



**Transcultural Communication and Exchange: The Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires
in the Early Modern Age**

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The project aims to analyse the interrelations of the most powerful empires of early modern Europe, the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, with a special focus on transcultural communication and exchange processes in a period of change and intensive innovation (1520-1620).

The geographical focus will be on the capitals of the two empires, Vienna (since 1583 Prague) and Istanbul/Constantinople, on the one hand, and on the Carpathian basin, an important “frontier zone” of both empires, on the other hand.

The project assumes that the two empires did not face each other in an exclusively military confrontation in the Carpathian basin. Their proximity during one and a half centuries led to the construction of physical and mental boundaries as well as to the building of cultural bridges. These empires shared more cultural values than the common Orient-Occident dichotomy suggests, and such shared values co-existed with intense military conflicts. A further hypothesis of the present project is that the Reformation, the various migration/mobility processes, and the frontier position of the Carpathian basin actually stimulated communication and cultural interaction between the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires. Further, the applicant assumes that the Ottoman Empire did not resist all forms of Western innovation of early modern communication and it participated in principal networks of cultural exchange in the research period (1520-1620).

In that context the project emphasises the role of ‘transcultural or trans-imperial intermediaries’ who embody the porosity of physical and political borders as well as linguistic and religious boundaries. Therefore, they and their intermediary and sociocultural practices, the uses of early modern handwritten media and the followed hybridisation processes in the Habsburg-Ottoman context are in the focus of research.

The project provides a new scientific approach to networks of exchange by means of correspondence. The focus will be on private, diplomatic, merchant and learned correspondence and on early modern *avvisi*-communication. Communication between the Habsburg and the Ottoman territories will be analysed by studying the various functions and different meanings that handwritten correspondence had for persons of different social background, origin, and confession during the early age of printing. In that sense correspondence is considered as an essential instrument of transcultural exchange. The project concentrates on official Habsburg and Ottoman collections as well as on selected collections of correspondence by persons belonging to different social strata, origins and confessions, primarily in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Turkey.

In a present perspective the project results will demonstrate that “Austrians” and “Turks” had much in common in the early modern age and were not merely enemies in a political and military sense. The networks of transcultural communication and exchange demonstrate their interconnections and interaction, and can reduce existing prejudices.

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