

Rudolf Agstner / Elmar Samsinger

The old friendship between Austria and Turkey: A Profile

„I believe, we all experience a fairy tale of 1001 nights“. With these enthusiastic words Emperor Franz Joseph described his feelings at first sight of the palace, put at his disposal by the Sultan for his stay in Constantinople. He was not the only Austrian fascinated by the encounter with the Orient, viz. Turkey.

The Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires are linked by a centuries-old changing history, peaceful only in its last part. We recall the two Turkish sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683, or Prince Eugene's re-conquest of the Balkans. Besides fear and horror the Orient always fascinated the Occident, which in the 18th, and in particular in the 19th century turned into an Orient – boom. Mozart's Turkish March in one of his piano sonatas or the overture of his opera "The Abduction from the Seraglio" became catchy melodies. Architecture and fashion adopted oriental settings to leading viewers to believe in an oriental fairy world. The World Exhibition of 1873 in Vienna offered such an oriental world, with its oriental city including a great mosque, a copy of the Sultan Ahmed-Fountain from Constantinople and a Turkish coffee-house, inviting visitors to day-dreaming. Renowned explorers and scientists, like Joseph Baron Hammer-Purgstall, Anton Count Prokesch-Osten, Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer or Alois Musil have devoted themselves to oriental studies.

When the Berlin Congress mandated Austria-Hungary to occupy and administer the Ottoman vilayet of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Orient became the focus of public attention. Foreign Minister Count Andrassy enthusiastically reported this diplomatic success to Emperor Franz Joseph "*The gates of the Orient are open to Your Majesty*". The following military occupation campaign brought about unexpected heavy losses, and 40 years of economic and cultural development, turning enemies to loyal subjects. Bosnian regiments loyally fought for their emperor on many fronts until the end of World War I. The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina on 1908 four years later led to the recognition of Islam of hanafitic rite in Austria. Bosnia-Herzegovina also marks the beginning of the end of Austria-Hungary, when the deadly shots fired at Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife served as motive for World War I. During that war artillery units from the Monarchy fought side by side with their Turkish comrades in arms in Gallipoli and marched towards the Suez Canal. Foreign policy played a particular role in the Ottoman-Habsburg relations, manifested by the many consulates Austria (-Hungary) maintained throughout the Ottoman Empire. In his papers Rudolf Agstner looks at the history of the I.R. Internuntiate and Imperial & Royal Embassy in the "Palazzo di Venezia" and the summer residence in Yeniköy, the Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) consular network in the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Ottoman consulates in Austria (-Hungary).

Apart from the political and military involvement of the Habsburg Monarchy there were numerous other links with Turkey. In addition to the "Austrian Lloyd", until World War I the most important steam navigation company in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the 40 or so I.R. post offices in the Levant in an impressive manner manifested Austrian presence in the Ottoman Empire. Andreas Patera in his paper is tracing the history of the three Austrian post offices in Constantinople. Today, only Austrian stamps in piaster and para remind us of this Austrian postal history, whereas the St. George-College, whose history is outlined by Franz Kangler,

is very much alive. Based on an Austrian Lloyd travel guide, Elmar Samsinger presents an insight into touristic and economic relations. Yavuz Köse takes a close and surprising look at Austrian department stores in Istanbul, which during decades were highly successful shrines of consumerism. Markus Purkart in his equally surprising paper recalls the story of the fez, which developed into a big seller from the Monarchy in the Ottoman Empire. Last, but not least, Elmar Samsinger follows the traces of two VIP travellers to the Orient, Emperor Franz Joseph and Emperor Charles I who visited Constantinople in 1869 and shortly before the end of World War I in 1918.

So far, scientific research on the relations between Austria and the Ottoman Empire has concentrated on the Turkish Wars and the military-political role of Austria (-Hungary) in the 19th and 20th centuries in the context of the “Oriental Question”, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina or the military commitment of the Monarchy as ally of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. So far, the actual presence of Austria (-Hungary) in Turkey with its remarkable economic and cultural aspects has not received due attention. This festschrift tries to close this regrettable gap.

The editors would, in conclusion, like to express their gratitude to all who have agreed, despite time constraints, to contribute highly informative papers free of charge. We also like to thank all those “good spirits” who provided valuable information or copyrights, have typed papers, or did proof-reading or translation. Special thanks are due to Funda Yilmaz, Austrian Embassy Ankara, for her translation of the Turkish abstracts and captions.

This festschrift on the occasion of „Istanbul 2010 – European capital of culture“ is a welcome opportunity to remember two scientists of outstanding merit, who regrettably died early: military and naval historian Dr. Peter Jung, and postal historian MMag. Andreas Patera. Both historians have, in their particular fields, during many decades studied the history and presence of Austria (-Hungary) in the Levant and published countless articles thereon. Their work may serve as incentive to scientific research, to devote due attention to many of the themes which so far have been inadequately dealt with, themes which make up the manifold relations between Austria and the Orient.