

Europe on the Sava: Austrian Encounters with “Turks” in Bosnia¹

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Abstract: This article examines Austrian perceptions of the people and landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1878 to 1908. It traces Austrians’ fantasies about and encounters with Bosnian Muslims, whom they often categorized as “Turks.” Following the Congress of Berlin, Austrians claimed to be doing the civilizing work of “Europe” in Bosnia. The article investigates the meanings of border and borderlands between the Habsburg Empire and Ottoman Bosnia, focusing in particular on crossings of the Sava River. Drawing on the writings of soldiers, administrators, journalists and travel writers, the essay considers a number of mental maps, imagined geographies of what Habsburg authors thought they knew about the land and people they occupied. It contributes to a growing scholarship on the Habsburg-Ottoman borderlands.

Keywords: Habsburg-Ottoman, borderlands, Bosnia, Austria, colonialism, Sava River, Congress of Berlin, 1878, Turks, Muslims, frontier Orientalism

IN THE SUMMER OF 1878, the improbably named Franz Mac-Nevin O’Kelly, a twenty-nine-year-old infantry officer of the Austro-Hungarian army, was called for service in the Balkans. On 29 July, feeling like a “pioneer,” he crossed the Sava River that separated the Habsburg monarchy from the Ottoman territory of Bosnia.² Subsequently, after several months of unanticipated resistance, the region was “pacified.” Over the next forty years, hundreds of thousands of Austro-Hungarian citizens—troops, civil servants, tourists, colonists, and the Kaiser—crossed the Sava into what were called the occupied lands and, after the empire annexed the territory in 1908, the *Reichsland*. Despite the fact that Bosnia’s population in 1878 was roughly 60 percent Christian, Bosnian soil was, for O’Kelly, Muslim soil.³ On his first day, at the very moment when the Habsburg colors were unfurled in Bosnia, he marveled at a stork that flew over the Sava, spiraled, and, undisturbed by the celebratory cannon fire, landed elegantly on a minaret. “This appeared to me a friendly

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²For concision I refer to Bosnia-Herzegovina throughout the chapter as Bosnia, except when quoting directly from other sources.

³The population in the late 1870s was roughly 42 percent Orthodox, 38 percent Muslim, and 18 percent Catholic. Peter F. Sugar, *Industrialization of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1878–1918* (Seattle, 1963), 6. Another way of counting the population was by village: in 1878 there were 1,412 Orthodox villages, 793 Muslim villages, and 493 Catholic villages, with a “slightly higher number of mixed settlements.” Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007), 2–3.

omen.”⁴ Bosnia was also Turkish soil. On day one there, O’Kelly was thinking about sex and history. He gazed “with a romantic curiosity at the small, barred windows of the Turkish houses. Naturally I thought only of the beauties of the harem.”⁵ More soberly, he saw crossing the Sava as a reversal of the thrust of “Turkish hordes who so often crossed . . . to spread all horror and devastation to Hungary or to ‘white Carniola’ and the Granitzen.”⁶ These areas on the southern edge of the monarchy had been invaded by Ottoman troops numerous times during the early modern period. His fascination with the harem in the present and with Turkish invaders of yore calls to mind anthropologist Andre Gingrich’s concept of “frontier orientalism,” in which the Turk was not a distant threat but a proximate one. This Turk-next-door had left his mark on the local landscape, feared, reviled, and remembered in the folk cultures of towns and villages north of the Sava.⁷

The arrival of O’Kelly and his comrades marked a new beginning for the Habsburg imperial border. This article explores the meanings ascribed to the act of crossing this border and the imagined world that existed on the other side. *Grenze im Kopf*, the title of Peter Haslinger’s edited volume on border histories in East-Central Europe, provides a useful concept: the *border in the head*.⁸ This article considers a number of mental maps, imagined geographies of what Habsburg authors *thought they knew* about the land and people they occupied in 1878. It centers on Austrian soldiers, administrators, journalists, and travel writers’ fascination with a “Muslim” land—“a genuine *Türkenland*”—just over the river, and their anticipated and actual encounters with “the Turk” there.⁹ What follows is not a history of occupied Bosnia per se; here I defer to historians of the Balkans who have written authoritatively on the occupation from the perspective of the occupied.¹⁰ Rather, I present a number of “borders in the head”—from religious to civilizational, hydrological to historical—of the Austrian occupiers. By crossing into and transforming this “Turkish” province, Austria sought to bolster its own belonging in—and importance to—Europe.

⁴Franz Mac-Nevin O’Kelly, *Vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren. Eigene Erinnerungen aus der Okkupations-Kampagne, 1878, in Bosnien* (Graz, 1903), 21. He crossed at Alt-Gradiska.

⁵*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶*Ibid.*, 22. Here puts “weiße Krain” in quotation marks.

⁷Andre Gingrich writes that the “frontier oriental” was (and is) useful in Austria for self-definition. “Frontier Myths of Orientalism: The Muslim World in Public and Popular Cultures of Central Europe,” in *MESS. Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School*, vol. 2, eds. Bojan Baskar and Borut Brumen (Ljubljana, 1996), 99–127, here 111. See also Robert J. Donia, “The Proximate Colony: Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian Rule,” *Kakanien Revisited* (11 Sept. 2007), accessed 30 June 2019, www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/RDonia1.pdf.

⁸Peter Haslinger, ed., *Grenze im Kopf. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Grenze in Ostmitteleuropa* (Frankfurt, 1999).

⁹Moriz Hoernes, *Bosnien und die Hercegowina* (Vienna, 1889), 6. On myths of Bosnia as a “bulwark and firm boundary of Islam” or an “*Islamic antemurale* against the West” from eighteenth-century Bosnian Muslim chroniclers, see Srećko M. Džaja, “Bosnian Historical Reality and Its Reflection in Myth,” in *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*, ed. Pål Kolstø (London, 2005), 106–29, here 113.

¹⁰See Leyla Amzi-Erdogdular, “Alternative Muslim Modernities: Bosnian Intellectuals in the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, no. 4 (2017): 912–43; Edin Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914* (Ithaca, 2015); Mark Pinson, ed., *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1996); Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism*; Horst Haselsteiner, *Bosnien-Hercegovina. Orientkrise und Südslavische Frage* (Vienna, 1996); Robert Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle: The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1878–1914* (Boulder, 1981); Kemal H. Karpat, “The Ottoman Attitude towards the Resistance of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Austrian Occupation in 1878,” *Naučni Skup. Otpor austrougarskoj okupaciji 1878. Godine u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo, 23. i 24. Oktobra 1978 [Scientific Conference. Resistance to the Austro-Hungarian Occupation of 1878 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 23 and 24 Oct. 1978] (Sarajevo, 1979), 147–72.

This investigation of Sava border crossing is informed by the historiography of other Habsburg borderlands; it also acknowledges a “borderline” of sorts that separates Habsburg and Ottoman historians’ interpretations of conditions in Bosnia. In her study of Austrian Galicia, historian Iryna Vushko suggests that the Habsburg monarchy could be described as “an assemblage of borderlands,” knitted together over centuries.¹¹ The discursive construction of Habsburg Galicia in the eighteenth century finds echo a hundred years later in Habsburg Bosnia. In Emperor Joseph II’s descriptions of Galicia in 1773 we hear precursors of Habsburg voices on Bosnia. To his mother, Maria Theresa, he wrote, “I already see in advance . . . that the work will be immense here.”¹² This mission in Galicia, in which, Larry Wolff writes, “barbarism was to be reformed, and Galician backwardness was to be ameliorated,” provided a civilizational vocabulary that was recycled in the Bosnian context.¹³ Much recent historiography reads the Habsburg project in Bosnia as a colonial project: a paternal government sought to bring culture and civilization to a backward, unclean, wild, unproductive, religiously fanatical, and politically immature population; an untapped land of natural bounty sat ready for economic and commercial exploitation; and oriental exoticism was displayed for international audiences.¹⁴ And yet one line from Joseph II’s Galicia gives pause as we consider Bosnia. He wrote to his brother in 1773, “It is incredible everything that has to be done here; it is a confusion like no other: cabals, intrigues, anarchy.”¹⁵ The borderland appears as an administrative tabula rasa; the new rulers imagined they were starting from scratch. In the historiography on late nineteenth-century Bosnia written from the Habsburg “side of the river,” so to speak, which focuses on the modernizing project, one could come away with the impression that Ottoman Bosnia similarly lacked much of an administration at all. According to historian Peter Sugar, the Ottomans had administered the vilayet of Bosnia-Herzegovina with roughly only 120 officials. In 1881, Austria-Hungary already had about six hundred administrators there, and the figure had skyrocketed to more than nine thousand by 1908.¹⁶ Austrian contemporaries gloated that the divan had been replaced by the desk. Within the Habsburg historiography on “colonial” Bosnia, based largely on German-language sources, the divan-to-desk narrative holds purchase. And yet, a recent intervention from the “other side of the river”—based on Bosnian, Ottoman, and Turkish sources—offers an arc of continuity rather than rupture. Leyla Amzi-Erdogdular’s trenchant study of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals posits that late Ottoman Bosnia had become

¹¹Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867* (New Haven, 2015), 10. When Vushko writes, “Galicia on the Russian-Austrian frontier never posed dangers similar to those of the Austrian-Ottoman borderland,” 52, she is referring to events that preceded the partitions of Poland. The Habsburgs’ commitment to civilian rather than military administration in Galicia finds rather close parallel in their later approach in Bosnia. On Habsburg Trieste and its shifting “borderland identity” before and after 1918, see Maura E. Hametz, “On the Periphery/At the Frontier: The Triestines in the Northeastern Borderland,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 5, no. 3 (2000): 277–93.

¹²Cited in Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, 2010), 16.

¹³Ibid., 7.

¹⁴Several excellent recent edited volumes explore these topics at length. See Clemens Ruthner and Tamara Scheer, eds., *Bosnien-Herzegowina und Österreich-Ungarn: Annäherungen an eine Kolonie* (Tübingen, 2018); Clemens Ruthner, Diana Reynolds-Cordileone, Ursula Reber, and Raymond Detrez, eds., *Wechselwirkungen: Austria-Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegowina, and the Western Balkans, 1878–1918* (New York, 2015); Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, and Moritz Csáky, eds. *Habsburg Postcolonial. Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis* (Innsbruck, 2003); Wolfgang Müller-Funk, Peter Plener, and Clemens Ruthner, eds., *Kakanien Revisited. Das Fremde und das Eigene (in) der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* (Tübingen, 2002).

¹⁵Cited in Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia*, 16.

¹⁶Sugar, *The Industrialization of Bosnia-Herzegowina*, 29.

“a model province,” seat to “advanced Ottoman modernization policies.”¹⁷ The present article invites Habsburg and Ottoman historians to meet at the disciplinary river between us.

“In Its Capacity as a Border Power”: Berlin 1878 and a Mandate from Europe

At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Austria-Hungary won international approval to occupy the vilayet of Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁸ Contemporaries’ descriptions of Habsburg aims and ambitions in Bosnia presented the Austrian occupation as doing the work of Europe. Some characterized the occupation as an assignment: Europe had issued a “mandate” to Austria to tame the province.¹⁹ Europe had “expectations.”²⁰ Europe was “threatened” by “evils and dangers” in Bosnia and Austria obliged to respond.²¹ Habsburg diplomats forcefully argued that its border position made their state the correct power to fulfill this task. “Austria-Hungary, in its capacity as a border power (*Grenzmacht*), is more interested than any other power in the regulation of things in Bosnia and Hercegovina,” they emphasized.²² Metaphors for the Bosnian operation were plentiful. The Habsburgs were alternately breaking the heavy chains of slavery,²³ putting out a fire in a neighbor’s house,²⁴ even teaching the Bosnians how to waltz.²⁵ One of the more compelling articulations came from Béni von Kállay, the Habsburg joint finance minister, who from 1882 to 1903 was charged with administering the territory. With grandeur, he wrote that the project in Bosnia was an attempt by the “western half of humanity” to prove whether it was possible “through European means” to flip East into West, to turn Bosnia Habsburg.²⁶ Note the complexities of his claim. Austria-Hungary was doing the work—had the boots on the ground, so to speak—but the true agent is the “West.” The signatories in Berlin did not address the more abstract questions of what constituted “Europe” and whether Austria-Hungary itself wholly belonged to it.²⁷ “Europe”

¹⁷Amzi-Erdogdular, “Alternative Muslim Modernities,” 916.

¹⁸See W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878–1880*, 2nd ed. (Hamden, 1963).

¹⁹Article XXV of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin stated, “The provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary.” Internet Modern History Sourcebook, accessed 8 Dec. 2018, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1878berlin.html>.

²⁰August Fournier, *Wie wir zu Bosnien kamen* (Vienna, 1909), 82.

²¹*Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, Dargestellt in der Abtheilung für Kriegsgeschichte des k.k. Kriegs-Archivs (Vienna, 1879), 39–40.

²²*Ibid.*, 39: “bei der Regelung der Dinge in Bosnien.”

²³Adolf Strausz, *Bosnien. Land und Leute. Historisch-ethnographische-geographische Schilderung*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1884), iii–iv.

²⁴*Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 905. In this case, the fire of violence and “wildness” in the Ottoman province.

²⁵See Diana Reynolds, “Kavaliers, Kostüme, Kunstgewerbe: Die Vorstellung Bosniens in Wien 1878–1900,” in *Habsburg Postcolonial*, eds. Feichtinger et al., 243–55, here 244. Reynolds reviews the 1893 ballet “Eine Hochzeit in Bosnien.”

²⁶[Béni v. Kállay], *Die Lage der Mohammedaner in Bosnien von einem Ungarn* (Vienna, 1900), 44. Published anonymously, this important text is usually attributed to Kállay. Robin Okey suggests the author may have been Lajos Thallóczy. “A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists: Béni Kállay, István Burián and Lajos Thallóczy in the Age of High Nationalism,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 80, no. 2 (Apr. 2002): 234–66, here 246.

²⁷Interestingly, there was a concrete diplomatic “entry” into Europe for the Ottoman Empire in the 1856 Treaty of Paris. It “was officially recognized as a permanent part of the European balance of power.” The preamble stated that “the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire was vital to ‘the Peace of Europe,’ and Article 2 gave the Sublime Porte . . . the right ‘a participer aux avantages du droit public et du concert europeen [to take part in the

and “West” were imprecisely demarcated borders in the head. As we will see, however, hydrological borders in the head suggested that the Habsburgs’ own southern borderlands were “not quite” Europe.

By issuing Austria-Hungary’s new assignment, the great powers were attempting to resolve a number of conflicts that fell generally under the rubric of the “Eastern Question.” In 1875, an uprising had started in Herzegovina, spread to Bosnia, and created a refugee crisis for both the Habsburg and Ottoman empires.²⁸ Representatives for some of the 250,000 Bosnian Christian refugees sheltering on the Habsburg side of the border appealed to European commissions to intervene against the horrors being inflicted upon them by “Turks.”²⁹ Yet their use of the term “Turks” was as slippery as that of the statesmen coming out of Berlin. They contrasted “Turks” with “unhappy Slavic people.” But what if some “Turks” were Slavic people? Did they mean representatives of the sultan’s government in Istanbul or Bosnian Muslim landlords living down the lane? As we will see, the two were not at all synonymous. The Bosnian project entailed mastering “Turks” in two senses—first militarily and then administratively—thereby “civilizing” the large Muslim population living in the European borderland.

Infantryman Franz Noir, a river crosser in the summer of 1878, depicted the occupation as a rather prosaic changing of the guard. Where Turkish soldiers “had once slept away their guard hours” dreaming “blessedly of Mohammed, paradise, harem and beautiful girls,” Austrian soldiers now guarded “something or other” that Noir couldn’t quite see in the darkness. In the morning, he concluded he was in a Turkish town and he took in the surroundings in short order. “A brisk walk about satisfied my curiosity to see a Turkish city.”³⁰ Noir was less concerned with the mysteries of the harem than with the terrible smell of dead horses. What Noir shared with O’Kelly was a conviction that they had entered someplace “Turkish.” They were soldiers, and this crossing was at some level a reckoning with the Turk. But for a small mosque near Petrovaradin further down on the Danube, there were no mosques in the military frontier on the Habsburg side of the river.³¹

Mosques, minarets, filthy streets, and merchants hawking cheap wares immediately signaled to another officer, Georg Freiherr von Holtz, that he too had entered a foreign world. “In short,” he remembered, “all of this gave the impression of being deep down in the Orient.” He found the contrast between the towns on the Austrian and Turkish sides of the river, separated by only a few hundred meters, “completely incredible.”³² Holtz then narrated a scene of the river crossing that portended trouble to come. A “Turkish *Bimbaschi*” (major) traveled back across the Sava and “handed [our] field-master a sealed document allegedly containing the Sultan’s

benefits of international law and the Concert of Europe].” Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The East in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis, 1998), 40. ProQuest Ebook.

²⁸See Jared Manasek, “Protection, Repatriation and Categorization: Refugees and Empire at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017): 301–17.

²⁹“Memorandum der Insurgenten,” *Das Vaterland*, 27 Sept. 1875, p. 1–2. See also Josef Koetschet, *Aus Bosniens letzter Türkenzeit. Hinterlassene Aufzeichnungen* (Vienna, 1905), 8–10.

³⁰Franz Noir, *Die Oesterreicher in Bosnien: Erlebnisse eines österreichischen Infanteristen in Bosnien und in der Hercegowina* (Prague, 1884), 52.

³¹Historian Dragan Damjanović writes, “Despite the proximity of the Ottoman Empire, Islamic architecture had no influence on the design of Military Frontier towns.... Almost all mosques and public buildings constructed in the region during the Ottoman period, before the Habsburg monarchy’s expansion, had been demolished.... The mosques were likely taken down as part of an effort to eradicate the region’s former Ottoman history—*damnatio memoriae*—and because there were no longer any Muslims living there.” Damjanović, “Building the Frontier of the Habsburg Empire: Viennese Authorities and the Architecture of Croatian-Slavonian Military Frontier Towns, 1780–1881,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 78, no. 2 (June 2019), 187–207, here 191.

³²Georg Frh. v. Holtz, *Von Brod bis Sarajevo* (Vienna, 1907), 15–16.

protest against our invasion.” This gesture seemingly snapped the rank and file out of their Orientalist fantasies. From a perspective of *realpolitik*, what did it mean that they had crossed the Sava? Holtz continued: “The field-master refused to accept the letter, citing the resolution of the Congress of Berlin and referring to the proclamation [from Francis Joseph], which had already been posted on the government building in Turkish-Brod. The Turk did not say another word, put his letter on the ground, placed a stone on it, made his bow, and returned again in his boat.”³³ This was a rather unsettling moment. Had the sultan conveyed messages to European statesmen in Berlin that contradicted those sent to his own officers? Possibly. Should the Habsburg armies have prepared for resistance? Probably.

Just after the Habsburg troops crossed the Sava River, Kaiser Francis Joseph issued a proclamation to residents of Bosnia. In it they were assured, “The Emperor and King knows your complaints and cares for your well-being. Under his mighty scepter many peoples live together, and each speaks his own language. He rules the followers of many religions and everyone freely professes his faith.”³⁴ As the neighbor next door, Austria-Hungary was the natural choice among the European powers to free Bosnia from its present “Turkish yoke,” in part because it was already experienced at administering a diverse, multiconfessional society like Bosnia’s.

This “Turkish yoke” was a discursive border in the head that shaped many Habsburg accounts. Identifying and classifying the spectrum of “Turks” found south of the Sava preoccupied a variety of Austrian authors who had gone to Bosnia in the nineteenth century to study the “question” of this fascinating subset of the population. Some referred to them as “Muselmanen” or “Mohammedans.” Other writers opted for “Bosnian Turks,” “Mohammedan Bosnians,” “turkified Serbs,” “Serbian Mohammedans of Bosnia,” or, least generously, “indolent and insolent beasts of prey, called Bosnian Turks [that are] actually degenerate mohammedanized Serbs.”³⁵ Another primer attempted to clarify that “the Muslim Bosniak is not a real Turk” (*eigentlicher Türke*), and should be distinguished from the “original Turk” (*Originaltürke*).³⁶ Alongside these variations in name was a discourse of liberation from the “Turkish yoke.” This phrase (in German *das türkische Joch*) also appeared in English, French, Greek, and Bulgarian texts from the nineteenth century. It connoted everything from mismanagement and backwardness to oppression of Christians and savage cannibalism. An anonymous Austrian writer surveyed the Ottoman Empire at its zenith and zeroed in on Bosnia as the most depraved region ever under “Turkish” control. Travel there resembled conditions of “wild Kurdistan”; hatred toward Christians was more dire than in “fanatical old Damascus” and the indolence of the Muslim landlords (*agas*) in Bosnia rivaled the behavior of “Egyptian Mamluks.”³⁷ One did not even need to cross the Sava to be an expert on Bosnia; some who wrote authoritative treatises on the region had never been there.³⁸

³³Ibid., 14.

³⁴Amand Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, *Bosnien: das Land und seine Bewohner* (Vienna, 1878), 193–94.

³⁵“Muselmanen” and “Mohammedaner,” Johann Róskiewicz, *Studien über Bosnien und die Herzegovina* (Leipzig, 1868), 226, 235; “Bosnische Türken,” Karl Sax, “Skizzen über die Bewohner Bosniens,” *Mitteilungen der Kaiserlich-königlichen Geographischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1863), 93–107, here 101; “vertürkten Serben,” Joseph Alexander Freiherr von Helfert, *Bosnien*, 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1879), 96; “die mohammedanischen Bosnier,” Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, *Bosnien*, 97; “entarteter mohammedanisirte Serben,” *Die Christen in Bosnien*, 1853, p. 4. See also Nikola Ornić, “Diversität und Anerkennung. Die Rezeption der muslimischen Bevölkerung Österreich-Ungarns in ethnografischen Werken,” *Kakanien Revisited* (2004), accessed 30 June 2019, <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/nornig1.pdf>.

³⁶Carl Braum, *Sarajevo 1878* (Leipzig, 1907), 22.

³⁷Anonymous, *Die Christen in Bosnien. Ein Beitrag zur näheren Kenntniß der Verhältnisse der bosnischen Raaja zu den Türken* (Vienna, 1853), 3.

³⁸Helfert, offering a three-hundred-page book on all things Bosnian, nevertheless admits he had never been there. “Traveler! I was not there, and I bet a hundred to one that the gentle reader [has not been] either,” p. 4.

Crossing South—*Jenseits der Save*

To enter Bosnia from the north many crossed the Sava from one town of “Brod” to another. *Brod*, a Slavic term for a shallow place in a river where one can cross, reveals that river crossing itself had long been built into the region’s place names.³⁹ Along the river there were other “twin towns” with identical names on the Habsburg and Ottoman sides, but for small variations: Slavonisch-Brod stood across from Bosnisch-Brod on the south. Alt-Gradiska lay across the river from Bosnisch-Gradiska, Raca from Bosnisch-Raca, and so on. There was slippage between “Bosnian” and “Turkish” in the names given to towns on the south side of the river; Samac, for example, lay across from Bosnisch-Samac, which was also called Türkisch-Samac.⁴⁰

To cross from the north was to find oneself beyond (*jenseits*) the Sava, and the phrase suggested a drifting away, into someplace other. The river was fluid (of course), and not terribly wide, and yet the trip across it seemed to cause deeply felt realignment. In contemporary descriptions there was a temporal quality to Bosnia’s woeful condition; it became what Anne McClintock calls “anachronistic space.”⁴¹ This land, “forgotten in time,” elicited dreamy, wistful sensations among river crossers, diagnosed by an ethnographer as a condition of Asian *Zurückgebliebenheit* (a left-behindness).⁴² One recurring metaphor was slumber. Here was travel writer Heinrich Renner: “the Bosnian Sleeping Beauty slumbered under the centuries-long magic spell, and the spell was first lifted when the imperial troops crossed the border and ushered in the new era.”⁴³ The Austrian arrival marked an abrupt end to Turkish time, a snapping of fourteen generations of the “Turkish-*mohammedanischer*” worldview.⁴⁴

For other Austrian and European writers, the river was the physical demarcation between civilizations and religions, an artificial divide because, as we recall, 60 percent of the population of Bosnia was Christian at the time. It nevertheless confirmed a preexisting border in the head. When the British traveler Arthur Evans crossed the Sava by ferry in 1875 he reported, “the shores of Christendom were receding from our view.” For him and his brother, the “Rubicon [was] passed,” and a five-minute voyage had transported them “into Asia.” The sights in Bosnia recalled “the Turkish provinces of Syria, Armenia or Egypt.”⁴⁵ For many, the minarets in Turkish Brod symbolized the definitive passing from one civilization to another. Two decades later, now crossing the river on the newly built “great steel Sava bridge,” journalist Heinrich Renner recounted “the first minarets point to the sky like slender fingers, showing that we have entered the territory of Islam.”⁴⁶ Those who had made the crossing in earlier years impatiently anticipated the Muslim skyline upon their return. “Bosnia acts like a fever in me,” wrote Austrian novelist Robert Michel. He could hardly stand the wait, climbing “unnoticed to the conductor seat to have the widest view, and soon after I shout, ‘A minaret!’”⁴⁷ That his

³⁹The spelling “Brood” also appears in German primary sources.

⁴⁰Contemporary German sources did not adhere to standardized spellings of the river towns; for example, press reports referred to Samac or Schamatz, Brcka or Bereschka, etc. Use of the diacritical marks was also not standardized.

⁴¹Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995), 40.

⁴²Strausz, *Bosnien. Land und Leute*, iii–iv.

⁴³Heinrich Renner, *Durch Bosnien und die Hercegovina, kreuz und quer*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1897), vi.

⁴⁴This was Kállay’s claim. *Die Lage der Mohammedaner*, 3.

⁴⁵Arthur J. Evans, *Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection, August and September 1875*, 2nd ed. (London, 1877), 86–89.

⁴⁶Renner, *Durch Bosnien und die Hercegovina*, 1.

⁴⁷Robert Michel, “Notizen von der Korpsschulreise 1910,” in *Fahrten in den Reichslanden. Bilder und Skizzen aus Bosnien und der Hercegovina. Mit 25 Zeichnungen von Max Bucherer* (Vienna, 1912), 115–16.

outburst occurred in 1910 shows the power of the imagined Muslim landscape even after three decades of Austrian rule.

Looking North—*Diesseits der Save*

To understand the talk of Bosnia as a temporal, civilizational, and religious “elsewhere,” we must consider where the crossers were crossing *from*. Preceding the occupation by just a few years, a significant shake-up had taken place in the organization of Habsburg territories north of the Sava. In 1873, Kaiser Francis Joseph had issued an edict disbanding the last of the regiments of Croatian and Slavonian military border.⁴⁸ Since the sixteenth century, the *Militärgrenze* along the Habsburgs’ southern periphery had been populated by frontier fighters (*Grenzer*) who received special rights and privileges in exchange for lifelong service as the monarchy’s first line of defense. Their storied achievements elicited muscular tribute. One admirer recalled that, with swords drawn, enduring “bloody struggles and heavy sacrifices,” these brave defenders “shielded the culture and development of the West from the plight of Islam.”⁴⁹ But it was widely accepted that the Ottomans no longer posed an invasive threat on the southern border.⁵⁰ The rural border region entered the new era of civil administration in a “backward state,” one of the least developed areas in the entire Habsburg monarchy, with more than 75 percent of the population illiterate.⁵¹ No town had a population exceeding fifteen thousand people.⁵² Despite the *Grenzers*’ centuries of service to the Kaiser, one border soldier lamented, no one had been “truly and properly concerned with intellectual and cultural development, with progress, with uplifting the land, but [rather] . . . an impotent stagnation [had] spread into all affairs.”⁵³ Did this not sound rather like a description of Bosnia itself? This is an important question, for the writers who fancied a civilizational break, steeping cleanly from “Europe” directly into the “Orient” when they crossed the Sava, were in fact stepping from an underdeveloped region far removed from what the statesmen in Berlin imagined as “Europe.”

To these statesmen, who likely could not have located the Sava River on a map, to say nothing of the two Brods, the border between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires was an abstract, geopolitical “border in the head.” They would not have been concerned with water, currents, sand, and flood levels. Friedrich Ratzel, in a pioneering late nineteenth-century work on political geography, was thinking about the essence of natural borders, and rivers in particular. Upon closer inspection, he wrote, a “borderline is only an abstraction of the fact that where one body touches another, it experiences changes that distinguish its periphery

⁴⁸Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740–1881: A Study of an Imperial Institution* (Chicago, 1966), 185. Karl Kaser, *Freier Bauer und Soldat. Die Militarisierung der agrarischen Gesellschaft an der kroatisch-slawonischen Militärgrenze, 1535–1881* (Vienna, 1997), 630–42.

⁴⁹Norbert Spaleny, “Wahrnehmungen und Erfahrungen der k.k. Truppen bei der Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina im Jahre 1878,” in *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine XXIV* (Vienna, 1882), 14.

⁵⁰One outlier on this question was B. Panković, a native of the *Militärgrenze*, a self-described “son of the land,” who served as a Habsburg consular official. He predicted that the waning Turkish threat was temporary. Dismantling the *Militärgrenze*, leaving “large numbers of Turks” living next to “our open borders,” would lead to future “catastrophes.” B. Panković, *Die Militärgrenzfrage in ihrer Beziehung zur orientalischen Frage* (Vienna, 1865), 3, 19.

⁵¹Rothenberg, *The Military Border in Croatia*, 186–87.

⁵²Damjanović, “Building the Frontier of the Habsburg Empire,” 187.

⁵³*Neue Militär-Zeitung* 26, no. 41 (21 May 1873), p. 1.

from its interior.”⁵⁴ Austrian engineers, concerned with the practical consequences of the river “touching” Croatia, expressed a “border in the head” of a technical nature. They argued remarkably that the Sava River *itself* had constituted a dire threat to Austria-Hungary, its wild waters wreaking havoc on Habsburg soil. In 1878, as debates were waged about Turkey, “for and against the continued existence of this state on our continent,” engineers had made a case for the occupation of Bosnia on hydrological grounds. An unregulated river was wiping out entire communities in Croatia and Slavonia. Drawing on an 1876 report compiled by the k. k. General Command at Zagreb entitled “The Regulation of the Sava River” they concluded that commanding both the Austrian and Turkish banks of the Sava was an existential necessity.⁵⁵

Springing from northwestern Slovenia, the Sava flowed nearly a thousand kilometers before merging with the Danube in Belgrade. Far from describing a scenic waterway, military engineers with an eye on the Habsburg-Ottoman border instead depicted a watery version of hell marked by “[r]uptures and water splits in the upper, bottlenecks and excesses in the lower course of the river, rock debris and delta formations at the outlets of tributaries, [river] bed pollution by tree trunks, shoals, scouring holes, vortex formations, drops, falling precipices, rapids, bends, floods . . . swamp formations and vaporizations.”⁵⁶ Of greatest concern were massive malarial swamplands that threatened the “existence of an entire Austro-Hungarian province,” sparing no one, not even “the child in the mother’s womb.” The unregulated river behaved as an aggressor, displaying characteristics that in previous centuries had been ascribed to the Turks themselves; it destroyed fertile ground, disrupted landownership, hindered shipping and trade, contaminated the air, and delivered diseases that spread with terrifying intensity. In the former Croatian-Slavonian military border alone, 149 villages were flooded, many completely underwater. If the river was not brought under control, the engineers forecasted, “the population of this land [will] . . . be completely extinct in 80 to 100 years.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, the problem was exacerbated by the fact that the Sava was not just a river: it constituted the border with “Turkey.”

River regulation between two neighboring states always posed certain challenges, even in the best conditions when the states had achieved the same level of civilization (*Culturstufe*). In the unfortunate case when one state was at the “European” level and the other at the “Asian” level, the more advanced state would be “forced . . . without regard to the neighboring state” to occupy foreign soil and bear the cost of regulating the river alone.⁵⁸ Hence the case for the incorporation (*Einverleibung*) of Bosnia into the Austro-Hungarian state was justified as follows:

Because the introduction of an orderly administration in Bosnia is a question of survival for the inhabitants of the Austro-Hungarian Sava plain, it seems desirable that this province should be incorporated into the State of Austria-Hungary or placed under its protection.⁵⁹

⁵⁴Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 1923), 384.

⁵⁵Joseph Andreas Knoblauch, *Die Annexion von Bosnien vom volks- und landwirthschaftlichen Standpunkte* (Vienna, 1878), 3. With added commentary, Knoblauch’s book was a reproduction of “Die Regulierung des Saveflusses, dann die Ent- und Bewässerung des Savethales in Croatien und Slavonien, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des croatisch-slavonischen Grenzgebietes.” *Anordnung des k.k. Generalcommando in Agram als Landesverwaltungsbehörde der croatisch-slavonischen Militärgrenze* (Agram, 1876).

⁵⁶Knoblauch, *Die Annexion*, 5.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 3, 5, 8–9.

⁵⁸On earlier, unsuccessful attempts to work with the Ottoman government on river oversight, see Lothar Maier, “Die Grenze zwischen dem Habsburgerreich und Bosnien um 1830. Von einem Versuch, eine friedlose Region zu befriedigen,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51, no. 3 (2003): 379–91.

⁵⁹Knoblauch, *Annexion*, 12, 17.

The hydrological excursions on the Sava and its dangers supported occupation of Turkish territory, but in so doing, raised questions about the grand narrative of Austria, as proxy for “Europe,” delivering culture to lands suffering Turkish misrule. It turned out the Habsburgs’ southern border region was not *quite* Europe after all. Occupying Bosnia, thus enabling the coordinated regulation of the Sava from both sides of the river, would in effect “carry culture” to Croatia-Slavonia, the underdeveloped “vastly backward lands” of the former military frontier. This engineering feat would pay an “overdue debt” to the descendants of the military frontiersmen “who for centuries guarded the Empire against the charge of wild hordes.”⁶⁰ From the faraway desks in Berlin, then, the border demarcating “Europe” from “Turkey” looked sharp and self-evident. But the legibility of the frontier dissolves if both bridgeheads are in almost-Europe. On the ground, in the short span that separated Brod in the north from Brod in the south, the Habsburg-Ottoman borderland was as muddy as an unregulated river.

A Turkish Foe with Many Faces

While the 1878 occupation represented a mission for the modern age, troops entering Bosnia could imagine that they were following in the footsteps of Habsburg greatness. A historical “border in the head” was conjured by writers reflecting on Prince Eugene of Savoy. In 1697, the greatest Habsburg military commander of the early modern period, celebrated in popular culture as the slayer of Turks, had made a brief foray into Bosnia that would serve to inspire patriots in 1878. His troops had crossed the Sava River at Brod and marched toward Sarajevo. “In remembrance” of Eugene’s feat, one popular history noted, the modern soldiers contemplated the gravitas of their mission. Since that time, “that is, for 181 years, no Austrian army detachment had penetrated into the heart of Bosnia.”⁶¹ In the summer of 1878, newspapers back home eagerly drew parallels between Eugene’s historic mission against “the Turks” of yore and the present-day operation. The *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna published sections of Eugene’s field diary to give readers perspective on the areas that were once again “the scene of bloody events.”⁶² Conquests of territory were cast as “reconquering”: with the taking of the town of Maglaj, the *Pilsner Abendpost* reported, “Austria’s flag flies from the citadel for the first time since the famous autumn campaign of Prince Eugene in 1697.”⁶³ *Das Vaterland* recommended that those passing through the village of Vranduk could catch some “rest and relaxation” near the ruins of a castle Prince Eugene had torched on his way to Sarajevo.⁶⁴ These press reports echoed sentiments of individual officers, in whose memoirs we find reference to the early modern Turkish Wars. Recall O’Kelly’s palpable satisfaction (on his first day in Bosnia, no less) at having turned back the “Turkish hordes” and reversed the tide of history.

The historical parallel had its limits, however. Whereas Kaiser Francis Joseph proclaimed in 1878 that his troops came “not as enemies . . . [but] as friends,” Prince Eugene in 1697 had proceeded to march to Sarajevo and burn the city nearly to the ground. With too few troops to continue, he was forced to retreat, a decision he apparently lamented. “Among the Turks

⁶⁰Ibid., 22.

⁶¹Peter von Radics, *Das befreite Bosnien. Prinz Eugen, 1697—Laudon, 1788—Philippovic, 1878* (Wien, 1879), 106.

⁶²*Neue Freie Presse*, 7 Aug. 1878, p. 3.

⁶³*Pilsner Abendpost*, 9 Sept. 1878, p. 1.

⁶⁴*Das Vaterland*, 14 Aug. 1878, p. 2.

is terrible confusion,” he wrote in his diary. With more manpower, “the whole Kingdom could [have been] taken and secured.”⁶⁵ In the nineteenth-century accounts, the early modern adversaries were clear-cut: this had been a battle between “Turks” and “Christians.” After the burning of Sarajevo, “all Christians” reportedly fled with their belongings into the imperial camp and begged to depart the country under protection of Eugene’s troops.⁶⁶ They were desperate to “leave the land so cruelly ruled by the Turks.”⁶⁷ Eugene “accepted their request and promised to settle them on the other side of the Sava.”⁶⁸ Whether he made good on this broad promise is doubtful, but he arrived safely in Brod in November 1697 and crossed back north to the “Christian” side of the river. Modern writers who now pitched the crossing of the Sava as historical reenactment were drawn to the simplified, binary opposition—Christians versus Turks—that shaped the Eugene narrative.

The 1878 military occupation of Bosnia, which was met with resistance from both Muslims and Christians, did not go according to plan.⁶⁹ In the wake of the Congress of Berlin, at which the Ottoman sultan had ostensibly agreed to the occupation, both Habsburg soldiers heading toward the Sava and readers back home expected little resistance. After all, the newspaper *Bohemia* reported, the sultan had instructed the “local Turkish authorities” to inform the “Turkish population” that the Austrian army came with “the most friendly intentions,” and that relations between the two empires remained harmonious.⁷⁰ The newspaper *Fremdenblatt* predicted in July that Bosnia would be secured “without the sacrifice of blood.”⁷¹ In the end, 170,000 Habsburg troops needed several months to “pacify” the region, and Austria-Hungary suffered 5,198 casualties.⁷² In the heat of battle, under heavy fire, an Austrian officer recalled hearing the enemy’s “calls to Allah.”⁷³ What had gone wrong?

A deep cleavage existed between the “friendly” understandings in Berlin and conditions on the ground in Bosnia. Trust that “local Turkish authorities” (meaning agents of the Ottoman state) had command over the vaguely described “Turkish population” in Bosnia was woefully unfounded. Here sloppy use of the words “Turks” in the Austrian press contributed to misunderstandings of a multifaceted conflict. Upon hearing that the Ottoman government had ceded their land to a new invading enemy, Muslim elites in Bosnia organized armed resistance. Led by a holy man whom German speakers referred to as Hadschi Loja, these “insurgents” took up arms against Habsburg troops. And they were not alone. The press reported that the “fanaticized population” was supported by “regular Turkish soldiers” of the Ottoman army.⁷⁴ In essence, there were two varieties of “Turks,” and they were fighting a common Habsburg foe. Historian Kemal Karpat argues that Ottoman authorities had seemingly “adopted two attitudes: the overt one which was friendly to the Austrians, and the covert one which worked to the advantage of the insurgents.”⁷⁵ Contemporary press

⁶⁵*Prager Tagblatt*, 20 Aug. 1878, pp. 1–2 [transl: “eingenommen und behauptet werden”].

⁶⁶*Die Vedette*, 14 Aug. 1878, p. 5.

⁶⁷Radics, *Das befreite Bosnien*, 68.

⁶⁸*Prager Tagblatt*, 20 Aug. 1878, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁹Okey notes that the resistance had “significant Serb support in the towns but not in the countryside.” *Taming Balkan Nationalism*, 23.

⁷⁰*Bohemia*, 16 July 1878, cited in H. Haselsteiner, *Bosnien-Hercegovina. Orientkrise und Südslavische Frage* (Vienna, 1996), 67.

⁷¹*Fremdenblatt*, 14 July 1878, cited in Haselsteiner, *Bosnien-Hercegovina*, 66.

⁷²*Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878* (Vienna, 1879), appendix, p. x.

⁷³Georg Freiherr von Holtz, *Die letzten Kämpfe und der Heimmarsch 1878* (Vienna, 1908), 41.

⁷⁴*Fremdenblatt*, 17 Aug. 1878, cited in Haselsteiner, *Bosnien-Hercegovina*, 69.

⁷⁵Karpat, “The Ottoman Attitude,” 160.

accounts attributed this duplicity, typical of “the Turk,” to the “genuine, unadulterated logic of the harem.”⁷⁶

Habsburg soldiers, facing an uncertain pool of enemies, some in uniform and others dressed in peasant garb, fell back on familiar tropes of Muslim fanaticism and barbarism to make sense of their situation. Officer Joseph Beck recalled fighters wild with “religious delusions” possessed by “lust for robbery and murder.”⁷⁷ Soldier Edmund Chaura drew on a colonial vocabulary of the wild savage: “We stood in full battle dress against the ignoble cannibal enemy, and it is no exaggeration to say that the Zulus, Bagurus, Niam-Niams, Bechuans, Hottentots, and similar South African bands behaved more chivalrously towards European travelers than the Bosnian Turks did towards us.”⁷⁸ In an article titled “Horror Scene from Bosnia,” one newspaper reported on “barbarians” who had decapitated Habsburg soldiers and left their torsos floating in water by the side of a road.⁷⁹ Other accounts told of heads left on spikes. Such atrocity narratives often failed to distinguish between local insurgents and Ottoman soldiers. “The opponent,” concluded officer Beck, recognized “no international law, no humanity. Blood lust and blind raging fanaticism motivated his actions [and] every human emotion appeared extinguished.”⁸⁰ Note that “opponent” is singular. It may be that the distinction between insurgents and soldiers simply didn’t matter; both constituted “the Turk.”

When the opponent was identified specifically as an Ottoman soldier, Habsburg memoirists and journalists sometimes relayed not horror but curiosity. Formerly regal, this now threadbare figure elicited fascination and a dose of pity. In the late summer of 1878, when a group of around three hundred Ottoman fighters surrendered to them, Holtz and his men were impressed with the quality of their new captives: “The soldiers of the battalion were Anatolian reserves, magnificent, conspicuously tall, genuinely warlike figures, well-adjusted and well-armed.” Holtz’s men were curious to peek inside the saddlebags of a surrendered officer but were startled by the paucity of the contents: in one, an enormous cucumber, a lump of dissolving sugar, and a soggy piece of Turkish bread; in the other, a horseshoe and nails. “Such were the ups and downs of an imperial Ottoman Major,” Holtz concluded sardonically.⁸¹

When captured, some of these troops—poorly fed, in a “rather derelict and demoralized” condition and gripped by “religious fanaticism”—were sent to camps in the interior of the Habsburg monarchy.⁸² What “borders in the head” these captives may have entertained as they were transported north over the Sava we do not know. But their arrival sparked frenzied intrigue from onlookers at home. In an article titled “The Turks Are Coming!” one newspaper reported on a trainload of “captured Turks” said to be passing through the town of Adelsberg: “Crowds of curious people headed to the train stations in order to set sight on the ‘hereditary enemies of Christendom.’ They were excited about the arrival of the train and asked each other how many would come and how black they would be.”⁸³

⁷⁶*Haremslogik. Bohemia*, 7 Aug. 1878, cited in Haselsteiner, *Bosnien-Hercegovina*, 70.

⁷⁷Joseph Beck, *Banjaluka-Jajce* (Vienna, 1908), 151.

⁷⁸Cited in Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travelers* (London, 2004), 139. Chaura, who took part in battles at Vranduk in Aug. 1878, published his account in Czech, *Obrázky z okupace bosenské* [Pictures from the Bosnian Occupation] in 1893.

⁷⁹(*Neuigkeits*) *Welt Blatt*, 14 Sept. 1878, p. 2.

⁸⁰Beck, *Banjaluka-Jajce*, 151.

⁸¹Holtz, *Die letzten Kämpfe*, 86–87.

⁸²*Die Occupation Bosniens und der Hercegovina durch k.k. Truppen im Jahre 1878*, 53–55. In this official report, the Habsburg General Staff estimated that roughly forty thousand Ottoman troops had been present during the military occupation.

⁸³(*Neuigkeits*) *Welt Blatt*, 24 Aug. 1878, p. 5.

Alas, no Turks came to Adelsberg. Someone had “played a joke” on the crowds. But two days later the rumored train did arrive in Vienna carrying six hundred “Turks” who were then transported further to sites in Bohemia and Hungary. A month later a more elaborate joke disappointed crowds who “in masses” had “streamed to the rail lines to see Muslims (*Musselmänner*) up close.” When the occupants of a Habsburg military train passing through Bohemia heard of people’s curiosity about the Turks (*Türken-Neugier*), they staged a prank by dressing up as “Muslims”: “Hurriedly, [the Austrian soldiers turned] sackcloths into turbans, made faces as grim as possible, and stuck all heads out the windows. There was great amazement and astonishment among the spectators, who now everywhere described how ferocious and wild the Turks bound for Josefstadt looked.”⁸⁴ But in the end, some of the rumored “Turks” did indeed arrive, satisfying onlookers’ curiosity to see the exotic Other. At the end of August, 371 captives arrived in Olomouc. They sported “athletic figures, many of them Arabs and some Negroes, [and] almost all seem to belong to regular Turkish troops.” Six women accompanied them, “apparently the harem,” along with a “small child and a eunuch.” In the popular imagination, these prisoners seemed to merge with the historic early modern foe: many were said to be carrying “Austrian coins from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” They were apparently permitted to mingle in the town, as a swarm of onlookers “crowded to the window of the Hotel Lauer” to see how one captive, a good-natured “Bosnian Turk,” drank a glass of beer.⁸⁵

What are we to make of this multitude of “Turks”? In texts drawing parallels to the campaign of Prince Eugene, the Turk of the past and present remains unchanged, a stable foe throughout the centuries. At the moment of contact in 1878, the Turk begins to fragment into (at least) two figures, the Ottoman and the insurgent, whose outlines are difficult for Austrians to distinguish in the heat of battle. After capture, the Turk multiplies. We have Bosnians, but also Anatolians, Arabs, and Negroes. They are at once dressed in neglected rags and in regal uniforms. They are possessed by “religious fanaticism” but are drinking beer with the locals. We have Austrian soldiers spoofing the crowds by dressing as turbaned “Muslims” and bystanders disappointed to miss these “black” foreigners. They are ferocious cannibals in battle but pitiable creatures in captivity. Taken cumulatively, the Austrian depictions of “Turks”—diverse and contradictory—share a common possibility: they provide a canvas for projecting *Austrian virtue*. Juxtaposed to the many-sided Turk, Austria is singular in its mission: it came to Bosnia at the request of “Europe.”

Imperial Snapshots

The most famous river crosser, Kaiser Francis Joseph, visited Bosnia twice. In 1885, wearing a Hungarian general’s uniform, he crossed the bridge from one Brod to the other. It is possible to imagine one “border in the head” at this moment: that of Austrian engineers who were likely satisfied that they had overcome the challenge of a river border with the speedy construction of a 485-meter bridge connecting the twin towns. Already in September 1878, while skirmishes were still being fought along the river, an ad appeared in the *Linzer Tages-Post*: “Immediately seeking 150 carpenters as well as diggers, good pay” for work on a railway bridge across the Sava.⁸⁶ Opened for traffic the following year, the bridge and a three-kilometer long connecting rail line linked the normal-gauge rail network of the monarchy to

⁸⁴“Falsche Türken,” *Znaimer Wochenblatt*, 7 Sept. 1878, p. 13.

⁸⁵“Türkische Kriegsgefangene in Olmütz,” *Znaimer Wochenblatt*, 7 Sept. 1878, p. 13.

⁸⁶*Linzer Tages-Post*, 17 Sept. 1878, p. 4.

the narrow-gauge line in Bosnia.⁸⁷ Just in time for the Kaiser's visit, the bridge's temporary wooden trusses had been replaced by steel.⁸⁸ What Francis Joseph was thinking about as he crossed the river was a "border in the head" moment inaccessible to us now. But the stop in Bosnisch-Brod did provide an opportunity to display imperial paternalism. A young boy wearing a fez emerged from the crowd, and (as reported in the Viennese press) the Kaiser "caressed him smilingly." The mayor, speaking "in the Croatian language" welcomed the Kaiser to his "small but loyal (*treue*) city." The Kaiser responded "in the German language" that he hoped to be able to visit Bosnia again.⁸⁹ Unlike soldiers O'Kelly and Noir, he did not have much time to ponder the harem or properly take in a "Turkish city," for his stay on Bosnian soil lasted all of thirty minutes. He did not return for twenty-five years.

When Francis Joseph crossed again in 1910, two years after the province had been annexed, things in sleepy Bosnisch-Brod had changed. The territory was now depicted in many Austrian writings as a postcard for modernity. If earlier crossings evoked a showdown with the Turk (and a border with Europe), new images showcased Bosnia as the posterchild of Austro-Hungarian competence and ingenuity. The *Neue Freie Presse* reported unmistakable signs of "European culture": modern buildings, well-tended streets, and an enormous train station on whose tracks sat "heavily loaded cars groaning under the weight of giant lumber from the Bosnian forest, heavy petroleum cars, telling signs of blossoming industry and trade."⁹⁰ Some things hadn't changed. Mehmed Hafiz Hodžić, the mayor who had greeted the Kaiser in 1885, was still in office and greeted him again.

The "Turk" had been defeated and then administered into a creature more congenial to the Habsburg worldview, the loyal "Bosniak."⁹¹ But early twentieth-century Austrian writers still reproduced, nearly verbatim, narratives of crossing into "elsewhere." In this sense, in the final decade of the Habsburg Empire, the Sava attained the status of what recent scholars have called a "phantom border," defined as a historical or political demarcation "that structure[s] space despite [its] subsequent institutional abolishment."⁹² A river crossing in 1914, from a volume promoting patriotic Habsburg consciousness, included familiar echoes of an encounter with the Orient. The requisite "slight mist" hangs in the air as one pulls into Bosnisch-Brod. The still morning air is penetrated only by the "melancholy, quavering song, the prayer of the muezzin." The arriving passenger gazes out at bright white minarets and "Turkish houses" whose wooden grates "seem to preserve a harem secret." There are donkeys, men in turbans. "Orient, wherever we look." This passage could have been lifted from any number of nineteenth-century crossing narratives. Nearly four decades after Austria donned the mantle of "Europe," the minaret does have some company. Towering, sturdy chimneys have multiplied, "smoldering columns of smoke announce" soberly that

⁸⁷"Antheilnahme der Occupations-Truppen und der Heeres-Verwaltung an den Massnahmen zur Förderung der materiellen und culturellen Entwicklung Bosniens und der Hercegovina," *Organ der militärwissenschaftlichen Vereine* XXIV (Vienna, 1882), 31.

⁸⁸Moriz Bock, "Der Ausbau der Eisenbahnbrücke über die Save bei Brod, 1882–1884, im Auftrage des k.k. Reichs-Kriegs-Ministeriums (Vienna, 1885), 3.

⁸⁹*Wiener Zeitung*, 18 Sept. 1885, p. 1.

⁹⁰*Neue Freie Presse*, 31 May 1910, p. 4.

⁹¹On efforts to create a Bosnian "national" identity, see Aydın Babuna, "The Story of *Bošnjaštvo*," in Ruthner et al., *Wechselwirkungen*, 123–38; Hajdarpasic, chapter five. On Bosnians in Habsburg armed forces, see Christoph Neumayer and Erwin A. Schmidl, eds., *Des Kaisers Bosniaken. Die bosnisch-herzegowinischen Truppen in der k.u.k. Armee* (Vienna, 2008), esp. 126–85; Werner Schachinger, *Die Bosniaken kommen! Elitetruppe in der k.u.k. Armee, 1879–1918* (Graz, 1989).

⁹²Béatrice von Hirschhausen et al., "Phantom Borders in Eastern Europe: A New Concept for Regional Research," *Slavic Review* 78, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 368–89, here 370.

“the West has ... awakened this former land of robber poetry from lazy slumber.”⁹³ No longer serving as an imperial border—the Sava at Brod was now a mere provincial border (*Landesgrenze*)—the river and the borders in the head it inspired nevertheless retained powerful and residual holds on the imaginations of Austrian crossers.

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⁹³Siegmund Schneider and Benno Imendörffer, *Mein Österreich, mein Heimatland. Illustrierte Volks- und Vaterlandskunde des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1914), 498–99.