

Migrations | Migrations within the Ottoman Empire | Refugee victims of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire

In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire increasingly became a land of mass migration following a series of devastating wars.

The 19th century witnessed the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Its constantly redrawn borders ended up dividing former territories in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania in the Balkans, the Crimea on the Russian border and the Kurdish zones on the Ukrainian border and elsewhere, causing communities and even villages to be split and dispersed. Millions of refugees were displaced, and 2 million Muslim refugees from the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe settled in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Anatolia. Cities such as Aleppo, Izmir, Alexandria, Cairo and Damascus began to grow dramatically as a result, in some cases doubling their population. After World War I, the creation of the modern Republic of Turkey resulted in movements of millions of people as large-scale population exchanges took place on either side of the new international borders.



Working Number: TR2 115

Name: Balkan immigrants village at Sivrihisar

Holding Museum: Istanbul University, Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi (Rare Books Library)

Date: 19th century

Materials: Photograph

Curator Justification: A series of crises redrew the map of the Balkans under Ottoman control in the 19th century. The arbitrary division of the area and the power games played took no account of populations or nationalities.



Working Number: RS 007

Name: Fugitives Of Herzegovina

Holding Museum: The National Museum

Date: 1889

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: This realistic and heart-wrenching painting charts the tribulations and agony of refugees on the roads of Herzegovina, fleeing the Turco-Serbian war (1875–78).



Working Number: MC 042

Name: Gjorgij Pulevski

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: 1880s

Materials: Paper

Curator Justification: Gjorgji Pulevski was the founder of the Macedonian Literary Society established in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1888. It was one of the independent associations established by Macedonian immigrants in the Balkans, aimed at making a contribution to the awakening of the Macedonian national spirit.



Working Number: MC 033

Name: Constitution of the Slav-Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society in Saint Petersburg

Holding Museum: University of St. Cyril and Methodius - Publisher

Date: 16th December 1903

Materials:

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Curator

Justification: The Slav-Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society, also known as the St Petersburg Colony, played an important role in the national awakening of Macedonians and bringing forth the issue of the independence of Macedonia in the international community.



Working Number: JO 085

Name: Samovar

Holding Museum: Jordan Folklore Museum, Department of Antiquities

Date: 1899

Materials: Polished brass

Curator

Justification: Away from the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire had to face continuing conflict with its northern neighbour Russia. In its wake, whole Circassian and Chechen villages chose voluntary exile in Ottoman lands, most notably Syria, the Levant and areas that are today part of modern Jordan. This samovar symbolises their physical and cultural presence.



Working Number: JO 086

Name: Drinking cup

Holding Museum: Jordan Folklore Museum, Department of Antiquities

Date: 1896

Materials: Polished brass

Curator

Justification: Away from the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire had to face continuing conflict with its northern neighbour Russia. In its wake, whole Circassian and Chechen villages chose voluntary exile in Ottoman lands, most notably Syria, the Levant and areas that are today part of modern Jordan. This cup symbolises their physical and cultural presence.



Working Number: FR 038

Name: Balkans, exiled civilians on the move

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 1912

Materials:

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Curator

Justification: The first Balkan War (1912–13) pitted Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece against the Ottoman Empire. The violence of the battles resulted

in the significant movement and permanent dislocation of people, including Albanians, Bulgarians, Greeks and Turks.



Working Number: GR 021

Name: The arrival of the refugees

Holding Museum: Benaki Museum

Date: 1922

Materials: Photograph

Curator Justification: The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24 July 1923, ended the bloody war the Ottoman Empire had been fighting against Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece and the Balkan states in the wake of World War I. As a result of this treaty, 2 million people (around 1.5 million Anatolians and 500,000 Greek Muslims) became refugees.



Working Number: GR 022

Name: The arrival of the refugees

Holding Museum: Benaki Museum

Date: 1922

Materials: Photograph

Curator Justification: The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24 July 1923, ended the bloody war the Ottoman Empire had been fighting against Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece and the Balkan states in the wake of World War I. As a result of this treaty, 2 million people (around 1.5 million Anatolians and 500,000 Greek Muslims) became refugees.



Working Number: TR2 077

Name: Migration preparations from Lemnos island to Turkey

Holding Museum: Population Exchange Museum (The Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants)

Date:

1924

Materials:

Photograph

Curator

Justification: As a result of the peace treaty signed by the Turkish and Greek governments in Lausanne in July 1923, mandatory exchanges of populations based on their religious beliefs were undertaken. Muslim Greeks of Turkish descent left for Anatolia while Christian Anatolians of Greek descent headed for the Greek mainland and islands.



Working Number: TR2 078

Name: Migration preparations of Muslim families to Turkey

Holding Museum: Population Exchange Museum (The Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants)

Date:

1924

Materials:

Curator Photograph
Justification: Muslim families were forced to emigrate from Greece to Turkey as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne, July 1923. According to official records, around 200,000 Orthodox Greeks left Anatolia, while around 400,000 Muslim Turks left Greece. The overall numbers of refugees and migrants are estimated to be much larger.



Working Number: TR2 079
Name: Refugees' documents for refuge house after the population exchange
Holding Museum: Population Exchange Museum (The Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants)
Date: 1923–1924
Materials: Document
Curator Document
Justification: The 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey was based on religious identity and involved the Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey and the Muslim citizens of Greece. This document relates to accommodation for the Greek Papoukidis family following their move.



Working Number: TR2 076
Name: Migration preparations from Lemnos island to Turkey
Holding Museum: Population Exchange Museum (The Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants)
Date: 1924
Materials: Photograph
Curator Photograph
Justification: This photograph captures the preparations of Muslims settled on the Greek island of Lemnos and obliged to leave for Turkey in the wake of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923.



Working Number: TR2 081
Name: Emigrant family
Holding Museum: Population Exchange Museum (The Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants)
Date: 1925
Materials: Photograph
Curator Photograph
Justification: This photograph shows members of a Turkish Muslim family forced to leave their home on the Greek island of Crete for Turkey in 1925.
