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Monitoring migrations: the Habsburg-Ottoman border in the eighteenth century

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CONCLUSION

White-settler nations (Australia, Canada, United States) introduced modern migration controls in the late nineteenth century prohibiting the entry of Asian immigrants and other supposedly undesirable ethnic groups. Other countries adopted these exclusionary practices after World War I.[691] However, another border-control regime predated these developments in white-settler nations by a century and a half. What is more, it did not aim to reduce, but to facilitate migrations. In this study, I examine this early example of border controls. In addition, I show how the motivation of these border controls differed from modern examples.

Systematic migration controls on the Habsburg-Ottoman border were introduced in the 1720s to protect and facilitate free travel between the two empires, rather than to restrict it. Free travel was advanced, first, by making the border area safe; second, by dealing with the plague, the major peacetime threat to free movement; third, by coopting the parties affected by the new border arrangement into supporting controls; and, fourth, by making procedures universal, uniform and inclusive. Consequently, the regulation of cross-border travel contributed to the threefold increase in the number of migrants from the early 1750s to the late 1760s, despite strict controls and compulsory quarantine.

It was the Habsburg-Ottoman 1699 peace treaty that established a new arrangement, making the border area safe for migrants. The new arrangement was not the beginning of the Ottoman adherence to supposed international norms of territorial

[691] Holquist, "'Information Is the Alpha and Omega;'" Torpey, "Great War;" Lucassen, "'A Many-Headed Monster;'" Lucassen and Lucassen, "Mobilität;" McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

sovereignty and the acceptance of fixed borders.[692] In fact, the Ottomans were the initiators of the new border regime.[693] Precisely demarcated borders had previously been used to separate charitable endowments (*vakıf*s) from Ottoman state-owned lands, as well as to delimit external borders with Venice and Poland.[694] This suggests that there could be wider areas of cooperation and administrative influences between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire than usually admitted. The two empires were close neighbors and maintained a rich, deep relationship for centuries. Future research could profit from a closer examination of this relationship, moving away from the traditional focus on military rivalry, which ceased to be the defining characteristic of Ottoman-Habsburg relationship in 1699. The two empires were peaceful neighbors much longer than they were military rivals. This peaceful coexistence deserves more attention.

In 1699, the new border arrangement replaced a fortified zone along the Habsburg-Ottoman frontier. Competing claims, overlapping jurisdictions and endemic violence would give way to a pacified border. A jointly demarcated boundary separated precisely defined and mutually acknowledged exclusive territorial jurisdictions. The 1699 treaty banned cross-border violence and the building of new fortifications, leading to a significant decrease in border conflicts and infringements. The delimitation of the Habsburg-Ottoman boundary was a necessary preparatory step for the introduction of migration controls. Migrants entering Habsburg territory could be controlled only when territorial limits were precisely known. As early as 1699, the systematic border demarcation, described in official bilateral protocols, defined the space by fixing its limits. In most other parts of Europe, state authority continued to

[692] Abou-el-Haj, "The Formal Closure." Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Attitudes Toward Peace Making;" Heywood, "The Frontier in Ottoman History;" Kasaba,"L'Empire ottoman, ses nomades et ses frontières."

[693] Stoye, *Marsigli's Europe*.

[694] Pedani, *Dalla frontiera al confine*; Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*.

be defined in a traditional non-spatial way, as a collection of overlapping rights and jurisdictions.[695] This remarkably early border demarcation, overlooked in many works about borders, enabled the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire to introduce migration controls decades before other major European powers.

Second, the Habsburg Monarchy used border migration controls to protect free travel from the gravest peacetime threat, the plague. The controls were introduced in the form of a land sanitary cordon, an extraordinary measure used elsewhere to stop all but essential travel, and to close off and isolate infested places and provinces.[696] On the Habsburg-Ottoman border the same instrument was used in a different way and with the opposite goal. The Habsburg sanitary cordon was a permanent institution rather than an extraordinary mechanism enforced only during epidemics. It kept the border open at all times, while at the same time controlling and facilitating free travel.

Border controls were initially introduced to ensure that subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy could have access to the big Ottoman market. After securing free trade privileges and low custom payments in the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz, Vienna first had to put in place sanitary protection against the plague before it could engage in commerce.[697] While the disease began to disappear from Western, Central and Southern Europe during the second half of the seventeenth century, it remained endemic in the Ottoman Empire. Like other European states trading with the Ottoman Empire, such as Venice or France, the Habsburgs introduced compulsory quarantine for incoming ships in the ports of Trieste and Rijeka (Fiume). In addition to maritime

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[695] Febvre, "Frontière;" Sahlins, *Boundaries*; Nordman, *Frontières de France*; Biggs, "Putting the State on the Map."

[696] Denis, "The Invention of Mobility."

[697] Franz Martin, Mayer, *Die Anfänge des Handels und der Industrie in Österreich und die orientalische Compagnie* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1882); Herbert Hassinger, "Die Erste Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie 1667-1683," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 53 (1942): 1-53.

trade, the Habsburg Monarchy wanted to develop overland trade. Overland trade, however, suffered immensely during plague epidemics. In the first three decades of the eighteenth century, the deadly disease, coming from the Ottoman Empire, reached the Austrian duchies and Central Hungary on a couple of occasions, consequently stopping all travel and trade for prolonged periods of time. After experimenting with provisional quarantines and sanitary cordons, Vienna opted for a permanent solution – the land sanitary cordon, as an effective arrangement that could keep the border open while, at the same time, protecting public health.

Third, the border controls were made effective by enlisting the support of the majority of stakeholders. One such stakeholder, whose support was essential, was the Habsburg military. Enlisting the Habsburg military's assistance helped to alleviate a major challenge – insufficient administrative capacity of the central government. The Habsburg central government was modestly staffed. It did not have the administrative capacity of the industrial states' central bureaucracies of the late nineteenth century. It compensated for this lack of direct reach by coopting intermediate powers, like the estates, reinforcing the power of traditional elites in the provinces.[698] Traditional noble intermediate powers, with local knowledge and networks, however, did not exist on the Habsburg-Ottoman border. A few hundred border sanitary officials, who manned quarantine stations at official border crossings, could not monitor the entire 1,800-kilometer border for illegal entries. A new partnership needed to be forged. Instead of old elites, a different traditional institution, the Military Border, was reorganized and reinforced to offer local expertise and workforce for the central government. While the importance of the partnership with provincial nobility began to decline after 1763, the Military Border's new role preserved its significance for

[698] Dickson, "Monarchy and Bureaucracy;" Torpey, "Coming and Going;" Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870*, 146, 171; Godsey, *The Sinews of Habsburg Power*, 13-18, 23-29, 128-50, 248-67.

another century. Guarding the boundary with the Ottomans became the most important peacetime duty of Military Border troops, for which common soldiers were not paid extra. This decreased fiscal pressure on the Habsburg state at the expense of border soldiers' service burden. In addition to regular military exercises and participation in foreign campaigns, the soldiers of the Military Border had to pay taxes, to provide corvée for erecting and maintaining border roads and watchtowers as well as spend many weeks annually guarding the border against epidemic diseases, illegal migration and smuggling. While they were still better off socially and economically than Hungarian and Slavonian serfs, their position in the eighteenth century was a far cry from that of free peasant-soldiers.

The local population provided additional partners. Their cooperation was essential. Familiar with the system and its weak spots, the locals could cross the border undetected, and assist others in secret border crossings. Compulsory reporting of strangers and absent neighbors, as well as rewards for denunciation were the tools used by the Habsburg state to control its border population. Population control thus amounted to the control of neighbors by neighbors. This became a crucial element in the much more comprehensive control systems of twentieth-century totalitarian states, such as the Soviet Union, because mere administrative control was not effective. In the eighteenth as well as the twentieth century it was crucial to use local tensions and clashing interests to secure the willing support of locals.[699] The control by neighbors was the most powerful tool in addressing one of the most serious concerns of Habsburg population policy, emigration, and the ensuing loss of wealth that leaving subjects would have created if they had stayed. The statement by Engel, from 1786, that emigration from the border area occurred rarely, [700] suggests that this local control

[699] Holquist, "'Information Is the Alpha and Omega;'" Groebner, *Der Schein der Person*.

[700] Engel, "Beschreibung des Königreichs Slawonien," vol 2: 541.

was relatively successful. However, it was not perfect, as sporadic cases of illegal crossings and banditry occurred.

Ottoman border authorities were the third party involved. They had to agree to any changes in the border area, as is visible from the long negotiations during the 1750s about establishing a pre-quarantine station near Belgrade. Ottoman cooperation was also important for the everyday functioning of the border. Disorder on the Ottoman side, such as the Janissary unrest in Belgrade in 1755, made the control of illegal entrances and smuggling more difficult and the resolution of conflicts between the subjects of the two empires all but impossible.

The most directly affected party, the migrants themselves, participated in controls as well. In the case of uneven cleaning taxes in different quarantine stations from 1742, for example, the official investigation involving four different stations, interviewed Ottoman subjects residing in Banat, talked to Ottoman merchants undergoing quarantine, and to Habsburg merchants traveling to the Ottoman Empire. The officials attempted to find a solution that would keep the Monarchy safe, while making the system fairer to migrants, prioritizing free travel over taxes and tariffs. The migrants also had an active role in the regime, collecting sanitary intelligence and sharing it with border officials. The consideration for migrants' interests was greater than that shown by late-nineteenth-century and later migration control regimes.[701]

Fourth, the border migration regime was inclusive, favoring immigration. Unlike other medieval and early modern mobility-control regimes, which singled out specific groups like rural laborers, vagrant poor, Gypsies, unemployed workers, traveling journeymen, soldiers on leave, and foreigners,[702] the Habsburg-Ottoman border-

[701] McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

[702] Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State*; Ehmer, "Worlds of Mobility;" Lucassen and Lucassen, "Migration, Migration History;" Lucassen, "Eternal Vagrants;" Wendelin, "Schub und Heimatrecht;" Denis, "The Invention of Mobility;" Lis and Soly, "Labor Laws in Western Europe."

control regime applied a uniform approach to everyone. Well-off migrants, even high dignitaries and diplomats, usually excluded from border controls in other European regions until the twentieth century,[703] were not exempted at the Habsburg-Ottoman border. In early modern times, universal migration controls typically took place at city gates, protecting urban communities,[704] but were rarely used at external borders. The quarantine costs of poor individuals and families, escaped or freed slaves, were funded from the public purse if they accepted Habsburg subjecthood.

The border regime was set up with the aim to have the least possible adverse impact on migrations. It kept the border open and minimized the necessary quarantine time. Central, provincial and local sanitary bodies adjusted quarantine duration to closely monitored health circumstances in Ottoman European provinces. In the later border-control regimes (late-nineteenth-century Australia, United States, South Africa), the focus was on selectivity and exclusion, hindering some movements, while facilitating others.[705]

As the detailed analysis of the migrants' list from the Pančevo border station in 1752-1756 showed, the border regime depressed non-essential and temporary short-distance movements while semi-permanent or permanent migrations were much less affected. The mere existence of compulsory quarantine forced migrants to extend their journey by at least twenty-one to forty-two days. It increased travel costs, as the migrants had to pay for food, firewood and maintenance of their horses, while they were unable to work. In this respect it was a "hard border" with longer and more expensive procedures than those imposed by later border-control regimes. Migrations, however, continued to increase during the 1750s and the 1760s despite occasional border closures and the inflation of quarantine times. The average number of migrants

[703] Torpey, "Coming and Going."

[704] Jütte, "Entering a City."

[705] McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

who passed through the station tripled between the early 1750s and 1768. The increase happened despite competition with the two nearest stations, Zemun and Mehadia, which both had pre-quarantine facilities and could afford to stay open even when plague epidemics were present in the nearest Ottoman settlements.

In the 1750s, two major groups of migrants passed through the Pančevo border station. One group were immigrants, who hoped to settle permanently in the Habsburg realm. The other group, more numerous than the immigrants, were business people, consisting mostly of merchants. They included Ottoman subjects and Habsburg subjects (often naturalized) returning from their trips in the Ottoman Empire. The Habsburg state perceived merchants as typical migrants. Passport forms for Ottoman subjects contained the pre-printed occupation "Handelsmann" because most migrants who traveled on their own after crossing the border were business people (the travel of immigrants after exiting quarantine to their places of settlement was organized and directed by the state). The majority of business travelers came from the central and southern Balkans, particularly from the 1750s onward, when "Greek" merchants took the leading role in the trade between the two empires. While their economic role in Hungary has been acknowledged,[706] their mobility has not been closely researched. The analysis of border records from the 1750s and from 1768 gives a clearer picture of the mobility of business people from the Ottoman Empire entering the Habsburg lands. Most of them were temporary migrants, returning periodically to their provinces of origin in the Ottoman Balkans, which were up to 700 km away from the Habsburg-Ottoman Border. Distances along with lengthy quarantine procedures, discouraged frequent visits to their original places of residence. They would return every couple of years, if not every year, to marry, to conceive a child, to share their

[706] Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant;" Popović, *O Cincarima*; Katsiardi-Hering,"Migrationen."Mantouvalos, "Greek Immigrants in Central Europe."

earnings with their families and to buy new merchandise, such as wool from their mountainous home areas or cotton from the valleys. While many among them were merchants, the fact that for many years they kept their formal residence and family in the Ottoman Empire and periodically returned there makes them also similar in behavior to migratory laborers. They were Ottoman subjects, and there was no serfdom in the sultan's lands, which would have prevented them from participating in migratory labor, as was the case in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe.[707] The data from Pančevo and the other border stations suggest that in a typical 1760s year up to 10,000 business people entered the Habsburg Monarchy from the Ottoman Empire. The economic incentives were strong enough to justify increased costs at the border. The number of business migrants is two to ten times lower than flow of migratory labor to principal "pull" areas in Western Europe about sixty years later. [708] With these numbers the labor migrations between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy would have difficulties to qualify as one of major contemporary European labor migratory systems. However, if we take into account the longer distances, expensive border procedures and the relative underdevelopment of the major "pull" area, the Kingdom of Hungary, the number of migrants travelling for work-related reasons is surprisingly high. The major economic activity in their mountainous "push" areas of origin in the Balkans was often animal husbandry, which provided a lot of idle time to be used by engaging in economic activity elsewhere. It would be useful to research why these business migrants could not find sufficient work much closer to their home areas in the Ottoman Empire, including the major cities, such as Thessaloniki.

[707] Lucassen, Migrant Labor, 125-126.

[708] Jan Lucassen, *Migrant Labor in Europe 1600-1900: The Drift to the North Sea* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 108-112, 119

Most immigrants, the second most numerous group in Pančevo, were coming from nearby Ottoman provinces. For them additional quarantine costs were of little significance, because of the definitive nature of the migration and because Habsburg authorities paid for their expenses. Ottoman immigrants were the cheapest source of colonists for the thinly populated Habsburg southern provinces, particularly for the Military Border.

Looking at the total size and structure of migrations, and comparing Pančevo with the other seventeen stations in 1768, would suggest that it can be used as a representative border-crossing point. The size of migrations at Pančevo station was close to the average for a border-crossing point in 1768. Furthermore, the migration structure was also comparable to the structure at a number of other stations, with major migration groups well represented. The prevalence of business people and immigrants was in line with Habsburg economic and demographic policies.

The cumulative effect of inter-imperial peacetime immigrations, registered in quarantine stations between the 1720s and the end of the century, is measured in tens of thousands of immigrants. Wartime migrations, like the retreat of Muslim refugees from Hungary and Slavonia in the 1680s and the 1690s, or the Great Serbian migration of 1690, also involved tens of thousands of people moving in a short time span. However, war was not typical for Habsburg-Ottoman relations during the eighteenth century, and it was completely absent in the nineteenth century. Population movements appear to be usually less dramatic. Even after wars, the transition of authority between the two empires was more peaceful than in previous centuries. For example, the first Habsburg assessment of the Banat population after 1718 produced a four- to eight-fold underestimation.[709] Many more inhabitants remained following a

[709] After the conquest of Banat from the Ottomans, the Habsburg administration estimated that it was inhabited by 25,000-50,000 people, while the actual number was probably much higher, 180,000-200,000 persons. Dávid, "The Eyalet of Temesvár."

conquest than previously acknowledged. Peacetime migrations were even less spectacular, but their cumulative effect could be enormous. From the 1750s to the 1770s, the number of Ottoman immigrants redirected to Banat from Croatia and Slavonia[710] or entering through the Pančevo and Mehadia stations reached about 12,000 persons.[711] In other provinces such as Slavonia, where state-directed colonization efforts were less intensive, the share of Ottoman immigrants between the 1760s and the 1770s seemed even greater. While the internal colonization of Hungary was very important to the Habsburg Monarchy,[712] the share of Ottoman immigrants in the eighteenth century should be revised upwards. They reached between one fifth to one third of at least 150,000-200,000 internal colonists in Hungary.

The increase in migration during the eighteenth century suggests that the goals of the border regime, that is, to protect and facilitate migrations, were successfully pursued. The Habsburg Monarchy used the border to support its demographic policies. Border migration controls appear to have been a tool for population management, which could be used to support, as well as to curb migration. Following cameralistic and physiocratic ideas, which regarded the increase of population as beneficial for the economy and the power of state,[713] the Habsburg border controls facilitated immigration and free travel. The border regime depressed short-term and temporary mobility, while settler migration and the mobility of merchants were much less affected. In total, the effects of border controls could be designated as migration-neutral.

State intervention was not without setbacks. After 1763, there was a general effort to rationalize Habsburg administration, to decrease the costs and to increase

[710] Gavrilović, *Prilog istoriji trgovine i migracije*.

[711] Jordan, *Die kaiserliche Wirtschaftspolitik im Banat*.

[712] Lucassen and Lucassen, "Siedlungsmigration, innereuropäische."

[713] Behrisch, *Die Berechnung der Glückseligkeit*, 32-41

productivity.[714] This effort included reform of the sanitary-border administration. It was expected that the introduction of uniform and standardized quarantine regulations and sanitary procedures would lead to optimization and increased efficiency. It may have improved the operation of the quarantines with more commercial traffic because the merchants preferred uniform procedures. The rationalization and standardization were less suited for the region of Lika, on the western end of the border. The changes produced economic hardships and hunger in this area that was not on major trade routes. Its economy struggled with new longer quarantine times. In the end, the Habsburg Monarchy had to abandon inflexible uniformity and accept the introduction of diversified regional solutions, in this case no-contact border markets, preserving the local economy.

The history of the border controls suggests that there were two major periods of change and transformation. New policies were initiated in the 1720s and the 1730s, during the reign of Charles VI (1711-1740): the establishment of border controls, border quarantines and sanitary-cordon legislation, and the beginning of the reorganization of the Military Border. The second period of change lasted from the 1760s through the 1780s, elaborating and further developing Caroline policies: the extension of the Military Border, the codification of sanitary laws, the reorganization of border quarantines, the reform of quarantine duration, and the rationalization of the sanitary administration. From the perspective of border controls, the rule of Charles VI was more innovative and significant than the first half of the rule of his daughter Maria Theresa in the 1740s and the 1750s.

[714] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Behrisch, *Die Berechnung der Glückseligkeit*, 56-65; Godsey, *The Sinews of Habsburg Power*, 248-67.

Membership regimes[715] had a much deeper impact on migration rates and migration structure than border controls. Crossing the border was an eventful moment in a migration process. Yet the question remains whether in the long run it was as significant as rights to residence, professional rights, and the possibilities of integration or assimilation. Many decades before the Edict of Toleration of 1781, there was an explicit tolerance of non-Catholics in the Habsburg Monarchy. While Leopold I in 1691 guaranteed the toleration of Lutherans and Calvinists in Transylvania, Orthodox Christians were granted religious rights in a wider area of the monarchy. Vienna continued to endorse Catholic Reformation values, as in 1762, when the *Staatsrat* discussed how to "improve" the religious composition of Banat by settling more Catholic women, but pragmatism prevailed.[716] The non-territorial autonomy for Orthodox Christians in the Habsburg Monarchy, realized through the Metropolitanate of Karlovci (Krušedol) after 1690,[717] enabled Ottoman Orthodox Christian subjects to create their own communities or to integrate into existing ones, as well as to build business networks. Their religious autonomy was well protected also in the Ottoman Empire, which enabled them to build and maintain inter-imperial networks of co-religionists. Those options were not available to the Sultan's Muslim and Jewish subjects. Unlike in Russia,[718] Muslims were not tolerated in the Habsburg Monarchy. Muslims could not form permanent communities on which their business networks could rely. That would suggest that even in early modern open-door migration control regimes, which allowed entrance to all healthy individuals, residence and naturalization rights might exert a very strong and formative influence

[715] Defined as "the complex of rules, regulations, customs and values surrounding the entry and long-term settlement of migrants in a new polity." Bosma, Kessler and Lucassen, "Migration and Membership Regimes," 10-11.

[716] Steiner, *Rückkehr unerwünscht*, 250, 349.

[717] Petrović, "Josephinist Reforms and the Serbian Church Hierarchy."

[718] Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*.

on the composition of the migrants. The impact of residence and naturalization rights on migration between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire was probably more significant than the border-control regime. Future research, focusing on this area and its relationship with border controls, is necessary before offering more definite answers.