



universität
wien



INSTITUT für
Orientalistik



universität
wien

Vienna Doctoral School PhilKult



Stadt
Wien

Migration and Mobility in the Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Borderlands (19th-21st centuries)

Vienna, 13-14 November 2026

The last decades have brought increasing solidification of contemporary borders in the Middle East (Tejel and Öztan 2023), as border walls between Turkey and Syria, Egypt and Gaza, as well as Saudi Arabia and Yemen have become tangible, impermeable manifestations of spatial segregation. In the Aegean Sea, the Hellenic Coast Guard and Frontex have created a similarly rigid, albeit moving and thus more permeable, system of border control, which is much more characterised by its coercive function than an alleged humanitarian one (López 2022). In light of these developments, our workshop is interested in highlighting instances of the liminality, permeability, and fluidity of borders, as well as their effects on individuals, communities, and especially minority groups (e.g., Armenians, Greeks, Kurds). In this sense, borders can be understood not as fixed lines, but as part of wider networks of mobility and interaction, in line with approaches that stress connectivity and micro-regional dynamics (Horden and Purcell 2000). Borderlands, by extension, are thus ‘spaces where place, identity and power relations intersect over time’ (Schlaepfer and Tejel 2024: 81).

By zooming in on individual and microhistorical perspectives in particular, this workshop seeks to trace instances of trans-border mobility, networks, minority cultures, and memory in borderland spaces that (have) transcend(ed) the territorial division of the former Ottoman Empire. Thus, we aim to discuss the border(land) and trans-border mobility not within the light of top-down policing and control, but as the site of vibrant social, economic, and cultural dynamics, individual agency, transgression, trans-border relations, identity, and memory production (particularly in relation to experiences of mobility and displacement). By entwining microhistorical perspectives and minority histories with broader debates in border and mobility studies, the workshop aims to open new methodological and conceptual avenues for studying the Ottoman and post-Ottoman world.

We particularly invite contributions from fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, spatial and border studies, which address various instances of trans-border mobility, specific borderlands/borderzones, transnational diaspora networks, minority histories, memory, and memory production within the context of Ottoman and post-Ottoman space. Possible questions include:

- How do recent approaches to migration (e.g., mobility studies, refugee studies, memory studies, etc.) reshape the study of the borderlands?
- How do the shifting borderland landscapes affect individual and collective mobility, migration, and agency?
- Which role do (physical, cultural, and emotional) borderlands play in the creation of diaspora identity, memory, and memory production?
- How do borderland mobility and identity shape social spaces in the Ottoman Empire / Turkey / Ottoman and Turkish diaspora communities?
- How do communities in the Ottoman / Turkish borderlands navigate belonging, when shifting borders redefined who was on the “inside” and “outside”?
- How do traumatic memories/events (e.g., genocide, population exchange, the Holocaust, forced deportation etc.) influence later identity construction among migrants in the diasporas?
- How do refugees, migrants, and mobile populations (re-)negotiate borders?
- How are memories of migration and displacement expressed and materialised (e.g., through monuments, archives, or everyday practices)? (memories and their manifestation in material objects/memory production)

The two-day workshop (13-14 November 2026) is hosted by the Department of Near Eastern Studies, located at the campus of the University of Vienna. Partial bursaries for travel and/or accommodations will be offered according to participant need and available funding. These are payable only after participation and submission of all relevant receipts (originals only).

We particularly encourage PhD candidates and early career scholars to apply. We also specifically welcome contributions from Vienna-based Doctoral Schools such as the Doctoral School of Philological and Cultural Studies and the Doctoral School of Historical and Cultural Studies.

Please submit your abstract (max. 300 words) and short bio (max. 100 words) to julia.froehlich@univie.ac.at by 17 August at the latest. Successful applicants will be notified by 1 September. Full papers will be circulated four weeks prior to the workshop to allow for an in-depth discussion. Please send your paper (max. 6,000 words including references) by 12 October.

Organising committee: Julia Fröhlich-Siegl, Özlem Sultan Çolak