

NOTES ON THE OTTOMAN-HABSBURG ANTAGONISM IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE AND ITS CLIMAX DURING THE 17TH CENTURY *

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At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire (*Devlet-i 'Othmāniyye*) had to face two major external dangers: the emerging Şafavid power in Iran was one of them. However, the second threat was not less dangerous to the Sublime Porte: the Habsburgs challenged the Ottomans on the Balkan scene.¹ Their attitude in the course of their rivalry with the Ottomans over the control of South East Europe shows similarities in the crusades of previous centuries. The seventeenth century indicated a turning point in the relations between Ottomans and Habsburgs, resulting in the final decline of the former's power in Europe and in the establishment of the latter's hegemony over the Balkans. This turning point was marked by the decisive Ottoman defeat at Vienna in 1683. This last major Ottoman advance to the heartlands of Europe contributed considerably to their later decline. In its aftermath, the Porte had to concentrate all available forces for defense, since further conquests in the West did not happen.

The fact of the continuous presence of millions of indigenous Muslims in Europe for more than six hundred years had often been neglected in the past. The understanding of this historical background for the existence of native European Muslims

* The compilation of a paper dealing with seventeenth-century Ottoman-Habsburg relations was suggested to me by my revered teacher Prof. Dr. Mehmet İpşirli in June 1995. Prof. Dr. İpşirli is Visiting Professor at ISTAC, and Professor of History at Istanbul University. This particular paper is a revised version of the one I wrote in 1995 for Professor İpşirli's class 'Islamic History since 1500'.

¹ Ottomans and Habsburgs had become direct neighbours after the collapse of Jagiellon Hungary in 1526, see *infra*.

in the Balkans, in eastern Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belorus and European Russia is vital for judging current political developments adequately. They deserve to be treated as equals by their non-Muslim European neighbours and by their co-religionists of other Muslim countries as well. Furthermore, there can be no doubt about the various contributions made by them in the fields of culture and sciences.² Moreover, if the idea of a "European House" is intended to be taken seriously, certain European countries should have taken stern measures in order to avoid or punish any aggression against independent Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, support from the Muslim countries for the young Bosnian state was given in most cases only hesitatingly and at a very late stage.

The intention of this survey is to present an outline of the major stages of the Ottoman-Habsburg military confrontation in South East Europe during the 17th century by drawing attention at the same time to parallel historical developments in the emergence of those two antagonists. The present contribution does not offer new historiographical material or exciting discoveries from the archives.³ Rather, it is a summary aimed at increasing awareness of some of the historical roots of a contemporary political conflict. The reader may soon notice the prevalence of European works among the materials chosen, in particular secondary sources, compiled predominantly by either Austrians or Germans. This was done with the intention to lead the reader's attention to the biased nature of most of these sources. Interesting in this regard is the fact that most of the respective German or

² Irene Komposch-Ortner, "Die kulturelle Begegnung von Orient und Okzident in Bosnien-Herzegowina", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, IV (1984), 281-303.

³ See Rhodes Murphey, "Ottoman Historical Writing in the Seventeenth Century: A Survey of the General Development after the Reign of Sultan Ahmed I (1603-17)", *Archivum Ottomanicum*, XIII (1993-1994), 277-311 and Franz Taeschner, "Die Osmanische Literatur", *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (ed. B. Spuler et al.), I. Abt., Band V, 1. Abschnitt (Leiden and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1982), 313-318.