO, Cairo, 20 January 1824, FO 78/126, PRO. For more details, see chapter one of John P. Dunn, *Khedive Ismail’s Army* (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁴ Thanks to Dr. Letitia Ufford, the writer was introduced to descendants of Sève, who kindly allowed us to see parts of his Egyptian uniform along with Ottoman and European decorations in 1995.

¹⁵ George B. English, *Narrative of the Expedition to Dongola and Sennaar* (London 1822). See also William A. English, *Adventures of a 19th Century American Muslim. The Strange Tale of George Bethune English* (master’s thesis, Valdosta State University, 2015).

¹⁶ Muhammad Ali employed many other Europeans, for details see John Dunn, “Missions or Mercenaries? European Military Advisors in Mehmed Ali’s Egypt, 1815–1848”, in *Military Advising and Assistance: From Mercenaries to Privatization, 1815–2007*, ed. by Donald Stoker (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁷ Para – a small copper coin of the Ottoman Empire. *Sketches of Modern Greece*, Vol. II (London: Hurst, Chance & Co., 1828), 41. See also William St. Clair, *That Greece might still be free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); Charalampos N. Vlachopoulos, “Italian Military Officers on Service of the Greek War of Independence”, *Nuova Antologia Militare* 1/4 (Settembre 2020): 3–27.

Others were swayed by this question. Giovanni Romei, an engineer officer, provided intelligence to Philhellene friends, and misdirected artillery fire during the siege of Neokastron in 1825. His correspondence intercepted, Romei was arrested, and sent to Alexandria in chains¹⁸.

French officers serving with the Egyptian Navy also faced challenges to their loyalty. As a combined force of British, French, and Russian vessels prepared to drive off the Ottoman flotilla at Navarino in 1827, they were convinced to abandon their Muslim paymasters. Providing much needed ship-handling skills, their desertion played a role in the destruction of nearly the entire Ottoman force¹⁹.

While disloyalty tarnished the record of some mercenaries, the vast majority performed well enough to continue their employment. They were needed, as fallout from the failed effort to preserve Ottoman Greece led to a series of conflicts between Muhammad Ali and his nominal sovereign. These Turko-Egyptian Wars, fought between 1831–1839, demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of Muhammad Ali's armed forces²⁰.

On the battlefield, they were very good, triumphant in every major engagement due to well-trained infantry, cavalry, and artillery, that could perform combined-arms operations. For more specialized duties, the Egyptian armed forces lacked officers with vital technical skills. For example, a lack of military engineers significantly lengthened the siege of Acre (Akko), while a tiny general staff restricted choices as the Egyptian drove northwards. Fixing these problems required military professionals with experience and skill sets much greater than Sève or English²¹.

Mercenary instruction had mainly focused on teaching basic skills to company level officers. It was lacking at higher levels. General Pierre Boyer, writing in the 1820s, complained that few company level officers could read or write. Another critic, Jules Planat, argued that too many captains, some only sixteen years old, were promoted, "[...] without examination, and without passing through the ranks of ensign and lieutenant". Edmund Cohorn, writing in 1829, commented that the principal vice of the new army was its lack of men trained for high command. General Henryk Dembiński echoed this view in 1833, saying that a true European style general staff was "indispensable"²².

¹⁸ Dunn, "Missions or Mercenaries", p. 21, n. 12.

¹⁹ Roger C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant, 1559–1853* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 526; Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *The Battle of Navarino* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 108.

²⁰ For a good overview consult Khaled Fahmy, "The Era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, 1805–1848", in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. by M. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For military details see Maxime Weygand, *Histoire militaire de Mohammed Aly et de ses fils* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1936).

²¹ Romei was freed to direct the siege of Acre, allowing Ibrahim to capture the city after six months of fighting.

²² For Cohorn's lengthy critique, see Georges Douin, *L'Égypte de 1828 à 1830. Correspondance des consuls de France en Égypte* (Roma: Nell' Istituto Poligrafico, 1935), 67. On Boyer, consult

Training Muhammad Ali's officers to serve as majors, colonels, or generals, required mercenaries with greater experience than English or Sève. After 1831, such men were available, due to Poland's November Insurrection. Thousands left their homes after this failed effort to liberate Russian Poland. A good number were soldiers with few civilian skills. Polish émigré leaders like Adam Czartoryski, working out of the Hôtel Lambert in Paris, sought employment for these men²³.

Paid service was needed, but Czartoryski also saw these soldiers as a nucleus for revamped Polish military power. Recent history supported this move. Dąbrowski's Legion founded in Italy during the 1790s, aligned Poland with French interests, encouraging Napoléon Bonaparte to see Poles as very useful allies. He later established the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, placing Poland back on the map until Bonaparte's empire collapsed in 1814. Czartoryski argued a new legionary movement would benefit Polish interests, maybe even recreate conditions allowing the liberation of Poland²⁴.

Between 1831–1855, Czartoryski and his allies found spots for Polish officers, and sometimes complete "Legions" across Europe. Hôtel Lambert strategists also sought contacts in the Middle East and North Africa. This presented a significant possibility during 1832, when Muhammad Ali's soldiers were marching on Istanbul²⁵.

This march ended when a Russian expeditionary force landed to protect the Ottoman capital, snatching victory from the Egyptian Army. Simultaneously, Czartoryski sent General Henryk Dembiński to offer Muhammad Ali the service of over 400 Polish officers. These men were capable of expanding officer instruction, or dramatically improving the Egyptian General Staff²⁶.

Douin, *Une mission militaire Française auprès de Mohamed Aly* (Caire: Société Royale de Géographie d'Égypte, 1927), 189. Dembinski's report is in Adam Georges Benis, *Une mission militaire Polonaise en Égypte*, Vol. I (Caire: Institut Français, 1938), 345.

²³ Hans Hahn, "Possibilities and Limitations of Foreign Policy in Exile: Adam Jerzy Czartoryski's Hotel Lambert in Western Europe, 1831–40", in *Eastern Europe and the West*, ed. by John Morison (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992).

²⁴ On the Legion see Jan Pachonski, "The Effects of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France on the Shaping of Polish National Military Forces, 1797–1814", *War and Society*, ed. by Bela K. Kiraly IV (1984), 85–106; and *Legiony Polskie. Prawda i Legenda, 1794–1807*, Vol. 1–IV (Warszawa: 1969–1979). For an excellent overview of Poland during Napoleonic times, consult Jarosław Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815: A Napoleonic Outpost in Central Europe*, transl. Ursula Phillips (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

²⁵ Although not recruited by Hôtel Lambert agents, two companies of Polish deserters from the Russian Army served Qajar Iran during the 1830s. There were also a few Polish officers hired by the Bey of Tunis. L. Carl Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey, 1837–1855* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 283; Jan Fedirko, "Tragiczny bohater wyprawy herackiej. Generał Izidor Borowski", in *Alma Mater*, nr 94, 2007, [accessed online: 3 I 2020]; Alexandr Kibovskii, "Bagaderan – Russian deserters in the Persian Army, 1802–1839", in *Tseikhgauz*, No. 5, 1996, [accessed online: 26 XII 2018].

²⁶ Dembinski's venture is very well covered in Hubert Chudzio, *Egipt w idei legionowej Wielkiej Emigracji* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2014). Professor

These were exactly the mercenaries Ibrahim and his father sought to enlarge the already potent capabilities of their Egyptian Army. Well-trained, and with recent experience of winning early battles during the November Insurrection, the Poles were a potential match. Dembiński arrived to clinch this deal in a very hot July 1833, and after meeting high-ranking Egyptian officials, traveled to Northern Syria for consultations with Ibrahim.

Despite the potential benefits for both sides, there were challenges to incorporating hundreds of Poles into the Egyptian Army. First, proof of an old Polish adage – where two Poles are in a room, there are three opinions. The rival, and more radical Dwernicki Committee, sent Colonel August Szulc and a pair of captains to also discuss military hires²⁷.

Szulc had significant engineering skills, for example directing construction of the Przewięź Lock of the Augustów Canal or reinforcing defenses at Modlin in 1831. He embraced a *Carbonari* approach to revolutionary politics, making it easy to work with fellow exile Józef Dwernicki, whose committee sent Szulc to Egypt²⁸.

Szulc and Dembiński maintained, at best, a strained relationship while trying to promote their teams to the Egyptian government²⁹. Both met Ibrahim in northern Syria, whose army was stalled by Russian-garrisoned Istanbul. British, French, Russian, and Austrian diplomats simultaneously engaged in diplomacy to try to end the conflict between Muhammad Ali and his suzerain³⁰.

Dembiński, also a trained engineer, held high command during the November Insurrection. He had the experience required to help Ibrahim create a top notch general staff. Dembiński also stressed that Tsar Nicholas I was a “common enemy” to the aspirations of Egypt and Poland, making the hire of Polish émigrés seem a perfect match³¹.

Chudzio provides an English language synopsis of his research in “Summary of Scientific Accomplishments” (Cracow, 2014), which is available online. Another important source is Adam Benis, Poland’s consul to Egypt in the 1930s. His two volume *Une Mission Militaire Polonaise en Égypte* (Caire: Institute Française d’Archéologie Orientale, MCMXXXVIII), contains 277 primary source documents. Many of the Polish originals did not survive World War II. Note that Benis died before the completion of this book, and it has some significant errata listed at the end of volume two, it also features a “*” on the title page, rather than “tome I”; and signifies the second volume with “**”. This article employs vol. I rather than Vol. *.

²⁷ For details consult Hans Hahn, “Possibilities and Limitations of Foreign Policy...”.

²⁸ For more on Szulc, see Hubert Chudzio, “August Szultz – inżynier i bobowniczzy twierdz Muhammada Ali”, in *Polacy i osoby polskiego pochodzenia w siłach zbrojnych i policji państw obcych*. VI Międzynarodowe Sympozjum Biografistyki Polonijnej. Toruń, 2001, 51–6.

²⁹ Józef Bem called Dwernicki’s team “émeutiers” (rabble rousers). Bennis, Vol. I, 35.

³⁰ Austria, Russia, and Prussia, the three partitioning powers, supported the Ottoman Empire against Muhammad Ali in 1831–1832, and again in 1839–1840.

³¹ Henryk Dembiński, “Quelques mois en Égypte et en Syrie au service de Méhémet Ali”, in *Le Polonais* (1834): 92 [accessed online: 26 XII 2019]. General Pierre Boyer, the only other high ranking mercenary in Muhammad Ali’s service, began the process of creating a general staff in the mid-1820s. For more on his mission see, Georges Douin, ed., *Une mission militaire français...*

Plans for reorganizing the Egyptian army followed, along with negotiations for the general's salary, and hire of more Polish officers to expand training academies started by a French mission in the 1820s. These ran into considerable opposition from the great powers, especially Russia³².

When the Convention of Kütahya, approved by the Ottoman Sultan on 6 May 1833, ended hostilities, the Poles became a liability. Muhammad Ali gained all of Syria and was not prepared for war with a European coalition. He was willing to hire individual experts, but not large bodies, and certainly not entire military units that could serve as the nucleus for a new Polish Legion. Packing his uniform, Dembiński returned to Europe, gaining his last military command leading Magyar rebels fighting their Austrian overlords in 1849.

Szulc on the other hand, stayed in Egypt, and was hired to modernize fortresses across Syria in the mid-late 1830s. Not only an accomplished military engineer, he also embraced Islam. Like Sève and English, this conversion opened many doors. He was now Yusef *Agha*, the latter word an Ottoman title of respect³³.

In 1837, having demonstrated his worth on smaller projects, Ibrahim tasked Szulc with improving the fortifications of Acre (Akko). This city had been a formidable challenge to the 1831 invasion of Syria. A resulting five-month siege clearly demonstrated Acre's strategic value, as it dominated north-south movement between Palestine and Syria. It also made clear the value of a military engineer, both in attacking, and defending a large fortress³⁴.

Szulc was the perfect fit for commandant of Acre. His engineering talents made possible the repair and extension of the city's land walls. When a combined British-Austrian-Ottoman flotilla attacked from the sea in 1840, Szulc led the defense until a shell penetrated the main gunpowder magazine. The resulting explosion caused over a thousand casualties. The survivors carried their wounded leader to safety, but the loss of Acre was a main factor in Muhammad Ali's accepting a negotiated settlement to his long running dispute with the Ottoman Empire³⁵.

Muhammad Ali kept some of his mercenaries after 1840, but stymied by the allied coalition, he lacked resources needed to maintain a large military. Ismail, his grandson, attempted to repeat large-scale mercenary hires in the 1870s, but

³² "Campbell to Palmerston, Cairo, 12 January 1834", in F.O. 78.245, No. 2, Public Record Office, London. Bennis, Vol. II, 344–376, provides two documents covering Dembiński's plans for reorganizing the Egyptian Army. See also Chudzio, 263–281.

³³ I am indebted to Dr. Bolesław Orłowski, who provided a copy of his excellent work, *Osiągnięcia Inżynierskie Wielkiej Emigracji* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IHNOiT Pan, 1992), pp. 30, 43, fn 42. See also Bennis, Vol. I, 9, 256.

³⁴ The author hopes soon to place a mss. examining the 1831 Egyptian siege of Acre.

³⁵ Chudzio, "Summary of Scientific...", pg. 19, lists Józef Purzycki and Stanisław Kałuski as serving with Szulc in the defense of Acre.

these were less successful. Farouk, the dynastic founder's great-great-grandson, hired former Nazis before the monarchy was abolished by the Free Officers Coup in 1952³⁶.

How do we evaluate mercenary talent in the army of Muhammad Ali? As Christian products of western culture, they faced considerable challenges adjusting to Egypt. Most lacked competency in Turkish or Arabic; some did not even possess good French or Italian, the foreign languages most likely possessed by their Egyptian students.

The mercenaries' greatest success came as technical advisors. They helped in the construction of large warships, the purchase of European surplus weapons, or teaching tactical formations to officer cadets. Even here, cultural differences were significant. Khaled Fahmy notes an exasperated Ibrahim asking his father to sack a mercenary and replace his "French ways"³⁷.

Westerners had to respect Middle Eastern superiors, almost always a Muslim. Friction over cultural norms and religious affiliation, especially for westerners uncomfortable with a reversal of status from Europe, made this difficult. In addition, foreign mercenaries brought their own problems to Egypt. General Boyer makes this clear, dismissing many Spanish and Italian mercenaries as "men without respect for authority, without fidelity... and honor"³⁸.

Dealing with Islamic superiors was the greatest challenge. For men like Sève, English, or Szulc, this was not a problem. Embracing Islam might cause fellow countrymen to denounce them as "renegades", but it opened doors for the converts. Muslims saw them as *muhtadi* – someone who discovered the truth path. In Ottoman culture, where one's position in society was determined by race, occupation, and religious affiliation, to discriminate in favor of such men was a given.

For mercenaries unwilling to "turn Turk", working for Muhammad Ali was a challenge. It was especially difficult for field grade officers who had the experience needed to teach Muhammad Ali's future generals, but lacked flexibility for dealing with an alien culture. International politics precluded Dembiński's Poles from creating a true general staff. With no homeland for a return, would they have been motivated to try harder?

An impossible question to answer, but Cheop's Pyramid provides a useful conclusion to this discussion. By the nineteenth century, it was covered with graffiti carved into its stone facings. The poet Juliusz Słowacki recorded that one of these was in Polish saying... "Pass on to the centuries the memorable day of 29 November 1830". No doubt placed there by a member of Dembiński's

³⁶ Nicholas Kulish, "Old Nazis Never Die", *New York Times* (10 I 2015), [accessed online: 28 I 2021].

³⁷ Fahmy, 172.

³⁸ Douin, *Une Mission militaire*, 22, 52–3.

or Dwernicki's missions a few years earlier to honor the start of the November Insurrection. By the twentieth century, wind-blown sand had erased this memory of an effort to westernize the Egyptian Army³⁹.

John P. Dunn

**Prawdziwe diamenty czy fałszywe kamienie? Lojalność najemników
w armii egipskiej Muhammada Alego**

Najemnicy i ich lojalność stanowią wyzwanie dla mocodawców wojsk zaciężnych. Muhammad Ali (1805–1848), który dzięki swoim wysiłkom militarnym ustanowił dynastię, zatrudnił wielu zachodnich żołnierzy najemnych do pomocy w modernizacji egipskich sił zbrojnych. Twierdził, że posiada wystarczające doświadczenie, by wśród wielu „fałszywych klejnotów” znaleźć choć kilka diamentów. Tak też zrobił, ale różnice w religii i kulturze wystawiły na próbę lojalność jego najemników.

³⁹ Mieczysław Rokosz, *Słowacki's "Beautiful Journey to the East" (1836–1837)*, transl. Anna Czechowicz [accessed online: 12 IV 2018]. A photo of the Polish inscription is on the very last page of Chudzio, *Egipt w idei legionowej*.