

ABSTRACT: The article presents the 'Forum Turcica' research project. The Forum Turcica was founded at the end of 2020 as an inter-institutional and interdisciplinary working group. One goal of the Forum Turcica is to establish an online thematic portal where colleagues from museums and universities interested in researching the use and reception of historical objects of Ottoman origin from the early modern period to the present can exchange ideas. In addition to processing the objects on the thematic portal, the second focus of the Forum Turcica is the comprehensive scientific processing of various Turcica collections. The research topics are: Provenance, Material, Presentation and Instrumentalisation. These topics are to be investigated in a research project that Prof. Dr. Hendrik Ziegler (Marburg) intends to apply for at the German Research Foundation (DFG).

KEYWORDS: objects of Ottoman provenance, thematic online portal, Holy Roman Empire, early modern period – now, Provenance, Material, Presentation, Instrumentalisation

COMMUNICATION

THE FORUM TURCICA

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The Forum Turcica was founded at the end of 2020 as an inter-institutional and interdisciplinary working group. In terms of content, the Forum Turcica pursues several goals, which are to be realised in different work steps.

The first priority is the preparation of an online platform: the thematic portal Forum Turcica is intended to facilitate exchange between colleagues from museums and universities who are interested in researching the utilisation and reception of historical objects of Ottoman origin from the early modern period to the present.

The thematic portal Forum Turcica aims to provide greater public visibility of the rich holdings of objects of Ottoman provenance from museums in German-speaking countries and to inspire their analysis. In the Holy Roman Empire, the princely courts collected Ottoman objects to varying levels of intensity. These form the basis for the Turcica collections in museums such as those in Vienna, Dresden, Karlsruhe, Munich and Ingolstadt, Kassel, Coburg etc. The collections, their provenances, their use and their presentation up to the present day form the subject of our joint research.

The individual collection holdings and their histories are already well researched for the most part. However, this does not always apply to the Turcica part of the collection. A synopsis of the already existing object-based research is missing. The thematic portal offers the possibility of collecting and linking this information. On the homepage turcica.museum-digital.de/home, you will find objects that have been commented on by members of the forum.

The Forum examines 'objects of Ottoman provenance' in Western and Central European collections. This refers to objects that originate from the sphere of power of the Ottoman Empire at its greatest expansion in the seventeenth century. This explicitly includes objects that originally came from the Persian Safavid Empire, the Mughal Empire, the former sphere of influence of the Mamlukes or the Barbary states, but reached the West through trade, war and other exchange relations with the Ottoman Empire. Also included are objects of Ottoman appearance that do not originate from the Ottoman Empire. Examples are Transylvania or Venice where objects were made for the upper European (and also Ottoman) market. The inclusion of Hungarian and Polish-Sarmatian pieces also suggests itself.

The study of objects that no longer exist and have been lost in the course of time should also be explicitly included. These especially include textiles such as flags, tents, items of clothing, etc. Their importance for exchange relations with the Ottoman Empire can hardly be overestimated. The information is mostly available only through archival sources.

In addition to processing the objects on the thematic portal, the second focus of Forum Turcica is the comprehensive scientific processing of the individual object collections. For this purpose, a research group was

formed. The research group is currently formulating a proposal. This will be submitted to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). The main applicant is Prof. Dr Hendrik Ziegler, Phillips University Marburg.

The research topics of the members of the research group are oriented towards four research themes: 1) Provenance: Comparison of the origin histories of the objects and their integration into the collection. 2) Material: Material properties of the objects and production processes. 3) Presentation: Forms of presenting Turcica. 4) Instrumentalisation: Politically motivated use of Ottoman objects in phases of confrontation and peace.

In the first section, 'Provenance', the origin of the various objects is examined. These were often very different and complex object biographies. The starting point is the emergence of the Turcica collections in the early modern period. These were mostly princely collections. However, collections were also created in other contexts. One project will examine Ottoman objects in the Rumanian collection of the National Museum of the Banat in Timișoara (Temeswar) in comparison to Swiss holdings and question their respective contributions to the processes of nation building in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Another study is dedicated to the Württemberg Kunstkammer as well as the Stuttgart Army Museum. In addition, there will be overriding project in which provenances and object biographies will be digitally indexed and linked in a database: Procedures and observation terms such as 'trophy', 'donation', 'purchase', 'reworking' or 'forgery' will be reexamined for their applicability and conciseness.

In the second section, 'Material', the material composition of different groups of objects is examined. The manufacturing processes and the use of the objects in the societies of origin are also researched. Two projects examine medals and textiles (Ottoman tents and flags).

The third section, 'Presentation', examines the changing history of the exhibition. Here there is a change in the classification and presentation of the objects: Until the 18th century, weapons, textiles and precious objects were exhibited as captured trophies and signs of victory. With the establishment of museums open to the public, Turcica were exhibited for their aesthetic, technical or functional value. The Turcica were thus exhibited with various intentions. A project wants to address this question and investigate the different musealisation strategies of Turcica since the early modern period. For this purpose, the collections in the former kingdoms of Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, Hanover, as well as in Austria will be compared. Another project is focused exclusively on the collections of the Wittelsbach dynasty.

The fourth section, 'Instrumentalisation', follows on from the section 'Presentation'. The question posed here is for which narratives the Turcica were used. It is thus about the use of the objects and at the same time about the intention of the communication. For example, a certain

object could serve as a trophy at a military parade, then mutate into an exotic accessory at a courtly masquerade, and finally serve as a diplomatic gift to stabilise some relationships of dependence.

In this context, it is also relevant what image of the Turks was conveyed and, above all, how it was conveyed. In times of war, Turcica were used to make the population ready for war. Various pamphlets and leaflets were distributed for this purpose. The depicted objects and the narrated stories were used for mobilisation or to maintain the will to defend oneself. In peacetime, on the other hand, the aesthetic and technical skill of the objects could come into the foreground. A general ethnographic interest in non-European peoples can also be noted.

In addition, it is interesting to ask how the societies of origin perceived the handling of the objects in Europe, away from their cultural context. Another project is dedicated to this question.

The projects of the research group will result in several individual studies. Their focus is on the German-speaking region. The inclusion of further participants in Eastern European, Central European and Southern European countries is scientifically imperative and will be pursued as a next step.

The exciting field of research on the Turcica is far from exhausted with the envisaged individual studies. Hopefully, they will be the first starting point for further more intensive work on these fascinating objects.

The colleagues from the research group and the members of the Forum Turcica are looking forward to numerous suggestions and further ideas. We would also be very pleased to receive references to objects and groups of objects in the various museums. We would like to collect the knowledge in the Turcica theme portal. The theme portal is intended to link objects as well as people. Therefore, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are delighted with your interest!

The study was conducted as part of individual research.

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