



## **Call for Papers**

# **Mobilizing Nature: The Environmental History of the Ottoman Danubian Frontier**

**Vienna, 12-13 March 2026**

The Danube, “le roi des fleuves de l’Europe” (the king of European rivers), as Napoleon Bonaparte called it, is the second longest river in Europe, surpassed by the Volga in Russia only. Originating from the Black Forests in Germany, it flows through or past ten Central and Southeastern European countries before it flows into the Black Sea. The Danube was a vital commercial and military shipping channel for the Ottomans. From the fourteenth century, they increasingly used the Danube as a waterway to move supplies and munition between the Black Sea and the Hungarian plains. Especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Danube was an inseparable part of Ottoman campaign logistics. It enabled the Ottomans to apply their military projections to Europe and contributed to their success in their military operations against the Habsburgs.

Scholars have tracked the political, social, and economic consequences of the Ottoman military presence on the Danube, but less attention has been paid to its environmental repercussions. To fill this gap, the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Vienna will host the “Mobilizing Nature: The Environmental History of the Danubian Frontier” workshop from 12 to 13 March 2026. Focusing on the Middle and Lower Danubian frontiers in the early modern period, it will explore the Danube River’s place and role in Ottoman warfare. The workshop aims to shed light on the relationship between the riverine environment, war and military in the early modern Ottoman Danube. It aims to bring together researchers working on the river’s military and environmental histories and those with a broader focus on river history. In this respect, it seeks to foster a cross-disciplinary conversation to build connections across fields and bring different perspectives to understand the establishment and maintenance of the Ottoman Danubian frontier in connection with the natural environment.

The participants are encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary topics that deal with questions including, but not limited to, the following:

- How did the Ottomans expand their rule and establish and maintain their military frontier on the Danube River?
- How did the Ottoman military engage with the Danubian environment? In what ways did environmental conditions, such as climate, landscape, flora, fauna, soil, and water, shape the character of Ottoman warfare?

- How did military ideas, strategies, bodies, and institutions interact with nature in the Ottoman Danube?
- How did they cope with the challenges posed by the Danube, such as shallows, whirlpools, and shifting islands?
- How did the Ottoman military mobilize natural resources, such as timber, stone, sand, and ores, for their military ends?
- What were the environmental consequences of the Ottoman military presence on the Danube? How did the militarization of Danubian landscapes affect human beings and other species?
- What are the specificities of the militarized environments along the Ottoman Danube? How similar or different are they from other militarized environments in the Ottoman Empire and beyond?
- How are the environmental histories of Ottoman battlefields linked?
- How can methods and tools used in the digital and spatial humanities, such as historical GIS and creative geovisualization, offer alternative ways of telling stories about the Ottoman Danubian Frontier?

For the “Mobilizing Nature” workshop, we invite submissions that align with the workshop aims mentioned above. Please send your proposals of max. 300 words and short bios to Onur İnal ([onur.inal@univie.ac.at](mailto:onur.inal@univie.ac.at)) and Deniz Armağan Akto ([deniz.armagan.akto@univie.ac.at](mailto:deniz.armagan.akto@univie.ac.at)) until 31 May 2025.

Limited funding will be available to help cover travelling costs for individuals without institutional support.

The workshop is part of the project “DANFront: An Environmental History of the Early-Modern Ottoman Military Frontier in the Middle and Lower Danube,” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) (PAT2459324).

<https://danfront.univie.ac.at/>

In the spirit of continuing the rich dialogue and scholarly exchange from the Mobilizing Nature workshop, we intend to publish an edited collection on the innovative research presented at the workshop. The edited collection will seek to consolidate and extend the theoretical and conceptual insights generated by the workshop, providing a significant contribution to Ottoman military environmental history.

**FWF** Österreichischer  
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