



HABSBURG BATTLEFIELD MEDICINE IN 18TH CENTURY SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE
DURING THE OTTOMAN WARS

(FWF | T 1108 Firmberg-Programm)

The adversarial relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy is well known and has been documented in various facets. The differences in interests were reflected in a series of military conflicts primarily for religious and territorial predominance in southeastern Europe. Usually, the Ottoman Wars are connected with remarkable violence, injury and death. Of course, war not only brings death, but also illness and disability. Simultaneously hunger and epidemic disease were the conflict's constant companions. In early modern Europe, the experience of battle and the confrontation with death and injury evokes emotions that civilians often do not comprehend, and memories that veterans can only try to cope with psychologically. This project investigates Habsburg battlefield medicine during the 18th century on the basis of the three Ottoman Wars; 1716–1718, 1736–1739 and 1787–1791. The research project will be the first to investigate how the Habsburg Monarchy tried to organize medical care for soldiers on the battlefield and offers a new understanding of the battlefield as a multi-dimensional system of processes. The project investigates the role of healthcare professionals and military personnel. Concerning the staff surgeons and physicians, the project analyzes whether they had gained new knowledge about medical technics and healing, and if yes, how they utilized and passed on their new knowledge. On the basis of letters from the battlefield and personal reports by high-ranking military men, the study examines how the soldiers perceived and dealt with disease, injury and invalidity among their own ranks as well as their Ottoman enemies. In addition, the project offers new insights concerning the functioning of field hospitals, facets of disease management, the supply of sustenance and clothing, the ensuring of hygiene, funeral practices and support for those disabled by war. The proposed project will find answers in unpublished source material. The material consists of imperial decrees, instructions, contracts, maps, paintings, architectural and construction plans, marching plans, official letters and correspondence, muster rolls as well as reports, textbooks, diaries and drill books.