Delimitating Northwestern Ottoman Borders: An Analysis of 1830 Ottoman-Russian Border Protocol

OSMANLI KUZEYBATI SINIRLARININ BELİRLENMESİ: 1830 OSMANLI-RUS SINIR PROTOKOLÜ ÜZERİNE BİR ANALİZ

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ABSTRACT

From the 18th century until 1829, Russia persistently exerted pressure on the Danube frontier through successive wars with the Ottoman Empire. By the end of the century, the occupation of the fortresses of Ochakiv and Budjak enabled Russia to advance closer to the Danube from the north. The Treaty of Bucharest in 1812 granted Russia limited rights over the river, marking the beginning of the Ottomans' erosion of full control over the Danube. The Ottoman defeat in the war of 1828-1829 resulted in the transfer of the Danube islands and the formal recognition of the river as a boundary. Under the Treaty of Adrianople, a boundary protocol (*hududnâme*) was jointly prepared in 1830 to define the new borders between Ottoman, Russian, Wallachian, and Moldavian territories along the Danube. This study aims to analyse and critically assess the boundary arrangements in 1830 and the protocol text itself. Despite its significance, this document has not been examined in detail in the existing literature. Accordingly, the defined borders are evaluated through official records, boundary maps, and relevant scholarly studies.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Treaty of Adrianople, Danube River, Boundary Protocol, Russia.

ÖZ

18. yüzyıldan 1829 yılına kadar Rusya, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile yaptığı savaşlarda Tuna sınırı üzerinde sürekli baskı uyguladı. Yüzyılın sonlarına doğru Özi ve Bucak kalelerinin işgaliyle birlikte Rusya, kuzeyden Tuna'ya daha da yaklaşmış oldu. 1812 tarihli Bükreş Antlaşması, Rusya'ya nehir üzerinde kısmî haklar tanıyarak Osmanlıların nehir üzerindeki tam hâkimiyetini kaybetmeye başlamasına zemin hazırladı. 1828-1829 savaşındaki Osmanlı yenilgisi ise Tuna'daki adaların tahsisine ve nehrin bir sınır hattı olarak kabul edilmesine yol açtı. 1829 tarihli Edirne Antlaşması uyarınca, 1830 yılında Tuna boyunca Osmanlı, Rusya, Eflak ve Boğdan toprakları arasındaki yeni sınırları tanımlayan bir sınır protokolü (hududnâme) ortak olarak hazırlandı. Bu çalışma, 1830'da belirlenen sınırları ve kabul edilen protokol metnini analiz etmeyi ve eleştirel bir değerlendirmeye tabi tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Önemine rağmen, bu protokol literatürde ayrıntılı biçimde incelenmemiştir. Bu nedenle, belirlenen sınırlar resmi kayıtlar, sınır haritaları ve akademik kaynaklar temelinde değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Devleti, Edirne Antlaşması, Tuna Nehri, Hududnâme, Rusya.

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INTRODUCTION

The diplomatic history of the Ottoman Empire, no less than its political history, rests upon a rich and extensive body of sources. Among the most significant of these are the *sınırnâmes* or *hududnâmes* (border protocols). Produced in the aftermath of wars fought with neighbouring states, these documents were closely connected to the treaties that concluded such conflicts and offered detailed accounts of border delineation. From the late seventeenth century onward, they assumed a more systematic character, paralleling the emergence of border commissions in the modern sense and the adoption of increasingly technical practices of delimitation. When examined chronologically, scholarly research on Ottoman *hududnâmes* is considerable in both scope and volume. Despite the growing scholarly interest in Ottoman frontiers and border documentation in recent years, no comprehensive study has yet been devoted to the border protocol jointly prepared by the Ottoman and Russian empires in 1830. Existing scholarship on Ottoman border texts has instead focused primarily on the delineation processes introduced under modern procedures following the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), as well as on the subsequent implementation of border demarcation in accordance with later treaty provisions.

In this regard, M. Molnár has demonstrated considering the role of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli that military, economic, geographical, and administrative considerations informed the determination of the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier within the framework of the Treaty of Karlowitz. In accordance with the treaty's provisions, the Ottoman frontiers with the Habsburg, Venetian, Polish, and Russian states were delimited within the parameters of early modern border-making practices. Consequently, the Empire's western boundaries were, likely for the first time, delineated as a coherent whole with clearly defined lines, thereby acquiring an official and enduring character.[1] From this period onward, a marked increase in the production and use of Ottoman *hududnâme*s can be observed. While it is not possible here to address the full range of studies concerning boundary protocols across the Empire's expansive geography, it is evident that, in connection with the Treaty of Karlowitz, independent delimitation procedures were undertaken not only with the Habsburgs but also with Poland, Russia, and Venice. In this context, T. Gökçe's study, which examines the process of defining the Bosnian frontier on the basis of *sınırnâme* texts, may be regarded as one of the earliest works in Turkey grounded in these primary sources.[2] Similarly, the border delimitation procedures carried out in parallel with the same treaty are reflected in the 1701 *sınırnâme* analysed by U. Kurtaran, which documents the demarcation of the Belgrade frontier with the Habsburgs.[3] Likewise, the Ottoman-Polish frontier was delineated pursuant to the provisions of the Treaty of Karlowitz; the procedures governing both the determination and implementation of this boundary have also been examined by Kurtaran.[4]

1 Feridun M. Emecen, *Osmanlı Klasik Çağında Siyaset* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), 207-208; Monika Molnar, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Avrupa'daki Sınırlarının Tespiti (1699-1701)", *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), 3/321-329.

2 Turan Gökçe, "1699-1700 Tarihli Bosna Vilâyeti Hududnâmesi", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 16/1 (2001), 75-104..

3 Uğur Kurtaran, "XVIII. Yüzyıla Ait Hudutname ve Sınır Tahdit Örneği: Karlofça Antlaşması'na Göre Belgrad Sınırlarının Belirlenmesi", *Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi: Kurumları ve Tatbiki,* ed. Mehmet Alaaddin Yalçınkaya - Uğur Kurtaran (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2018), 119-144.

4 Uğur Kurtaran, "Determination of the Ottoman-Polish Borders According to The Treaty of Karlowitz", *Osmanlı Mirası*

The Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) marked a new phase in the redefinition of the Ottoman-Austrian and Ottoman-Venetian frontiers. The activities of the boundary commissions established pursuant to its provisions have been examined by Kurtaran.[5]

Similarly, Z. Karaca's master's thesis, which analyses the border delimitation processes associated with the treaties concluded between the Ottoman and Austrian states from 1699 to 1739, focuses specifically on the question of demarcation.[6] The Treaty of Belgrade, concluded after the joint military operations undertaken by Austria and Russia against the Ottoman Empire between 1736 and 1739, once again redefined the Empire's frontiers with both powers. The border-related procedures implemented in accordance with the treaty's territorial provisions have been examined in part by T. Sevinç.[7] Within the framework of the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade, the records produced by Ebu Sehl Nûmân Efendi and Merâmi Ahmed Efendi -two of the most prominent figures of the century in border determination- constitute, when read alongside diplomatic correspondence and peace treaties, a coherent and complementary historical corpus.[8] In this regard, Nûmân Efendi's *Tedbîrât-ı Pesendîde* holds particular significance. This important source, which includes accounts of events witnessed by Nûmân Efendi between 1737 and 1739 as well as detailed information on border issues, has been translated and made accessible by Ali İ. Savaş.[9] In parallel with the Treaty of Belgrade, M. Solak examined the border determination processes of 1741 between the Ottoman and Austrian states in the regions of the Sava and Una rivers, drawing on Ottoman archival materials and supporting his analysis with a range of maps.[10]

Additionally, L. Düzcü has focused on Ottoman-Russian border negotiations along the Danube, particularly the delimitation stipulated by the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812. Although the delimitation process extended until 1817, the treaty remains significant for granting Russia partial authority over the Danube.[11] G. Doğan, in his study of Ottoman-Russian rivalry between 1724 and 1878, examined nearly 150 years of contested borders and the role of *muhaddids* (surveying commissioners) in delimitation processes. Notably, however, his analysis omitted the 1830 border protocol prepared pursuant to the Treaty of Adrianople (1829).[12] This omission is striking, given the protocol's importance as a joint Ottoman-Russian initiative.[13] While H. Engin's 2022 doctoral dissertation partially addressed the 1830

Araştırmaları Dergisi 9/23 (2023), 221-235.

5 Uğur Kurtaran, "Pasarofça Antlaşması'na Göre Osmanlı-Avusturya/Venedik Sınırları", *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 11/ 55 (2018), 287-300.

6 Zeynep Karaca, 1699-1739 *Osmanlı Avusturya Antlaşmalarına Göre Sınır Tespit Çalışmaları* (Karaman: Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2019).

7 Tahir Sevinç, "1739 Belgrad Antlaşması'nda Sınır Belirleme Çalışmaları ve Rus Elçilerin Serbest Bırakılması", *Yeni Türkiye Rumeli - Balkanlar Özel Sayısı* 3 (2015), 2792-2805.

8 Ali İbrahim Savaş, "Takrîr-i Ahmed Merâmî Efendi (Azak Muhaddidi Ahmed Merâmî Efendi'nin 1740/1741 Sınır Tespit Çalışmaları Hakkındaki Raporu)", *Belgeler 16/20* (1995), 153.

9 Ebu Sehl Nûmân Efendi, *Tedbirât-ı Pesendide*, ed. Ali İbrahim Savaş, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999).

10 Mehmet Solak, "Sava ve Una Nehir Bölgelerinde Osmanlı-Habsburg Hudûd Tahdîdi (1741)", *Tarih ve Gelecek Dergisi* 6/4 (2020), 1270-1296.

11 Levent Düzcü, "Tuna Sınırını Yeni Baştan Düzenlemek/Tahdîd-i Hudûd: Osmanlı'nın Rusya ile İmtihanı (1812-1818)", *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 16/3 (2016), 181-210.

12 Güner Doğan, "İstanbul Antlaşmasından Berlin Antlaşmasına: Osmanlı-Rus Sınırı ve Tartışmalı Alanlar (1724-1878)", XIX. *Türk Tarih Kongresi Bildirileri,* ed. Abdullah Kaymak et al. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2024), 3-1/597-624.

13 Güner Doğan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Sınırlarının Tespiti ve Tespit Edenler (Muhaddidler / Hudûdcûlar) Üzerine Düşünceler", *History Studies*, 16/4 (2024), 435-457.

protocol, his analysis concentrated primarily on Ottoman fortifications along the Danube rather than offering a comprehensive examination of the protocol itself.[14]

The 1830 border protocol, preserved in the Ottoman archives in Ottoman Turkish, French, and Romanian (Cyrillic) versions and accompanied by maps, constitutes a unique case with no known parallel. Unlike the more commonly encountered Turkish-language copies held in the archives, this protocol records settlements, uninhabited lands, and numerous islands in three languages. Moreover, in contrast to earlier examples discussed in the literature, it differs substantially in both content and technical characteristics. Most notably, the 1830 protocols were prepared in accordance with more scientific and modern criteria: the location of each boundary marker was calculated using trigonometric measurements, including latitude and longitude - a feature that clearly distinguishes them from earlier cases. Beyond these technical aspects, the 1830 protocol is also broader in scope. Despite its significance, it has not yet received sustained scholarly attention. The likely reasons are either its limited accessibility or, as will be discussed below, the considerable length and complexity of its content, which includes an extensive number of proper names referring to islands, islets, and uninhabited areas along the Danube. The publication and analysis of these protocols are therefore imperative, not only for understanding the practical processes of border delimitation but also because their content distinctly diverges from earlier *sınırnâme* traditions. While a systematic comparison with such earlier texts remains beyond the scope of the present study, it aims instead to interpret the 1830 border protocol - jointly prepared by the respective states - by situating it within the existing historiography and the broader corpus of Ottoman official documentation. In pursuing this aim, the study addresses a set of interrelated questions organized across three sections: first, how were boundary markers conceived, what instruments were employed to measure them, and how should the physical conditions of the demarcated frontier be conceptualized? Second, how did the protocol define the nomenclature, classification, and political affiliation of the Danube islands, and on what basis were the Ottoman-Wallachian-Moldavian and Ottoman-Russian borders established? Furthermore, how were delimitation procedures implemented in practice, and how were these islands apportioned among the Ottoman Empire, the Danubian Principalities, and Russia? Finally, what was the nature of the Ottoman-Russian frontier along the riverbanks, and how were uninhabited zones defined, administered, and transformed over time? In conjunction with these, what sequence of actions structured the boundary-making process, how were markers designed and positioned, and how did evacuated settlements within neutral zones subsequently evolve?

In the first section, the study addresses questions concerning the legal framework underpinning the 1830 boundary protocol, as well as its bibliographic and technical characteristics. This section conceptualises the *hududnâme* within the Ottoman administrative and legal tradition, emphasising its function as an official instrument of territorial delimitation produced through bilateral commissions. It highlights the exceptional features of the 1830 *hududnâme* - notably its multilingual composition, accompanying maps, and systematic use of scientific measurement techniques, which distinguish it from earlier Ottoman border texts and enhance its value as a historical source. The second section focuses on the initial

14 Hakan Engin, *Tuna Savunma Hattında Bir Osmanlı İstihkâmı: Askeri ve Mâli Yönleriyle İbrail Kalesi'nin Organizasyonu* (1711-1829) (Edirne: Trakya University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2022), 62-64.

phase of demarcation, analysing how ownership of the Danube's islands was determined. It examines the practical application of measurement methods, the criteria used to assign islands to different political entities, and the symbolic and material roles of boundary markers in translating treaty provisions into spatial realities. The final section addresses the second phase of demarcation, which defined the Ottoman-Russian frontier and established uninhabited buffer zones. It explores the legal rationale, geographical complexity, and geopolitical implications of these arrangements, underscoring their long-term impact on sovereignty, administration, and regional power relations along the Danube.

1. The Concept of *Hududnâme* in the Ottoman Empire: The 1830 *Hududnâme*, Accompanying Maps, and Their Value as Historical Sources

In the Ottoman Empire, the terms *border* (*hudud*) and boundary (*sınır*) generally referred to the domain of political geography within the context of inter-state relations. A political boundary was understood as a demarcation line separating the territories of two sovereign entities and was typically represented on contemporary maps. Such boundaries were established through formal legal agreements, most often following treaties concluded after military or diplomatic engagements. Initially, border delineation relied primarily on natural geographical features - such as mountain ranges, rivers, streams, and other topographical markers. Over time, however, with the introduction and gradual adoption of modern surveying instruments, boundary determination evolved into an increasingly scientific process.[15] Although the systematic application of scientific methods to boundary delimitation is generally regarded as a relatively modern development, the fundamental objective remained constant: borders were formalised through official documentation produced by allocation (*taksim*) and delimitation (*tahdid*) procedures conducted in accordance with treaty provisions. These processes culminated in written agreements that were mutually recognised and ratified by representatives of the neighbouring states.[16] Within the Ottoman administrative framework, the definition of boundaries extended beyond international frontiers to include the borders of internal provinces, villages, waqf lands, and private properties. Such boundaries were recorded in official documents known as *sınırnâme* or *hududnâme* (boundary charters). These documents often combined cartographic representations with detailed narrative descriptions of the demarcated territories. When applied to inter-state borders, *hududnâmes* were produced by bilateral commissions composed of appointed representatives from both parties.[17]

The border demarcation process, technically termed *tahdîd*, was executed by an official designated as a *muhaddid*. The duration of such operations fluctuated considerably, dictated by the terrain's geographical complexity and various logistical and political exigencies. Challenging landscapes - including mountainous, forested, swampy, or densely vegetated

15 Mark Stein, *Osmanlı Kaleleri Avrupa'da Hudut Boyları,* trans. Gül Çağalı Güven (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2017), 14; Molnar, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Avrupa'daki Sınırlarının Tespiti (1699-1701)", 3/321.

16 Osman Gümüşçü, "Siyasi Coğrafya Açısından Sınırlar ve Tarihi Süreç İçinde Türkiye'de Sınır Kavramı", Bilig 52 (2010), 81-82; Karaca, 1699-1739 *Osmanlı Avusturya Antlaşmalarına Göre Sınır Tespit Çalışmaları,* 11; Mustafa Alkan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Hudûdnâmelerin Kaynak Değeri Üzerine Bir Araştırma", Akademik Bakış 11/23 (2018), 99; Ömer Gezer, *Kale ve Nefer: Habsburg Sınırında Osmanlı Askerî Gücünün Yeniden Örgütlenmesi* (1699-1715) (Ankara: Hacettepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2016), 6.

17 Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, "Hududnâme", Türkiye *Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1998), 18/304.

regions - frequently impeded the systematic installation of physical boundary markers. Furthermore, delays were often compounded by the coordination of relevant officials, the logistics of supply and transport, diplomatic impasses within border commissions, communication with central authorities, illness among participants, or even deliberate obstruction. Until the early twentieth century, political boundaries were predominantly represented cartographically as thin lines and, in physical terms, were seldom reinforced by permanent structures. Where physical markers did occur, they typically utilized sparse watchtowers, customs posts, wooden stakes, boundary stones, or artificially cleared strips of land of a specified width. In exceptional instances, neighbouring states constructed substantial walls along the frontier to secure their borders.[18] Within this framework, the political boundary functioned primarily as a symbolic and administrative line, drafted cartographically to delineate the jurisdictional limits of a state's sovereignty and to distinguish it from adjacent political entities. In accordance with treaty provisions, these established borderlines were subject to reaffirmation or revision, reflecting territorial shifts resulting from military conflict or diplomatic negotiation.[19]

Articles 3 and 5 of the Treaty of Adrianople, concluded in the aftermath of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829, addressed the administrative status and territorial arrangements of the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Supplementary documents prepared in this context elaborated on the practical measures required to implement the treaty's provisions. These articles, which granted Wallachia and Moldavia a degree of autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty, set out the principles governing border delimitation, the resolution of territorial disputes, and the regulation of customs tariffs and commercial privileges. The Treaty of Adrianople also contained separate provisions concerning Greece and Serbia, as well as border demarcation in the Caucasus, underscoring the agreement's broad geopolitical ramifications. In this regard, the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Danubian Principalities was closely linked to the control and delineation of the Danube frontier. As in the cases of Greece, Serbia, and the Caucasus, a bilateral border commission was established to demarcate the Danube boundary. This commission was headed by Field Marshal Count Ivan I. Dibich-Zabalkanskii on behalf of the Russian Empire and by Mehmed Arif Zeki Efendi, former Treasurer of the Ottoman Navy, on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. These commissioners were entrusted with supervising the delimitation process in accordance with the treaty's stipulations.[20]

The legal foundation of the 1830 *Hududnâme* protocols was established by Article 3 of the Treaty of Adrianople, which explicitly addressed border demarcation and included a distinct provision concerning the islands and uninhabited lands along the Danube River. The working document jointly prepared by Ottoman and Russian officials constitutes an official and diplomatically significant source that is relatively rare within the Ottoman archival corpus. Drafted in Ottoman Turkish, French, and Romanian, the protocol was exchanged and ratified by representatives of the respective states. Notably, these texts do not conform to the standard Turkish-language copies most encountered in the Ottoman archives. According to the *Hududnâme*, the implementation of Article 3 of the Treaty of Adrianople proceeded in

18 Gümüşçü, "Siyasi Coğrafya Açısından Sınırlar ve Tarihi Süreç İçinde Türkiye'de Sınır Kavramı", 81-82.

19 Karaca, 1699-1739 *Osmanlı Avusturya Antlaşmalarına Göre Sınır Tespit Çalışmaları,* 11.

20 BOA, Muahedeler (MHD), 40/3 (The Russian *muhaddid's* report).

two principal phases. These activities were carried out jointly by the plenipotentiaries of the Ottoman and Russian empires, accompanied by representatives of the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, all of whom ratified the resulting protocols. The principal documentary records of this process are preserved in the Turkish Presidential State Archives of the Ottoman Empire (BOA), within the *Muahedeler* (MHD) collection of international treaties, specifically in volumes 39 and 42. Turkish-language copies relevant to this study are contained in volumes 40 and 41 of the same collection. In addition, two official maps were produced and ratified to delineate the border and determine island ownership along the main course of the Danube. Although originally conceived as a single map, they are catalogued as two separate parts under volumes 182 and 183 of the Maps (*Haritalar*, HRT) collection in the Ottoman Archives. The first phase of the demarcation process commenced on 20 August 1830 (3 Rabi al-Awwal 1246 AH) and concluded on 20 October 1830 (20 Jumada al-Awwal 1246 AH). The records preserved in MHD 39 document this phase, which encompassed the border zone between the Ottoman Empire and the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia along the Danube, extending from the Bahnea River to the confluence with the Prut River, as well as the determination of ownership over islands in the main Danube channel. The officially approved border maps corresponding to this phase are contained in HRT 182 and 183.

The second phase, which addressed the demarcation of uninhabited lands, began on 24 October 1830 (7 Jumada al-Awwal 1246 AH) and concluded on 4 November 1830 (18 Jumada al-Awwal 1246 AH). The protocol recorded in MHD 42 pertains to this stage and constitutes a continuation of the work documented in MHD 39, together providing a comprehensive delineation of the Ottoman-Russian frontier in accordance with the Treaty of Adrianople. From the nineteenth century onward, scientific methods incorporating geographic coordinates - such as latitude and longitude, expressed in degrees, minutes, and seconds, together with precise locational data - began to be employed in the demarcation of state boundaries. One of the earliest instances in which the Ottoman Empire adopted such methods and incorporated them into official documentation is found in the 1830 border demarcation protocol examined in this study. Prepared in accordance with the agreement concluded with Russia, this multilingual protocol, drafted in Ottoman Turkish, French, and Romanian, explicitly employs trigonometric and geographic terminology, including latitude, longitude, degrees, and minutes. In the Ottoman context, the term *hatt-ı nısfü'n-nehâr* was used to correspond to the geographical concept of the meridian.[21] Although earlier surveying practices made use of technical instruments such as the astrolabe and protractor, border delineation had traditionally relied on toponyms, natural features (such as rivers, streams, hills, and mountains), and directional indicators to define locations. While the Treaty of Karlowitz, which concluded the War of the Holy League (1683-1699), is often regarded as a turning point[22] in the application of modern surveying techniques to border demarcation, the systematic use of scientific and technical language, expressed through multilingual documentation and detailed coordinate data, as exemplified by the 1830 protocol, remains without precedent in the surviving corpus of Ottoman border documents. In this respect, the primary text examined in this study stands out as a unique and advanced example of Ottoman border documentation, marking a sig-

21 Hüseyin Hilmi Işık, *Se'âdet-i Ebediyye* (İstanbul: Hakikat Kitabevi, 2014), 177.

22 Molnar, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Avrupa'daki Sınırlarının Tespiti (1699-1701)", 3/323; Abdulkadir Özcan, "Karlofça", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2021), 24/504.

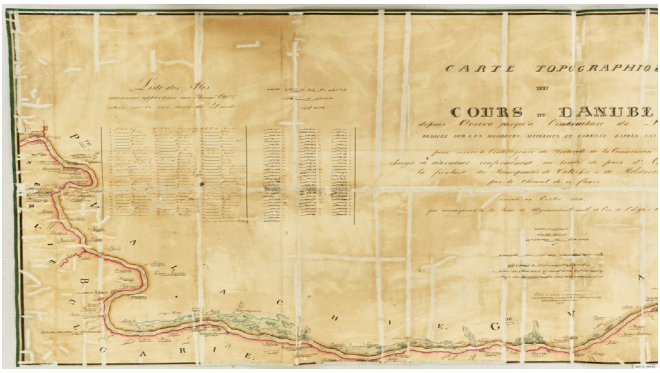
nificant evolution in the application of cartographic and geodetic practices within official interstate agreements.

2. Determining Ownership of the Danube River Islands: An Analysis of the *Hududnâme* from the Initial Phase of Boundary Demarcation

As noted above, pursuant to Article 3 of the Treaty of Adrianople, measures were undertaken to delineate the borders between the Ottoman Empire and Wallachia, Moldavia, and Russia along the Danube River. The first phase of this process focused on defining the boundaries between the Ottoman Empire and the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as resolving the question of ownership of the large and small islands situated within the Danube. The protocols relating to this phase are preserved in the Ottoman Archives in a register numbered MHD 39. Bound in leather and embellished with decorative elements, the register bears wax seals affixed at its conclusion. The cover page, with numbered folios, identifies the document as a record concerning the ownership of islands in the Danube River between the contracting parties. The protocol's heading and its attached certificate were classified as a supplementary document to the Treaty of Adrianople, detailing the demarcation of the Danube basin and the territorial boundaries with Wallachia and Moldavia. The document is dated according to both the Hijri and Gregorian calendars. The demarcation process commenced at the Bahnea River near Orşova (Romania). Except for Austrian outposts and quarantine stations in the Bahnea area, boundary delimitation began at the confluence of the Bahnea and Danube rivers, following the unanimous agreement of officials representing both sides. Although concerns were raised regarding the possibility of border disputes with Austria - particularly in the section overseen by the Wallachian officials Vezbek Mihalaki and Mihalaki Ghika - it was ultimately determined that no such conflicts would arise. Accordingly, the boundary's starting point was unanimously confirmed by all representatives involved. The initial task was to determine the midpoint of the Danube River as the boundary line and to resolve the ownership of the islands aligned along it. This operation required officials to navigate the river by boat and to employ mathematical calculations to measure the distance of each island from the riverbanks. Each island was assigned to the state whose shoreline lay closest to it, as measured from the river's midpoint. The islands were identified by name in Turkish, French, and Romanian. Those located along the left bank of the Danube and allocated to Wallachia and Moldavia were marked with cross-shaped stakes: islands under Wallachian jurisdiction were indicated by blue and yellow markings, while those under Moldavian control were marked in blue and red. Islands remaining under Ottoman sovereignty on the right bank were marked with red stakes.

The demarcation process began on 20 August 1830 and continued for approximately two months. During this period, the physical characteristics of the islands were examined in detail, with visible topographical features playing a crucial role in determining their allocation. For example, the elevation of Gol Island was used as a reference point in determining the positions of the islands of Lastar, Decrat, Karataş, and Armud. While most of these islands were assigned to the Ottoman side, Armud Island was allocated differently. Owing to the inability to conduct surveying work during the evening hours, overnight stays were arranged by mutual agreement. On the evening of 21 August, the commission lodged at Fethülislam

(Kladovo, Serbia).[23] Timekeeping followed the Ottoman sunset-based system (*sa'at-ı müsta'mele-i gurûbî*). On 22 August, the delegation reached the island of Büyük Verbiça, and by 23 August it had arrived at Korbaba Island. In the case of Büyük Verbiça, proximity was determined using a step (*hatve*) measurement: the island was calculated to be 400 steps from the Wallachian bank and 600 steps from the Ottoman side, leading to its assignment to Wallachia.[24] These distance measurements were carried out using a planchette, a surveying instrument comparable to the *tabla*, an apparatus observed by the prominent Ottoman surveyor Ebu Sehl Nu'man Efendi during his visit to Austria in the mid-eighteenth century. In Nu'man Efendi's treatises *Tebyînü A'mâli'l-Misâha* (also known as *Tedbîrât-ı Pesendîde*) and *Risâletü'l-Misâha*, this device is referred to as the *tabla*. Ottoman engineering records list the instrument under several names, including *çârkûşe tabla*, *mesâha tablası*, *planşet*, and *plançete*. By the nineteenth century, the term *tabla* had largely been replaced by *plançete*, a designation commonly encountered in translations of French works and rendered in Ottoman Turkish as *mesâha tahtası* (measuring board).[25] Ottoman Turkish dictionaries generally define the *plançete/planşet* simply as a measuring instrument. However, in *Mecmûa-i Ulûm-ı Riyâziyye*, a major scientific work by the nineteenth-century Ottoman scholar Hoca İshak Efendi, the *plançete* is described as a device suited to mapping planar surfaces and producing topographical sketches. It was valued for its ability to generate information on surface and volumetric measurements through geometric operations and linear distance calculations.[26]



Map 1: The Initial Phase of the Danube Question: Ownership of the River Islands[27]

On Sunday, 24 August, the *muhaddids* departed from Birze Palanka (Birza), located approximately half an hour south of Graboviç Island. After half an hour, they reached a site known as Ostrova-mika (Small Island), and another half an hour later arrived at Ostrova-mare (Great Island). The latter was measured using a planchette and determined to extend approximately two and a half hours from east to west. Based on these measurements, the

23 BOA, MHD, 39/1-11.

24 BOA, MHD, 39/15-16.

25 Atilla Polat - Ali Demirci, "Kâtip Çelebi'nin Hendese Bilen Kadı'sına Müşahhas Bir Örnek: Ebû Sehl Nu'mân Efendi", *Sahn-ı Semân'dan Dârülfünûn'a Osmanlı'da İlim ve Fikir Dünyası (Âlimler, Müesseseler ve Fikrî Eserler)*-XVIII. Yüzyıl, ed. Ahmet Hamdi Furat et al. (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2018), 2/176.

26 İrem Aslan Seyhan, "Mathematical Instruments Commonly Used among the Ottomans", *Advances in Historical Studies* 8 (2019), 48.

27 BOA, Haritalar (HRT), 182-1.

island was adjudicated to belong to Wallachia. After placing the designated survey markers, the commissioners lodged for the night in the village of Brahova (Prahova). The following day, despite inclement weather and a severe storm, survey operations continued, and the group spent the night on an island bearing the same name as the nearby village of Radoviça. In the subsequent days, additional islands - including Gırla, Kosava, and Salatarna - were surveyed, and the night of 26 August was spent in Vidin. Owing to persistent adverse weather conditions, the commission remained in Vidin for three days. Following this interruption, Kalafat Island was identified as belonging to Wallachia, after which the group returned to Vidin.[28]

The next phase involved the survey of islands near the Bulgarian village of Vidibol (Vidbol), including Kınnab (Kinnap), İskombiya (Skombia), and Petriç (Petrich, Bulgaria), all of which were formally demarcated. On 30 August, the commissioners established a camp near Lom Palanka (Bulgaria).[29] Subsequently, islands such as Aliman, Murtaza Bayrakdar, and İbiş Aga were surveyed. It was noted that some islands were subjected to repeated measurements, although the reasons for this remain unclear. For example, on 1 September, multiple measurements were conducted on Draksin Island, after which the delegation stayed overnight in Orjahovo.[30] During the first week of September, the Ottoman official Hayrullah Efendi and a Wallachian counterpart contracted malaria; nevertheless, the remaining commissioners continued their duties. During this period, a previously unrecorded island was identified near Kum (Bendgol) Island. This newly formed sandy landmass, formed by the river's recession, was assigned to Wallachia. On 6 September, the delegation arrived in Nikopol, where they were hosted by the local pasha, the commander of the fortress. On 7 September, the group reached Svishtov. Two islands were identified approximately fifteen minutes from the town; however, no formal action was taken, as the sandy formations were expected to be eroded by the river current.[31] From there, the commission crossed a strait to the opposite bank near a site known as Ottoman Village, referred to in Turkish as Ostrova-mare. Owing to the low water level of the river, the crossing was made on foot.[32] On 9 September, the Russian, Wallachian, and Moldavian delegates announced their intention to travel from Ruse to Bucharest. As illness within the delegation increased and medical treatment became necessary, the surveying process was suspended for a period of fifteen days.

On 24 September, the delegation reconvened in Ruse and resumed the border demarcation. Their initial focus was the marshlands surrounding Giurgiu (Romania), where the island bearing the same name was surveyed and assigned to Wallachia.[33] Two days later, a dispute arose concerning the ownership of the Tutrakan Island (Bulgaria); however, it was ultimately allocated to Wallachia with the approval of the Ottoman chief commissioner, Arif Zeki Efendi. The mission subsequently proceeded to Silistra (Bulgaria) and Galati (Romania) to replenish supplies before continuing to Selhâne Island. This island, identified as Kasap Island by the eighteenth-century traveller and chronicler Friedrich Wilhelm von Bauer, is also mentioned in the *Seyahatnâme* of Evliya Çelebi. Historical accounts describe Selhâne Island

28 BOA, MHD, 39/22-28.
29 BOA, MHD, 39/28-33.
30 BOA, MHD, 39/42.
31 BOA, MHD, 39/60.
32 BOA, MHD, 39/61-62.
33 BOA, MHD, 39/69.

as a significant centre for producing pastrami and other meat products, which were transported by ship to Istanbul. In addition, a substantial stone fortress had been constructed there by Abdi Pasha, an Ottoman vizier.[34] By mid-October, when the surveyors reached the confluence of the Prut and Danube Rivers, the demarcation of the Danube frontier was nearing completion. The final boundary protocol included an appended index specifying the jurisdiction of each island. The complete text, extending to approximately 288 pages, concluded with the signatures and seals of the *muhaddids*. The final assessment determined that, up to the Prut River, eighty-eight islands fell under Ottoman sovereignty, while seventy-nine were assigned to Wallachia; no islands along this stretch were attributed to Moldavia.

Table 1: Distribution of Island Ownership on the Danube River[35]

Islands Belonging to the Ottoman Empire		*Islands Belonging to Wallachia*	
Sıb	Alepne	Armud or Dudaş	Kanlı Boğaz
Lastar	Kargalık	Simiyan	Gol
Decrat	Kovan	Korbor(Korbaba)	Armud or Dudaş
Karataş	Razvan	Ostrova-mika	Korbor(Korbaba)
Valiga	Selhâne	Ostrova-mare	Ostrova-mika or The Small Island
Bordel	Hobba	İzvorile	Tutrakan
Ğraboviça	Kali Gorgi	Gırla	Vetren
Salatarna (two islands)	Perlita	Çatane	Hisarlı (Köylügümrük or Ostrova de Sos)
Kotava	İstrimba (Istrinbol)	Koşava	Poloska
Sıçan	Holtin	Unnamed an island Golya	Bala
Çifte (two islands)	Taler	Kalafat	Unnamed small islands
the Lesser and Greater İskombiyâ islands	Uzun	Three unnamed small islands	Massayd
	Habnova (Hanova)		

34 Engin, *Tuna Savunma Hattında Bir Osmanlı İstihkâmı: Askerive Mâli Yönleriyle İbrail Kalesi'nin Organizasyonu* (1711-1829), 37, 120.

35 BOA, MHD, 39, s. 225-274.

Petirçe (Petriç/three small islands)	Sekban	Kınnab	Unnamed small islands
Murtaza Bayrakdâr	Varsatura	Akkale	Gremen
İbiş Aga	Oraş	Lom	Popa
Unnamed small islands	Sayal (Zeval)	Linova	Kadalopol
Boyacı	Balaban	Aliman	Çağanka
Uzun İbrâhim	Luki	Kopaniça	Raptora
Kodoslı	Topal	Draksin	Lata
Salatorsa	Kestareşti	Kum or Bendgol	İstanko
Papadya	Veriga Kestareşti	Unnamed an island	Acoyi? (small Movori and Dranopçe)
Somoriçe	The Mouth of the Boroy	Beşli	Brezoyasa (Virzoyasa) or Istrimbe
Tavşan (Duşan?)	The Small Kostantin	Çelay or Iskara	Koroneska
Bağçe	Girşa	Ezlaz	Dimolasa
Eğrikum	Gropa Çoban	Mahalle- Komu	Iskorta
Makariça (Makrisa)	The Right Bank, Raçe	Kurd (Kuret/Kurt?)	Fablovi?/Filipoy?
Beline	İstoyanet	Pavlo	The Left Bank, Raçe
Çingâne	Unnamed small islands	Borçina	Veriga İstoyâneşt
Ziştovi (Svishtov)	Doyanilo	Lota	First Goliç
Vardım	Roçe	Deli Mustafa	Second Goliç
Kopanak	Rahte	Ostrova-mare	Third Goliç
Pergos (Birgoz)	Mokarye	Batum	Tatkof
Gola	Becenek	Yenikama	Iğniçe
Maradin	Röş	Giurgiu	Maçin
Hisarlık	Lupatna	Another Giurgiu	Türk?
Bekirli	Kıztaş	Mokanoğlu	Siret
The First Lahana Sitation	Azaklı	Dalyan Durağı	
The Second Lahana Sitation	The island is situated opposite the mouth of the Pruth River	Eflamonda	
Koşu (Kosay?)		Güzelceler	
Aşâğı Gümrük			
Pokovî			
Paracova			

3. The Second Phase of Demarcation: Defining the Ottoman-Russian Border and Uninhabited Zones

The most critical phase in delineating the Danube frontier was determining the Ottoman-Russian boundary and regulating uninhabited lands that could generate future disputes. In accordance with Article 3 of the Treaty of Adrianople, the Ottoman-Russian border was defined as extending from the point at which the Prut River enters the territory of Moldovia to its confluence with the Danube. From there, the boundary generally followed the course of the Danube toward the St. George (*Hızırilyas*) branch. Under these provisions, all major and minor islands located within the various branches of the Danube were to remain under Russian sovereignty, while settlements on the right bank of the river were to remain under Ottoman control, as had previously been the case. The right-bank strip, beginning at the point where the St. George branch diverges from the Sulina (*Sünne*) branch, was to remain uninhabited and undeveloped for a distance equivalent to two hours of travel time along the river. No new buildings or fortifications - except those already constructed by Russia - were permitted on the islands under Russian control. Commercial navigation was also regulated: merchants of both empires were allowed to engage in riverine trade; Ottoman-flagged vessels retained the right of free navigation through the Kilia and Sulina straits; and the St. George branch was opened to both military and commercial vessels of the treaty's signatories. At the same time, Russian warships ascending the Danube were prohibited from proceeding beyond the river's junction with the Prut.[36] The supplementary protocol drafted to implement these provisions was recorded in the Ottoman Archives under inventory number MHD 42. Like the earlier documentation, it was leather-bound, foliated, and bore the official seals of the respective plenipotentiaries. Its title explicitly identified the document as a certificate concerning the Ottoman-Russian border on the Danube, prepared in execution of the Treaty of Adrianople. Although the Danube was recognized in principle as the boundary between the two empires,[37] the existence of contested zones and the river's division into multiple branches between the Prut River and the Black Sea necessitated an especially careful and precise demarcation process.

3.1. Historical Geography of the Uninhabited Border Zone

After the Prut River diverges, the Danube continues along its principal course. Having passed the towns of Reni (Tımarabad, Ukranie) and Isaccea, it flows along the Babel lakes on the right bank. As the river approaches the city of New Tulcea, it divides in the region known as the İzmail Çatalı into two major branches: the Kilia and the St. George branches. The Kilia branch proceeds through a series of settlements, including Izmail, Tuçkof (Toutchkov), and Kislicki (Kislitza), near the village of Kislicsi (Kislitza). It then continues past the islands of Kofa (Spepovol), Soloneç (Solonetz/Solontchak), Yivance (İvanetchti/Divanechty), Tatar (Tatarskoe), Taler (Talerski/Dalarskoe), Maçuk (Matchuk), and Kaptan (Koshta-drak). The river subsequently advances toward the town of Yeni Kili (New Kilia) and its opposite settlement, Eski Kili (Old Kilia). In this section, the Danube fragments into multiple channels, forming a dense network of small islands, among them Silmanof (Silmanov), Otnoçine (Otnogina), Müslinof (Muslinov), Çornova (Tchornoi), and Yermanova.[38] These channels reconverge near

36 BOA, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi Evrakı (TSMA. e), 709-66, (Copy of the Treaty of Adrianople, Article 3).

37 BOA, MHD, 42/3-6.

38 These islands, located between the town of Kilia and the village of Vilkova, appear under varying names on different maps.

the village of Vilkova (Vilkoff). The principal channel of the Kilia branch, together with several associated islets - such as Belgorod, Dotchakoff, Dancoudinovo, Dotnojino, Peshanoi, Kuranskoi, and Stamboul - and the narrow straits they form, ultimately empties into the Black Sea through the Kilia Strait, from which the branch takes its name.[39]



Map 2: Danube Delta (19th Century) [40]

The St. George branch of the Danube continues in the direction of New Tulcea and Old Tulcea and, beyond New Tulça, forms what is known as the St. George Fork near Taşlı Kışla on the right bank. At this point, the river divides into two branches, one of which constitutes the Sulina channel of the Danube. The St. George branch flows past several settlements associated with the city of Tulcea, including the villages of Breslav (or Prıslav), Bechtepe-Moldovan, Bechtepe-Turc, and Beybucağı (Beijboudjac), before discharging into the Black Sea. Consequently, the Danube reaches the Black Sea through three principal distributaries: the Kilia, St. George, and Sulina branches. The watercourses situated between the Kilia and St. George branches - such as Şond (Chondon) or Pondiş (Pontich), Aten (Atene), and Lubatna (Lopatna) - flow from the Kilia branch into the Sulina channel. This interfluvial zone contains numerous large islands, including Çatal (Tchatal), Lati (Leti), and Tatar, as well as Kislitzki, Kofa, Soloneç, Yivance, Taler, Maçuk, Kaptan, Silmanof, Otnoçine, Müslinof, Çornova, and Yermanova. Between the Sulina and St. George channels lie additional significant islands, including Karasu, Moyiş (Moich), and St. Georges, which together constitute a substantial portion of the region's landmass.[41] The broader

Silmanof (Silmanov) Island is also recorded as Ibrahim or Protoka; Otnoçine (Otnogina) Island as Purutoka or Silmanof, sometimes Solomoff; Müslinof (Muslinov/Mazuroff) Island as Chernanki; Chornova (Tchornoi/Tchernioeff) Island as Babinov; and Yermanova Island as Sirteni, Siretni, or Stepeovoi. See BOA, HRT, 38, 42, 46, 88 and 179.

39 After passing Vilkova, the river enters the Black Sea through islands such as Belgorod, Dotchakoff, Dancoudinovo, Dotnojino, Peshanoi, Kuranskoi, and Stamboul, as well as the straits they form. See BOA, HRT, 42 (project map submitted by C. A. Hartley on behalf of the Danube European Commission, 1856-1857, concerning studies and surveys of islands and straits in the Danube delta).

40 BOA, HRT, 42/4.

41 For the historical geography of the region, particularly in the 19th century, see BOA, HRT, 38, 42, 46, 179, 182 and 183.

area, where the Danube divides into its three major distributaries before entering the Black Sea, is thus characterised by a complex hydrological and geographical network composed of interconnected settlements, secondary waterways, and islands of varying size.

From the early nineteenth century onward, the territories between the Danube's interconnected branches and waterways emerged as a recurring source of contention between the Ottoman and Russian empires. Following the Treaty of Bucharest, these areas were generally referred to as islands in official treaty texts, with their precise ownership deferred to subsequent negotiation and demarcation. While some of these islands contained permanent settlements, agricultural lands, and military installations, others consisted of lakes, forests, marshlands, and swamps, or functioned as seasonal habitats for fishing communities.[42] This historically and geographically intricate region - frequently depicted in nineteenth-century cartographic records, posed persistent challenges in distinguishing between inhabited and uninhabited lands. Such ambiguities were consistently reflected in the official documentation of Ottoman-Russian boundary-making. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the issue increasingly assumed an international dimension. By contrast, the demarcation of islands located directly along the main channel of the Danube was generally resolved with relative ease. This divergence stemmed primarily from the distinct geostrategic and geopolitical importance of the lands situated between the river's lower distributaries.

The historical geography of this zone, encompassing portions of Central Europe and the Black Sea basin, endowed it with considerable economic, demographic, logistical, and military significance. For Russia, these territories constituted a strategic objective; for the Ottoman Empire, they represented a geopolitical necessity. Control over the three Danube branches discharging into the Black Sea - and over the territory enclosed between them - conferred decisive advantages in the regulation of borders, waterways, and commercial routes.[43] Historically, the

42 A recent Turkish treatise, believed to have been written around the time of the establishment of the Danube European Commission in 1856, contains valuable information on the topography of the area. See Filiz Yıldırım, *1856 Tarihli Bir Risâle Işığında Tuna Nehri'nin Tarihi Coğrafyası ve Jeopolitiği* (İstanbul: Hiper Yayınları, 2019). Around the same period, F. C. Becke, royal military advisor to the Austrian delegation, conducted four separate studies on the mouths of the Danube-St. George, the Sulina Strait, the Tulcea line, and other straits opening into the Black Sea - and proposed engineering solutions for improving navigation. These were published in Vienna in 1856 under the title *Les embouchures du Danube: études sur les obstacles physiques que la navigation rencontre.* A copy is preserved in the Ottoman Archives (BOA, Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi (HR.SYS), 1604-43). For the project map submitted by Hartley regarding the cleaning of the Danube delta islands and straits, see BOA, HRT, 42; for additional maps, engineering projects, and reports prepared for the Danube European Commission, see BOA, HRT, 46. Following the 1856 Treaty of Paris, navigation on the Danube was reorganized under new legal frameworks, and two commissions were created with the participation of the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Britain, Austria, and France. These bodies addressed issues ranging from commercial activity and navigational improvements to the removal of physical obstacles in the Danube straits - matters that, from that point onward, often became sources of political dispute. On the historical background of these commissions and the new principles adopted at the 1883 London Conference, see İlhan Ekinci, *Tuna Nehri'nde Diplomasi Oyunları* (İstanbul: Altınpost, 2014). According to Ender Arat, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Hungary (1998-2002), "the 1856 Treaty of Paris created two bodies: the *Danube European Commission* for the Lower Danube (Sulina-Isaccea-Braila) and the *Danube International Commission* for the remainder. The European Commission, headquartered in Galati, included not only riparian states - the Ottoman Empire, Austria, Bavaria, and Württemberg - but also France, Britain, Prussia (later Germany), and Sardinia (Italy), which had participated in the Crimean War. This commission played a key role in improving technical, legal, and sanitary conditions for Lower Danube navigation, most notably by clearing the river mouth of sand and stabilizing the Sulina Canal to a depth of 24 feet (7.31 m), thus opening it to sea-going vessels. Trade and passenger transport subsequently increased, solidifying the Danube as a major European transport route. A new treaty regulating Danube navigation was adopted at the 1948 Belgrade Conference." For the full text of Arat's article, see Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), "Tuna Nehri'nde Seyrüsefer ve Türkiye" (Access: 10 May 2025).

43 Serkan Keçeci, "The Black Sea from Historical Perspective", *International Black Sea Maritime Security Symposium,* ed. Murat Akbaş (İstanbul: Maritime Security Centre of Excellence, 2019), 15-25; Serkan Keçeci, "Rusya ve Osmanlı İmparatorlukları Arasındaki Coğrafi ve Tarihsel Rekabet Üzerine: Kafkasya, Karadeniz ve Savaş", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları* 21/81 (2024), 1-26.

frontier zones of Ottoman vassal states such as Wallachia and Moldavia, along with segments of Poland and Russia's western borderlands, had been integrated into the Ottoman administrative and strategic sphere. Numerous fortified settlements along the Danube, Prut, Dniester, and Dnieper rivers were under Ottoman control. Consequently, from the eighteenth century onward, successive Russo-Ottoman conflicts repeatedly transformed these riverine corridors - above all the Danube - into primary theatres and staging grounds for Russian military operations.

3.2. Demarcating the Uninhabited Zone: An Analysis Based on the *Hududnâme*

In accordance with the directives issued to the Ottoman *muhaddid* Arif Zeki Efendi, the principal objective of the second phase of his official mandate was the demarcation of the islands along the Danube River, particularly within the St. George branch and the area between the St. George and Sulina channels. The identification of uninhabited lands was assigned to Hayrullah Efendi, an engineer attached to the delegation, together with other qualified personnel. The demarcation process was to be documented with particular care: territorial boundaries and geographic coordinates were to be recorded on detailed maps, which were then to be exchanged with Russian representatives, officially sealed, and submitted to the Bâb-ı Âli for archival registration.[44] The activities stipulated in the protocol were recorded with remarkable precision, arranged chronologically by day, hour, and location, thereby ensuring both the technical accuracy and procedural transparency of the border delineation process.

Table 2: Activity Dates of Border Determination Procedures

Date	Time	Gurûbi Time	Location
24 October 1830	10	6	Confluence of the Prut and Danube Rivers
25 October 1830	2	8	Isaccea Pier
26 October 1830	8	2	Departure from Isaccea
27 October 1830	4	10	Çatal Island
28 October 1830	6	12	Old Tulcea village
29 October 1830	6	12	Babadag
30 October 1830	-	-	Dunavis (Dounavetz)
1 November 1830	12	-	St. George Strait
2 November 1830	3	9	Breslav village
3 November 1830	9	3	Morigöl village
4 November 1830	-	-	Galati Pier

44 BOA, Hatt-ı Humayun (HAT), 1100/44520, (Instruction sent to Ottoman *muhaddid* Mehmed Arif Zeki Efendi for the demarcation of borders).

3.3. Boundary Markers of Uninhabited Areas

As documented in the accompanying maps and official deeds, a total of eighteen boundary markers were erected to delineate the uninhabited zones, with their precise locations and coordinates clearly specified. These markers were designated as customary signs (*alâmet-i mu'tâde*), and their physical characteristics were carefully recorded for both sides of the demarcation. Boundary markers placed beyond Ottoman territory were cross-shaped. Those erected on islands under Wallachian sovereignty were painted blue and yellow, while markers on Moldavian islands were coloured blue and red. Markers designating Ottoman territory, by contrast, consisted of poles painted entirely red and bearing the crescent-and-star emblem.[45] The design, placement, and visibility of the markers were governed by explicit criteria. At any point along the boundary line, at least three markers were required to be visible to the naked eye. Each marker consisted of a pole measuring seven fingers in diameter and two and a half cubits in length. The construction of any habitation near the demarcation line was strictly prohibited, and this restriction was explicitly inscribed on the markers themselves.[46]

Markers of identical dimensions and specifications were also employed in the delineation of the border between Wallachia and Moldavia along the Danube. The eighty-eight islands assigned to Wallachian jurisdiction and depicted on the official maps were each identified by these distinctive markers. To protect them from seasonal environmental conditions - particularly ice flows carried downstream by the Danube during winter - these markers were reinforced and painted in blue and yellow. Markers erected on islands under Ottoman control followed the same technical specifications and consisted of red-painted poles bearing the imperial crescent and star.[47] For territories under Russian control, cross-shaped boundary markers were installed along the left bank of the Danube, extending from the St. George Strait to the Black Sea. The islands of Isaccea, Çatal, Moyiş, and Zatok, along with several smaller islands, were designated according to the same conventions. In addition, six small islands of varying size, listed in the official deed from the beginning to the conclusion of the demarcation process, were likewise marked in accordance with these established practices.

The first boundary marker of the uninhabited line was erected opposite the point at which the St. George branch diverges from the Sulina branch of the Danube. The second marker was placed in the Taşlı Kışla Meadow, the third in the Manavoğlu Meadow, the fourth on Miho Hill, and the fifth on Kireçli Hill. The sixth marker positioned 5,000 *sazhen*[48] from the riverbank, marked the furthest inland extent of the uninhabited zone from the Danube shore and established the shared interval (*fasl-ı müşterek*) between the first and second markers. From this reference point, the seventh marker was installed at a distance of 820 *sazhen*, the eighth at 1,810 *sazhen*, and the ninth at 3,210 *sazhen*. The ninth marker was in a low-lying area and delineated the common section and interval between the second and third segments of the demarcation. The tenth marker was erected 1,000 *sazhen* from this second shared interval, followed by the eleventh at 2,000 *sazhen*, the twelfth at 2,890 *sazhen*, the thirteenth at 4,000

45 BOA, MHD, 39/10.

46 BOA, MHD, 42/94-96.

47 BOA, MHD, 40/5; MHD, 39/10.

48 Sazhen: Equivalent to seven English fathoms (2.1336 m). Historically, it denoted the span from fingertip to fingertip. Derived from the Russian verb syagat (to reach, to attain), itself from Old Russian sagnatı (to extend the hand). See Emine Atmaca, "Kazak Türkçesinde Ölçü ve Ölçü Adları", *Türk Dünyası Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 27 (2009), 29.

sazhen, and the fourteenth at 4,900 *sazhen*, all measured from the outskirts of Sarıgöl village. The fifteenth marker was placed 6,150 *sazhen* from the second reference point, the sixteenth at 6,660 *sazhen*, the seventeenth at 7,800 *sazhen*, and the eighteenth at 9,110 *sazhen*. The terrain extending from this final marker to the Black Sea coast was described in the boundary protocol as marshy, swampy, and largely impassable year-around. Consequently, nine additional boundary markers were installed along this section; however, these supplementary markers were not depicted on the officially approved maps.[49]

Table 3: The Measurement and Placement of Border Markers

Markers	Distance from the river or intersection point (sazhen=2,13 cm)	Location
	The point lies 195 sazhen (equivalent to 185 zirâ) from the shore, at a bearing of 74° 15'. This bearing is measured perpendicularly to the shoreline, calculated using the meridian toward the land. The 1,400-sazhen stretch in this area consists of muddy ground and a riverbed difficult to traverse in all seasons.	Opposite Sulina Fork - first marker post on the right bank of the St. George branch, located within the forested area.
	It is 1,400 sazhen away from the river.	Taşlı Kışla meadow.
	1,585 sazhen - located 1,500 sazhen from the preceding marker. The intervening terrain consists of hills covered with dense forest, shrubs, and thorns; the path has been cleared by axe.	Manavoğlu meadow.
	It is 2,510 sazhen away from the river.	Miho hill.
	It is 4,470 sazhen away from the river.	Kireçli hill.
	5,000 sazhen from the St. George branch, marking the end of the uninhabited zone. The intersection point is determined with reference to this marker.	Intersection point, at a bearing of 151° from south to east.

49 BOA, MHD, 40/3 (Report of the Russian *muhaddid*).

	820 sazhen from the intersection point	Located near the road leading from Breslav village to the mill.
	1,818 sazhen from the preceding point	Cevizli, near the Derin Lipka hollow.
	3,210 sazhen	Orta Yörük, also known as Güzel Ayşe.
	1,000 sazhen from the preceding point	Deli Manka stream (Near Sarıgöl village).
	2,000 sazhen	Yomalak stream
	2,890 sazhen	Yomalak stream (Southwest of Morigöl village).
	4,010 sazhen	In the Karaağaç plain, on the side facing Sarıgöl.
	4,900 sazhen	In the direction of the Tavşan stream.
	6,150 sazhen	In the direction of Ahmed Fakih hill.
	6,160 sazhen	In the direction of the Ahmed Fakih cemetery.
	7,800 sazhen	Passing along the western shore of the Ahmed Fakih lake and cutting across its eastern side.
	9,110 sazhen	Within the plain separating from the bay of Razim lake.
19.-27.	The total distance from point 6 to point 18 is 9,110 sazhen. The direct bearing from Tulcea to Babadag is 52° 15'.	Area consisting of reed beds and mudflats.

The islands were catalogued in a systematic register, and three signed and sealed maps were prepared, each accompanied by a corresponding certificate. One complete set - consisting of a map and certificate - was delivered respectively to the representatives of Russia, Wallachia, and Moldavia. In addition, summaries of the certificates, records documenting their exchange, and a register listing the islands designated to remain under Ottoman sovereignty, together with the relevant maps, certificates, and associated official documents, were submitted to the Ottoman commissioner, Arif Zeki Efendi.[50]

3.4. Physical Characteristics and Placement Distances of Boundary Markers

The objective of the second phase of the Danube survey was to identify the islands along the St. George branch of the Danube, beginning at Reni, with particular emphasis on delineating the boundaries of the uninhabited zone. This work was carried out jointly by the Chief Engineer of Bessarabia, representing the Russian Empire, and Hayrullah Efendi, Fourth

50 BOA, MHD, 40/2 (20 August 1830), report of the Ottoman *muhaddid* Arif Zeki Efendi.

Deputy of the *Mühendishâne-i Hümâyun*, who accompanied Mehmed Arif Zeki Efendi as part of the Ottoman delegation. The survey employed a planchette and a geometric chain to ensure precise measurement and calculation. To prevent discrepancies, the surveying terminology and unit equivalencies used by both parties were formally recorded in the official protocols. According to this agreement, the designated uninhabited strip - corresponding to a two-hour travel distance - was calculated as three versts[51] from the point where the Sulina branch diverges from the St. George branch, extending northward from the village of Breslav to a coordinate measured at 55°45' along the meridian (*hatt-ı nısfü'n-nehâr*). The first boundary marker was placed at 74°15' to the southwest, at a distance of 195 *sazhen* from the shoreline formed by the St. George and Sulina branches, equivalent to 585 Ottoman *zirâ*.[52]

Upon reaching a distance of 5,000 *sazhen* in the southwest direction at 55°45', the boundary line formed a corner (*zâviye*) and continued toward the Black Sea. The uninhabited border strip thus defined extended approximately 10 kilometres inland from the riverbank.[53] Alternatively, this distance was understood as a two-hour journey,[54] equivalent to 10 versts or 15,000 paces. Both parties generally agreed that one hour of travel equalled five versts.[55] According to the scale provided on the accompanying map, the estimated walking distance along the demarcated line was 71 versts, while the straight-line distance measured parallel to the Black Sea amounted to 60 versts. All boundary measurements, including angular values at meridian-defined corners, were recorded with precision using a protractor (*minkale*).

3.5. The Legal and Geopolitical Status of the Uninhabited Line: Ottoman-Russian Border Delimitation along the Danube River and Its Islands, 1830-1857

Apart from the initial phase concerning the ownership of the Danube islands, the second phase of the boundary question was defined by the recognition of an international frontier extending from the point at which the Prut River entered Bogdan territory to its confluence with the Danube at Reni. In this context, the agreements concluded in 1812, 1817, and 1826, followed by the protocols of 1830, temporarily established what was regarded as the definitive boundary between the Ottoman and the Russian Empires. The formulation that "the St. George or Tulcea branch constitutes the line of demarcation between the Sublime Ottoman State and the Russian Empire"[56] affirmed Russian sovereignty over the territories

51 Verst = 1.06 km. *Şakırım*: a Kazakh Turkish unit of length, c. 1,000 m. In Russian usage, verst was 1.067 km. See Atmaca, "Kazak Türkçesinde Ölçü ve Ölçü Adları", 30.

52 BOA, MHD, 42/60-62. Calculating with the architectural *zirâ* (75.8 cm), 585 × 75.8 cm = 443.430 cm. One hundred ninety-five *sazhen* are taken as equivalent to 585 Ottoman *zirâ*, though exact equivalence is uncertain - likely reflecting minor variations in the *mimari arşın* across time and region. See M. Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Ankara: MEB Basımevi, 1993), "zirâ", 2/314.

53 Exactly 5,000 × 2.13 m = 10,650 m.

54 "One hour" here denotes the distance covered in an hour on foot. In Ottoman practice, "an hour's distance" was variably understood. Colin Heywood notes that it often referred to horseback travel time rather than a fixed spatial measure. Reinhold Schiffer, writing on 19th-century English travellers in the Ottoman Empire, also emphasises time-based rather than distance-based reckoning. According to Rhoads Murphey, the *fersâh-ı kadîm* - equivalent to an "hour" - equalled 7,500 mason's arşın (= 5,685 m). See Cemal Çetin, "Osmanlılarda Mesafe Ölçümü ve Tarihî Süreci", *Prof. Dr. Nejat Göyünç Armağanı*, ed. Hasan Bahar et al. (Konya: Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2013), 452-453. In the *Hududnâme*, 10 versts = 2 hours. By this measure, 10 versts = 10,650 m, and 2 hours = 5,685 m × 2 = 11,370 m - close, though with minor discrepancies.

55 BOA, MHD, 42/29-30: "Although compelled to do so, we could only embark after using the standard chain of geometry. One hour, equal to five versts, is 500 *sazhen* or 1,500 steps; thus, two hours equals ten *versts*, i.e., 5,000 *sazhen* or 15,000 steps."

56 BOA, MHD, 42/13-14.

lying between the Kilia-Sulina and Sulina-St. George branches of the Danube, while simultaneously confining Ottoman sovereignty to the southern bank of the St. George branch. This arrangement was consistent with Article 4 of the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest and Article 2 of the Akkerman Convention, both of which formalised the transfer to Russia of the previously contested Çatal and Lati islands located along the Izmail and Kilia sections of the river. These agreements effectively reassigned several uninhabited islands and territories[57] that had formerly fallen under Ottoman jurisdiction to Russian control, thereby placing the Ottoman Empire at a strategic disadvantage. It was further stipulated that the right bank of the Danube, beginning at the point where the St. George branch diverges from the Sulina branch, would remain uninhabited for a distance equivalent to two hours' travel upstream, and that this boundary was to be physically demarcated by engineers.[58] With the international frontier thus formally recognised from the confluence of the Prut and Danube rivers, the St. George branch itself functioned as a natural boundary. Although the so-called uninhabited zone remained nominally under Ottoman sovereignty, the delimitation ultimately worked to the Empire's detriment. The only island on the main course of the Danube retained by Russia was Isaccea, which was likewise designated to remain uninhabited. By contrast, on the opposite side of the St. George branch, the islands of Moyiş, St. George, and all others within this basin were placed under Russian authority.



= 5.000 *sazhens* or 15.000 *hatves* (steps)

Map 3: Map of the Treaty-Defined Uninhabited Border Zone (1830)[59]

The second phase of border demarcation began in the vicinity of the town of Reni and extended through Isaccea, Tulcea, and its subordinate locality of Breslav, as well as the Moldavian settlements of Beştepe, Begbucağı (Beijbuadjac), and the areas surrounding Bencok Lake (Beinctchoqh), Kovalı Lake, and the St. George Strait, where the Danube empties into the Black Sea. A principal objective of this phase was to determine the sover-

57 BOA, MHD, 33 (Turkish copy of the Akkerman Agreement, 7 October 1826).

58 BOA, HAT, 1100/44520.

59 BOA, HRT, 182/3.

eignty of the islands along the Danube, with particular emphasis on defining the extent of uninhabited lands. In the initial stage of this process, Isaccea Island,[60] together with the Zatok and Çatal islands located along the Tulcea (or St. George) branch, was designated uninhabited and transferred to Russian control. The historical frontier was defined as beginning at the confluence of the Prut and Danube Rivers along the Moldavian boundary and continuing downstream along the Danube to the St. George Strait. Under the terms of the agreement, all islands formed between the St. George branch and the main Danube channel were assigned to Russia,[61] while the southern bank of the river - that is, the right bank - remained within Ottoman territory.

This demarcation constituted the basis of what came to be known as the uninhabited zone, beginning at the point where the Danube divides into the St. George branch. As specified in the official border protocols and accompanying cartographic materials, a two-hour (approximately 10 km) uninhabited buffer zone was established, within which the construction of fortifications, guard posts, quarantine stations, or permanent settlements was strictly prohibited.[62] The zone extended from the area between Old Tulcea and the village of Breslav, running from the confluence of the Sulina and St. George branches to the point where the St. George branch enters the Black Sea.[63] In accordance with the agreement, the two-hour buffer was measured from the divergence of the Sulina and St. George branches, extending three versts (approximately 3.18 km) northwest to a point lying at 55°45' north along the meridian from the village of Breslav. The first boundary marker was placed 74°15' southwest of this point, at a distance of 195 *sazhen* (approximately 415 m), corresponding to 585 Ottoman *zirâ'*, from the riverbank formed by the St. George and Sulina branches.[64] From there, the demarcation line continued south-westward for 5,000 *sazhen*,[65] forming a corner (*zâviye*) as it turned toward the Black Sea.[66] According to the scale indicated on the map, the walking distance across the uninhabited zone averaged approximately 75 km, while the straight-line distance measured parallel to the Black Sea coast was about 63 kilometres. The designated buffer zone encompassed marshlands, scrublands, reed beds, and limited forested areas, and its establishment required the evacuation of several settlements. These included Breslav, Morigöl (Moreghiol), Turc-Beştepesi, Moldavian-Beştepe, Ahmed Fakih (Amelh-fake), Karahabil, Sarınasuh (Sarnasous), Begbucağı, and Dunavis (Dounavetz).

Ultimately, control over the straits linking the Danube Delta to the Black Sea conferred a substantial strategic advantage upon Russia. At the same time, the Treaty of Adrianople imposed specific constraints on this advantage. No construction or fortification - apart from quarantine stations - was permitted on the islands remaining under Russian control. The treaty also guaranteed reciprocal commercial access, allowing merchants from both empires to trade along the Danube. Vessels flying the Muslim flag were authorised to navigate the Kilia and Sulina Straits, while the St. George Strait was designated for joint use by the military and

60 BOA, MHD, 42/8.
61 BOA, MHD, 42/4-5
62 BOA, MHD, 42/6.
63 BOA, MHD, 42/24.
64 BOA, MHD, 42/60-62.
65 Exactly 5,000 × 2.13 m = 10,650 m.
66 BOA, MHD, 42/30.

commercial vessels of both the Ottoman and Russian states. Crucially, Russian warships were prohibited from sailing upstream beyond the confluence of the Danube and Prut Rivers.[67] These provisions nevertheless facilitated the expansion of Russian commerce and contributed to the economic growth of its Black Sea ports.[68] Beyond Article 3, Articles 5 and 7 of the Treaty further consolidated Russia's commercial privileges. Russian subjects, benefiting from both earlier agreements and newly confirmed rights, were granted extensive freedom to trade within Ottoman domains by land and sea. Russian merchant vessels were placed under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Russian embassy and consulates and were protected from interference by Ottoman authorities. They were exempt from inspection in Ottoman ports and territorial waters, and, once the prescribed customs duties on goods and provisions had been paid, such commodities could be freely sold, transferred, or re-exported from warehouses to vessels of any nationality. Grain-carrying vessels from Russia likewise benefited from these exemptions, and their navigation in the Black Sea remained unrestricted. Passage through the straits connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean was fully open to merchant ships flying the Russian flag, regardless of direction of travel or whether they sailed laden or in ballast. No limitations were imposed on the tonnage of these vessels. Finally, under Article 7, the Treaty of Adrianople reaffirmed the nationality, privileges, and exemptions of the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia.[69]

This article, which bears direct relevance to the present study, was further reinforced in August 1834 by a new regulation issued in St. Petersburg. Article 5 of the Treaty also established explicit guarantees concerning the internal governance of the Danubian Principalities. Drawing on the provisions of the Treaty of Akkerman, these regulations focused primarily on the election and tenure of the voivodes. From the Ottoman perspective, it was essential that these arrangements be codified in formal documentation to ensure administrative continuity and to safeguard legitimate interests. A key reform stipulated that voivodes were to hold office for life, thereby abolishing the previous limitation of seven-year terms. At the same time, provisions were introduced allowing for their removal in cases of misconduct or voluntary resignation, subject to the decision of the respective local councils. The Ottoman central government explicitly underscored that it would not tolerate arbitrary rule or departures from legal norms that might threaten public order. The border adjustments addressed within this framework unequivocally reaffirmed Ottoman sovereignty over both banks of the Danube. The left bank, encompassing Wallachia and Moldavia, remained under Ottoman suzerainty, while the right bank likewise retained administrative control by the Empire. The treaty further stipulated that populations residing on either side of the river were not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Islands and islets located near the frontiers of Wallachia and Moldavia were defined as complementary territorial units and placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the two principalities. Moreover, the mid-course of the Danube, from its entry into Ottoman territory to its confluence with the Prut River, was formally recognised as the boundary between Wallachia and Moldavia. To prevent border violations, the left bank of the Danube was designated as an area in which Muslim settlement was prohibited; accordingly, no permanent Muslim communities were permitted in Wallachia, Moldavia, or Craiova

67 BOA, TSMA. e, 709/66 (Copy of Article 3 of the Treaty of Adrianople).

68 Şerafettin Turan, "1829 Edirne Antlaşması", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 9/1-2 (1951), 147.

69 BOA, TSMA.e, 709/66 (Copies of Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty of Adrianople).

(Romania). Nevertheless, Muslims were authorised to enter and exit these territories with official permits for commercial purposes, particularly to facilitate the transport of grain and other essential supplies to Istanbul. In cases where Ottoman subjects held property on the left bank of the Danube, such holdings were to be sold to the local Christian population within a period of eighteen months.

Accordingly, Ottoman towns and territories on the left bank of the Danube were placed under Wallachian administration, subject to a strict prohibition on the restoration or fortification of any pre-existing structures within these settlements. From the perspective of the Ottoman central government, the extensive autonomous privileges granted to the administrations of Wallachia and Moldavia entitled them to establish quarantine stations (*cordons sanitaires*) both within the Danube Delta, then under Russian control, and along the Danube within their own territories. These installations were intended to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The principalities were further charged with implementing public health measures for both Muslim and non-Muslim populations crossing their borders. To ensure public order and the effective enforcement of quarantine and border regulations, the governments of Wallachia and Moldavia were authorised to appoint the necessary personnel and to determine their deployment as required.

In recognition of the logistical difficulties caused by disruptions in the provisioning of Istanbul and the supply needs of the imperial arsenal, the Ottoman government relinquished direct authority over the regulation of grain, timber, and livestock trade to the administrations of Wallachia and Moldavia. Consequently, these principalities were granted the freedom to manage and commercialise the produce of their territories without being subject to Ottoman monopolistic controls. Nevertheless, the voivodes retained the right to impose a grain monopoly should their respective governing councils deem such measures necessary. To promote commercial freedom, the local populations of Wallachia and Moldavia were authorised to engage in trade along the Danube using vessels registered and licensed by their own governments. These traders were to be protected from arbitrary interference by customs officials operating in urban centres and ports. Finally, Russian troops stationed in the region were granted a two-year exemption from the taxes they had traditionally paid following their withdrawal.[70]

Although the Treaty of Adrianople did not formally transfer to Russia any territory beyond the areas it already controlled in the Danube Delta, extending to the St. George Strait and Serpent (Snake) Island, it nonetheless imposed substantial constraints on Ottoman sovereignty. While Russia formally undertook not to construct military installations or fortifications in these territories, except for quarantine facilities, the treaty effectively created conditions favourable to the economic expansion of Russia's Black Sea ports. By contrast, the Ottoman Empire faced severe restrictions on its military presence and administrative authority, leaving it increasingly vulnerable to external pressure and intervention.[71]

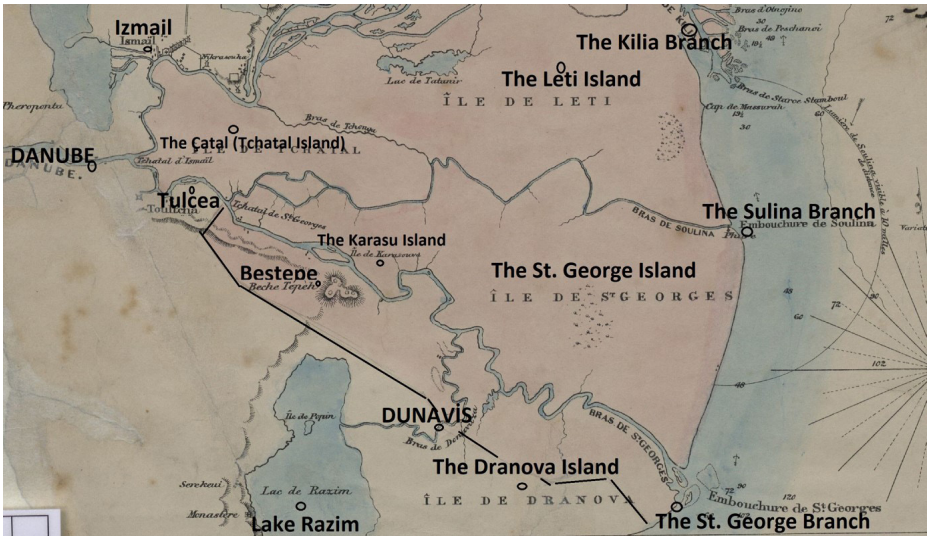
This new *de facto* geopolitical configuration along the Danube and its tributaries introduced a distinctly international dimension to riverine navigation and commerce. Merchants

70 BOA, MHD, 53 (Imperial decree, 15 May 1834, granting certain privileges and exemptions to Wallachia and Moldavia pursuant to Article 5 of the Treaty of Adrianople).

71 Turan, "1829 Edirne Antlaşması", 136-147.

from Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, France, Britain, and other European states - as well as from vassal polities under Ottoman suzerainty - began to operate within the Danube Delta. With Russia exercising control over key Danube branches in Wallachia and Moldavia, British and Austrian vessels seeking access to grain supplies increasingly navigated the St. George and Sulina straits. Although the Treaty of Adrianople shifted the frontier southward to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire, the Sulina Strait was assigned to Russia on the explicit condition that it remain permanently open to international trade and navigation.[72] Therefore, the Black Sea gradually evolved from a maritime space dominated by Russo-Ottoman rivalry into one of broader international significance. For the first time, a general principle governing foreign commercial shipping was articulated, permitting vessels of all non-belligerent states unrestricted access to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Straits.[73]

Russia's control over the Danube Straits nevertheless persisted until the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856. Under the terms of that treaty, navigation on the Danube was opened to all riparian states, and authority over the Danube Straits was formally restored to the Ottoman Empire. Despite this legal reconfiguration, the maps produced by the European Commission of the Danube - particularly those outlining proposed hydraulic and navigational improvements - continued to reproduce the spatial restrictions established by the protocols of 1830. Even so, the territorial adjustments secured by the Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Paris ultimately reshaped the regional border regime, modifying the earlier demarcation framework and attenuating the strategic constraints imposed in the aftermath of the Treaty of Adrianople.



Map 4: Uninhabited Line (1856)[74]

During this period, the Ottoman administration established a lighthouse on Snake Island, located opposite the Sulina Strait, and stationed a military detachment there.[75] The

72 İlhan Ekinci, *Tuna Nehri'nde Diplomasi Oyunları,* 131.

73 Turan, "1829 Edirne Antlaşması", 147.

74 For the project map submitted by C. A. Hartley (1856-1857) concerning the islands and straits of the Danube Delta and proposed cleaning works, see BOA, HRT, 42/4.

75 Şenay Özdemir Gümüş, "Sünne Boğazı'nda Seyrüsefer Güvenliği ve Kule-i Fener Vakfı", *The Journal of Academic Social*

Treaty of Paris (1856) introduced a new legal regime governing navigation on the Danube, transforming the river into an international waterway. Two international bodies were created for this purpose: the European Commission of the Danube and the Permanent (Coastal) Commission.[76] Composed of representatives from the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Great Britain, Austria, Italy, and France, these commissions were entrusted with the supervision of navigation, commercial activity, and the physical management of the river. Questions of sedimentation in the Danube Delta, navigational depth, and obstructions to river traffic soon emerged as matters of international political concern. In response, comprehensive hydrographic surveys were undertaken to regulate and facilitate navigation, and technical measures were implemented to ensure safe and uninterrupted passage through the delta. Article 15 of the Treaty of Paris established the legal framework for navigation on the Danube and its tributaries, codifying freedom of navigation in accordance with principles of international law. Merchants of all signatory states were subjected to a standardized system of dues for navigation rights, while new health and safety regulations were introduced to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.[77] Article 16 formally authorized the establishment of an international commission[78] composed of representatives from the Ottoman Empire, Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and Sardinia, specifically charged with regulating the lower Danube and its outlets into the Black Sea. The commission's mandate included dredging sediment, maintaining navigable depths, and securing safe passage through the delta. In parallel, Article 4 of the treaty linked the principle of free commercial navigation on the Danube to the evacuation of designated cities, ports, and territories. Article 20 further clarified the revised Ottoman-Russian frontier, incorporating previously contested uninhabited zones into the new settlement. Under this arrangement, the Bessarabian boundary extended south of Bolgrad (Bolhrad) along the Yalpuk River to its junction with the Prut, and from there continued toward Akkerman (Bilhorod-Dnistrovskii).[79] Consequently, the territorial status quo established by the 1830 border protocols - and the earlier allocation of uninhabited lands to Russia - was fundamentally revised. The new Russian border was drawn between the lines defined by the Treaty of Jassy (1792) and the 1817 agreement concluded pursuant to the Treaty of Bucharest. Although the Ottoman Empire recovered certain territories south of the Danube, including the strategically significant Çatal and Lati islands near the Sulina Canal, it simultaneously relinquished exclusive sovereignty over the river itself. In its place emerged an international regime of governance that permanently altered the legal and geopolitical character of the Danube.

Science 4/31 (2016), 35-52.

76 İlhan Ekinci, *Tuna Nehri'nde Diplomasi Oyunları*, 149.

77 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı* (1853-1856) (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2006), 103-104 (Paris Peace Treaty, Art. 15).

78 The treaty stipulated the establishment of a commission comprising members from the Ottoman Empire, France, Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Piedmont to supervise the maintenance of the Danube straits. An equal tax on each vessel navigating the river was to be levied to cover the expenses. A permanent commission would include one delegate from each of the Ottoman Empire, Austria, Bavaria, and Württemberg, as well as commissioners from Wallachia, Moldavia, and Serbia. An amendment in favour of the Ottoman Empire adjusted the Bessarabia border from the Black Sea to the Kanamori area on the Prut River; land ceded by Russia was to be incorporated into Moldavia under Ottoman suzerainty. Inhabitants of the transferred territory were granted the same rights and privileges as those of the *Memleketeyn* (Wallachia and Moldavia) and could sell their property and emigrate if they wished. See Mustafa Cezar, *Mufassal Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 6/3081.

79 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı*, 104-105 (Paris Peace Treaty, Art. 20).

3.6. Evacuated Settlements under the 1830 *Hududnâme*: Legal Provisions and Historical Outcomes

From the confluence of the Prut and Danube Rivers to the St. George Strait, all islands formed by the river's various branches on the left bank were marked with boundary stones. This demarcation also encompassed the area extending from the point where the St. George branch diverges from the Sulina branch to the end of the designated two-hour uninhabited zone, and from there to the head of Lake Razim (Razelm), following a line parallel to the river's course. During this process, it was discovered that eight inhabited villages lay within territory officially designated as uninhabited. A Russian official participating in the commission demanded the immediate evacuation of these settlements, asserting that this action fell within his official responsibilities. The Ottoman delegation, however, requested that the evacuation be postponed until the end of the winter season. They further noted that some inhabitants also resided in the Old Tulcea quarter and cautiously proposed that these populations be allowed to remain. The Russian official expressed reluctance to deviate from his instructions, remarking that any such action could result in severe repercussions from his government. In response, the Ottoman commissioner appealed to considerations of humanitarian necessity and administrative pragmatism, arguing that the immediate removal of the population would cause undue hardship and was neither divinely nor politically mandated. He proposed a technical adjustment to the demarcation - beginning the boundary line half a verst below the designated starting point and modifying the map accordingly - thereby allowing the villages to remain temporarily and enabling compensation arrangements. This compromise, informally agreed upon by the two parties, granted the villagers until May to relocate beyond the newly established border.

Following this resolution, the formal surveying of the uninhabited zone commenced, including the organization of transport and the procurement of technical equipment. Upon completion of these procedures, the delegation travelled to Galati to obtain copies of the protocols, maps, and associated documentation, before proceeding to Bucharest for their official exchange. Two maps and two copies of the detailed minutes were formally exchanged. Under the terms of the finalized protocol, all construction and settlement activity within the uninhabited zone was strictly prohibited. On islands remaining under Russian sovereignty, only quarantine stations were permitted. The protocol also recorded the presence of an additional ruined and abandoned village located within the uninhabited area between the first and eighteenth boundary markers, situated at a considerable distance from the coast of the St. George branch. The populations of the eight inhabited villages were formally notified[80] - through the district leaders of Tulcea and Babadag - through the district authorities of Tulcea and Babadag - to vacate the area within the prescribed period, taking with them their agricultural produce, livestock, and essential belongings.[81] These villages, along with the abandoned settlement, were indicated on the official border map. These villages, together with the abandoned settlement, were clearly indicated on the official border map. The affected settlements included Breslav, Morigöl, Turc-Beştepe, Moldavian-Beştepe, Ahmed Fakih, Karahabil, Sarınasuh, Begbucağı, and Dunavis.[82]

80 BOA, MHD, 40/2-4 (Rumi 9 June 1246 / 20 August 1830).

81 BOA, MHD, 40/3 (Report of the Russian *muhaddid*).

82 BOA, MHD, 42/98.


RENI
IZMAIL
Isaccea Island
ISACCEA
DANUBE
THE CATAL ISLAND
TULCEA
THE MOTS ISAND
Kiliya
Reni
Izmail
Tsatal
Tulcea
Isaccea

istrative and military centre - was destroyed, prompting the relocation of the urban settlement approximately half an hour's distance from its original site. This displacement likely explains the appearance of references to Old and New Tulcea in contemporary archival records. Today, the Beştepe area lies near Mahmudia, closer to Babadag and Lake Razim, and south of the modern urban centre of Tulcea. Evidence from the tax registers indicates that, during this period, Tulcea's administrative and residential structure became increasingly differentiated. Census records identify the city's central districts as comprising the neighbourhoods (*mahalles*) of Varoş, Çayıriçi, Hüsnü Bey, Kazak, Kıpti, and Ermeni, alongside the settlements of Breslav and Beştepe. The villages administratively attached to Tulcea included Kışla, Barkeş (Parcheş), Somova, Kataloyi (Cataloi), Sopaklı, and Ferekatçe (Frecatei).[87] By the time of the 1846 tax registers, the Tulcea district was recorded as encompassing the neighbourhoods of Varoş, Çayırbaşı, Kazak, Nurişay, Kıpti, Hüsnü Bey, and Beştepe, all classified as the urban artisan and retail population (*esnaf*). As reflected consistently in earlier fiscal documentation, the Breslav neighbourhood retained a substantial non-Muslim population and was located on the eastern periphery of the city, south of the predominantly Muslim quarters.[88]

According to the 1841 tax revenue registers compiled during the Tanzimat period, the Beştepe neighbourhood contained the highest concentration of non-Muslim inhabitants within Tulcea's central district. Other neighbourhoods with substantial non-Muslim populations included, in descending order, Varoş, Kazak, Çayır, Hüsnü Beg, and Breslav. A closer reading of the 1841 and 1845 census records indicates that the non-Muslim populations of Breslav and Beştepe were engaged in a wide range of economic activities. These included butchery, blacksmithing, tailoring, soup-making, fishing, oil trading, farriery, grocery retail, carpentry, baking, carting, painting, tobacco trading, rowing, cooking, shepherding, tavern keeping, and other skilled crafts and service occupations.[89] By contrast, the economic profile of the Beştepe neighbourhood was predominantly agrarian, with animal husbandry serving as a secondary activity. Twenty households in Beştepe were recorded as deriving their livelihoods primarily from agriculture, collectively cultivating 818 acres of arable land and 22 acres of vineyards and owning 161 head of large livestock. Taken together, these data illuminate both the demographic composition and economic structure of the region,[90] and they underscore the persistence - and even consolidation - of population clusters within zones that had been officially designated as uninhabited under the boundary protocol.[91]

From the promulgation of the 1830 regulation establishing the uninhabited border zone until 1845, Breslav and Moldovian-Beştepe appeared in the official registers as settlements populated exclusively by non-Muslim residents. Historically, Jewish and Armenian communities were concentrated in the urban centre of Tulcea and in the villages of Somova, Barkeş,

87 BOA, Maliye Vâridat Cizye Muhasebesi Defterleri (ML.VRD.CMH.d), nr. 395.

88 Hakan Engin, "Osmanlı İdaresinde Tulça (Tulcea) Kazası: Resmi Kaynaklara Göre Demografik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapısına Dair Bazı Tespit ve Değerlendirmeler", *Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi,* 12/2 (2023), 404-406.

89 BOA, Maliye Vâridat Defterleri (ML.VRD.d), nr. 403, p. 8-24.

90 BOA, Maliye Vâridat Temettuat Defterleri (ML.VRD.TMT.d), nr. 12755, p. 1-367. The 1844-1845 records indicate that the Tulcea centre comprised twelve neighbourhoods: Varoş, Çayır (formerly Çayıriçi and Çayırbaşı), İslam, Ermeni, Hüsnü Bey, Hüsnü Bey (newly established for foreign subjects), Kazak, Kıpti, Nurişay, Yahudi, Beştepe, and Breslav (Engin, "Osmanlı İdaresinde Tulça (Tulcea) Kazası: Resmi Kaynaklara Göre Demografik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapısına Dair Bazı Tespit ve Değerlendirmeler", 404-405).

91 BOA, Bâb-ı Defteri Cizye Muhasebesi Defterleri (D.CMH.d), nr. 26894, p. 4-5.

Breslav, and Beştepe. Notably, the demographic dominance of non-Muslims in Beştepe and Breslav - both situated along the Ottoman-Russian frontier and formally designated as uninhabited under the 1830 agreement - did not provoke any recorded objections from the Russian authorities. By contrast, no Muslim population was registered in the villages of Turc-Beştepe (or *Islam-Beştepe*), Karahabil, Sarınasuh, Dunavis, Ahmed Fakih, and Begbucağı. Although these settlements lay further inland, they were administratively affiliated with the Tulcea district. The 1834 agreement, concluded in St. Petersburg and discussed earlier, addressed the territorial boundaries of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia and contained no explicit provisions concerning uninhabited zones or related disputes. Under its terms, sovereignty over the left bank of the Danube remained with the Ottoman Empire, while the right bank and its administration were entrusted to the governments of Wallachia and Moldavia. This arrangement rested on the crucial stipulation that populations on either side of the river would refrain from interference or encroachment across the boundary. In addition, islands and islets located near the borders of Wallachia and Moldavia were to be incorporated into the territories of the respective principalities and governed accordingly.

The Ottoman Empire recognized the logistical imperatives associated with provisioning Istanbul, maintaining the Imperial Arsenal, and securing the strategic fortresses along the Danube. Considering these considerations, it consented to the transfer of full administrative authority in the region to the governments of Wallachia and Moldavia.[92] Although the agreement made no explicit reference to the uninhabited border zone, it nonetheless bore directly on the region's geopolitical configuration. The absence of Muslim settlements along the designated uninhabited frontier - corroborated by the 1844-1845 census - may be interpreted as the outcome of Russian efforts to preserve a favourable demographic balance in the borderlands. Ottoman officials were likely aware that this policy aimed to further isolate Christian populations from imperial influence. Accordingly, when the instruments of ratification for the Treaty of Adrianople were exchanged, the Ottoman side raised formal concerns regarding its broader implications. In their report, officials noted that the Russian emperor's public proclamation of the treaty had circulated widely among non-Muslim communities, sparking apprehension that governance of the Greek and Bulgarian populations would become increasingly difficult.[93]

Following the Crimean War (1853-1856), the legal status of the uninhabited border zone was redefined by the Treaty of Paris. Article 20 of the treaty established a new boundary between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, incorporating territories that had previously been contested. The revised border extended from south of Bolgrad (Bolhrad) along the Yalpuk (Yalpuh) River to the Prut River, and again from Bolgrad toward the area south of

92 BOA, MHD, 53 (Imperial decree, 15 May 1834, granting privileges and exemptions to Wallachia and Moldavia pursuant to Article 5 of the Treaty of Adrianople).

93 Turan, "1829 Edirne Antlaşması", 145-146. Ottoman official Sadık Efendi recalled in the exchange protocol that Russian Commander-in-Chief General Ivan I. Dibich urged the local population to remain loyal to their sovereign during the Russian occupation and expected the Ottoman authorities to treat them fairly after Russia's departure. He further noted that at their first meeting in Adrianople, the Russians expressed the wish that the Ottoman Empire would treat Muslim inhabitants of the newly conquered regions in accordance with Islamic customs. Sadık Efendi reflected that, European powers, though perhaps not initially intending such an outcome, had seized the opportunity afforded by war to advance their strategic aims - an assessment borne out by subsequent events.

Akkerman.[94] In this manner, the 1830 agreement that had governed the status of these lands was formally superseded. As a result, territories that had come under Russian control, together with the uninhabited zones that had operated to the disadvantage of the Ottoman Empire, were subjected to a new legal and administrative framework. The Ottoman government subsequently sought to reassert authority over the area surrounding the Sulina Canal, including the strategically significant islands of Çatal and Lati, located south of the Kilia branch of the Danube, and initiated policies aimed at settling these lands with Muslim populations. The earliest verifiable reference to the village of Beştepe dates to 1857. In that year, plans for the construction of a new settlement bearing this name, as well as the provisional establishment of a church for its non-Muslim inhabitants, were suspended.[95] Ottoman authorities intended to resettle populations drawn from suitable regions of Anatolia and the Sanjak of Lazistan on lands and islands incorporated into the newly established *Sünne* (Sulina) *Kaymakamlığı*. Owing to the limited availability of arable land in the immediate vicinity of Sulina, the area around Yeni Tulça was identified as a more viable location for settlement. Accordingly, plans were formulated to construct approximately 500 to 600 houses in designated zones, with prospective settlers to be granted exemptions from certain taxes and military obligations as incentives for migration.[96] In this context, the *Kaymakam* of Sünne, Mehmed Raşid, submitted a detailed report on the lands earmarked for settlement within the former uninhabited zone. He observed that the territory was extensive and spatially dispersed, and that construction activities would be feasible only during the summer months.

Accordingly, construction was scheduled to begin the following summer with an initial phase comprising 300 houses, a mosque, a township (*kasaba*), and four villages in the *Beştepeler* area. Upon the completion and full settlement of these units, additional construction projects were to follow. The first stage of settlement was planned for Moldavian-Beştepe, Morigöl, Karabayır, and Breslav. Owing to its proximity to the St. George branch of the Danube, Moldavian-Beştepe was designated as the site of a township consisting of 120 households. The surrounding villages were to accommodate 50 households in Turc-Beştepe, 40 in Morigöl, and a combined total of 50 households in Karabayır and Breslav by the end of the following year.[97] In his report, Mehmed Raşid Efendi warned that construction could not proceed unless firm arrangements were made to secure the transfer of population to these vacant lands. He emphasized the urgency of identifying suitable settlers and allocating the necessary funds from the imperial treasury.[98] These concerns prompted renewed deliberations regarding the administrative incorporation of lands south of the St. George Canal, which had previously been designated as uninhabited, into either the *Kaymakamlık* of Sünne or Tulcea. According to the Kaymakam of Sünne, lands under cultivation within the formerly uninhabited zone were already contributing tax revenues to the Tulcea district. This raised the question of whether the Beştepe region should be administratively attached to Tulcea or Sulina. The local council ultimately determined that, given the area's geographical proximity to Tulcea and the close integration of its inhabitants' agricultural activities with the town, Beştepe should remain

94 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı* (1853-1856), 105.

95 BOA, Hariciye Mektûbi (HR.MKT), 184/91 (9 Ş 1273 / 4 April 1857, report by the Governor of Silistra).

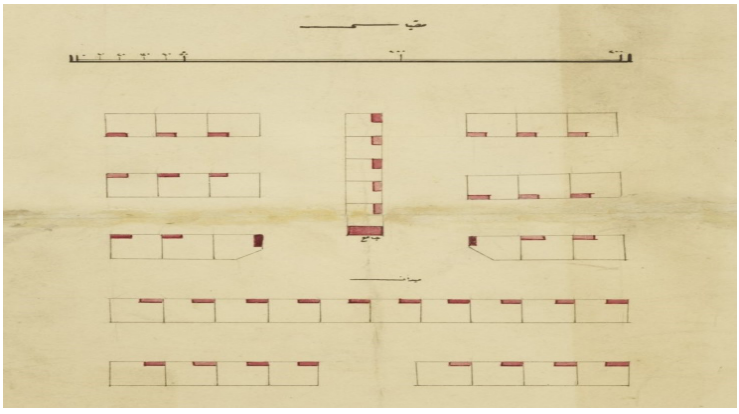
96 BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ (İ.MVL), 397/17268-2 (24 S 1274 / 13 October 1857).

97 BOA, İ.MVL, 31621/1 (5 Ra 1274 / 24 October 1857, report by *liva kaymakam Mehmed Raşid*).

98 BOA, İ.MVL, 892/62-6.

within the jurisdiction of the Sanjak of Tulcea. This arrangement would also preserve access to pastureland for local livestock. Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, the territory in question was formally ceded to the Ottoman Empire. The central government subsequently resolved to settle Muslim populations in the area and incorporated the land into the Sultan's endowment.[99]

Considering these developments, both the Council of Tulcea and the Governorate of Silistra formally petitioned the central administration to suspend the construction of the proposed village and church in the Beştepe area and to annex the land administratively to the *Kaymakamlık* of Tulcea. The local population, which had cultivated the land for nearly fifteen years and used the area as winter pasture for livestock, reported the presence of established vineyards and gardens. Although Beştepe had previously been affiliated with the town of Tulcea, its administrative ties had been severed by a decision of the central government. Furthermore, the fiscal revenues of Beştepe and Breslav - formerly neighbourhoods under Tulcea's administration - had already been auctioned to treasury tax farmers. Likewise, the tithes from the villages of Begbucağı, Karahabil, Sarınasuh, and Ahmed Fakih, together with the annual agricultural revenues of Kaliga village in the Babadag district, were regularly auctioned to tax collectors. Local residents argued that any further administrative separation from the Tulcea district[100] would have a direct and detrimental effect on their livelihoods, given that the area lay scarcely an hour from the town. They emphasized that the loss of access to nearby pasturelands and cultivated fields would severely disrupt both agricultural production and animal husbandry.

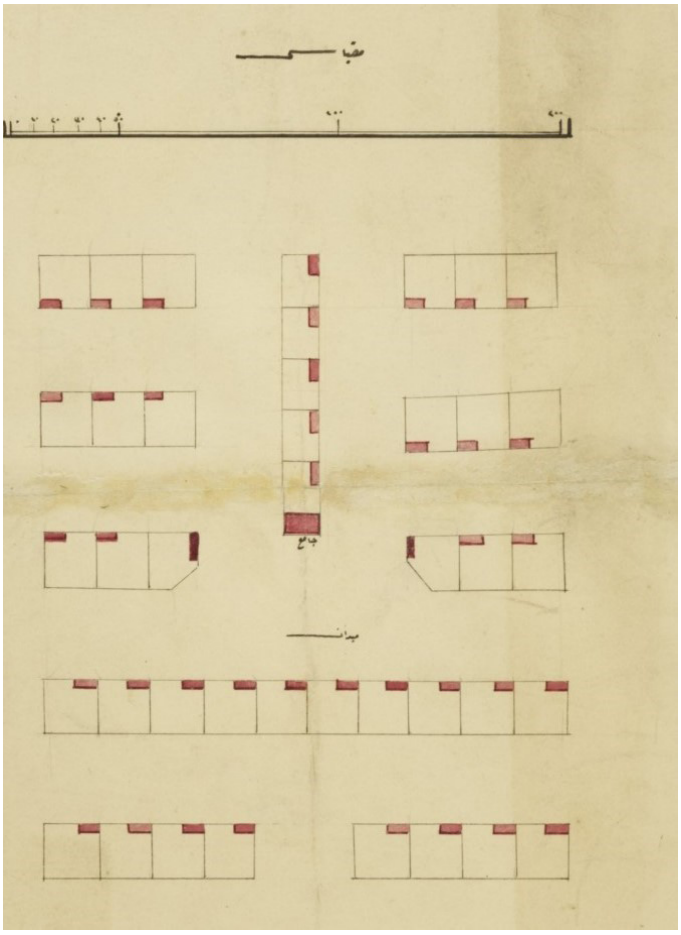


Plan 1: Reconstruction Plan for the Villages of Breslav, Türk Beştepesi, Karabayır, and Morigöl (After 1856) [101]

99 BOA, İrade Dâhiliyye (İ.DH), 413/27354-2 (3 C 1274 / 19 January 1858).

100 The Tulcea District Governorate later interfered with revenues from lands in Sünne. Some inhabitants, claiming hardship, applied to the French Consulate for citizenship. Villagers from Malkoç reported a four-year exemption but alleged Tulcea's interference; the Sünne District Governorate was instructed to desist. See Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Sadaret Mektubî Kalemi Umum Vilayat (A.MKT.UM), 370/1 (7 Ra 1276 / 5 October 1859).

101 BOA, Plan Proje Kroki (PLK.p), 819.



Plan 2: Plan of the Town to Be Built in Moldavian-Beştepe [102]

The Governorate of Sünne, however, objected to this proposal and formally petitioned for the disputed lands to remain under its jurisdiction.[103] In a separate report submitted to the central government, Mehmed Raşid Efendi provided a detailed assessment of the lands and islands within the Sünne district's boundaries and proposed reorganising the district into four administrative divisions. Under this plan, the first division would comprise Lati Island - the largest island in the Kilia Strait - together with several adjacent islands. The second division would include Çatal Island, situated between the Kilia and Sulina channels, along with nearby smaller islands. The third division would centre on the island located between the Sulina and St. George straits, which was designated as the district's administrative seat. The fourth division would consist of the vacant lands along the right bank of the St. George Strait. According to the report, the principal islands - Lati, Çatal, and Sulina - contained extensive pastures and

102 BOA, PLK.p, 819.

103 BOA, İ.DH, 413/27354-7.

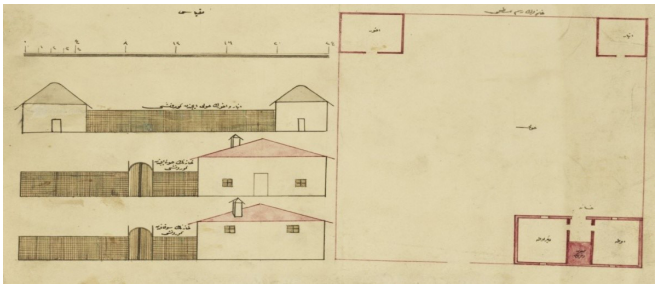
meadows, with large areas of grassland, lightly wooded tracts dominated by willow trees, and broad expanses of reeds and rushes. These environmental conditions supported widespread animal husbandry. Both local inhabitants and foreign pastoralists raised cattle, black sheep, and goats on the islands, paying grazing fees for access to the land. Over time, they established semi-permanent settlements consisting of houses, barns, and sheepfolds. In addition to their function as winter pastures, the islands were home to 113 villages whose populations relied primarily on fishing. Many of these settlements also maintained vineyards, gardens, and fruit orchards, sustaining a mixed economy that combined livestock rearing with agricultural production. Despite their long-term occupation and cultivation of the land, the inhabitants did not possess legal ownership rights. Although Russian authorities had previously permitted settlement on the islands, no formal land titles had been issued. Seasonal migration further contributed to the region's agricultural productivity. Residents from Bessarabia regularly crossed into Ottoman territory to cultivate vineyards, vegetable plots, and orchards on the islands and in the areas opposite İsmail. Following the harvest, they paid the requisite taxes to the Ottoman administration before returning across the river.

During the period of Russian control, a structured system of fiscal charges was in place. Grazing fees were levied at the rate of one *karbon* per cow or bull, half a *karbon* for foals and calves, and between three and three and a half *guruş* per sheep. In addition, a tithe amounting to one-tenth of the hay harvested for fodder was collected, alongside assessments based on the size of cultivated gardens. Following the transfer of these lands to Ottoman sovereignty, it was recognised that substantial development would be required, a process estimated to take at least one year. Accordingly, a comprehensive administrative proposal was prepared, stipulating that once formal land ownership was granted to the settled population, taxation would be assessed according to economic capacity. Revenues derived from agricultural production and livestock breeding were to be evaluated and collected on this basis.[104] Official correspondence further proposed that income from these lands - allocated to the Sultan's endowment - be incorporated into the *Hazine-i Hassa* (Imperial Privy Treasury)[105], particularly considering the newly established administrative unit at the Danube estuary, which had been annexed to the Province of Silistra. Earlier proposals to attach these formerly uninhabited territories - left depopulated in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828-1829 - to the Tulcea District were rejected by the central government. Ultimately, it was decided that they would remain under the jurisdiction of the Sünne District.[106]

104 BOA, MVL, 316/21-1 (5 Ra 1274 / 27 October 1857).

105 BOA, Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Mühimme (A.MKT.MHM), 143/38 (10 Ra 1275 / 18 October 1858). This decree annexed newly incorporated Danube Strait islands and defined territories to the Province of Silistra under the name *Sünne Sancağı*. As these lands had been endowed by imperial decree, their total income and expenses were referred to the High Council of Organisation for instruction; lands still belonging to the *waqf* were referred to the Treasury and Imperial Waqf Treasury.

106 BOA, A.MKT.MHM, 143/64 (15 Ra 1275 / 23 October 1858).



Plan 3: Plan for the Construction of a Town and Villages in the Uninhabited Area at Sulina (Sünne)[107]

In the same year, engineers were commissioned to prepare detailed maps of the uninhabited and vacant lands within the jurisdiction of the Sünne District Governorate. The projected costs for the construction of one hundred houses - deemed necessary for the settlement of Muslim households in the town of Sünne - were calculated, and a request was submitted for these expenses to be covered by the state treasury.[108] In addition, a five-year exemption from taxes, including the tithe, was sought. By contrast, the authorities rejected a proposed ten-year exemption from military service for the settlers.[109] Furthermore, in accordance with Ottoman land law, temporary exemptions were granted for the establishment of villages or the construction of buildings on vacant and uninhabited lands within the Sulina District when immediate construction was deemed infeasible. These provisions were formally documented, reflecting the Ottoman state's broader policy of encouraging resettlement and agricultural development in this strategically sensitive frontier region.[110]

As a result of these policies, all Muslim populations residing outside the two villages exempted within the boundaries of the uninhabited zone established in 1830 were evacuated. Following the restoration of these territories to Ottoman control under the Treaty of Paris, systematic resettlement and development initiatives were undertaken to re-establish a Muslim presence in the region. The territory remained under uninterrupted Ottoman administration until the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

CONCLUSION

Throughout history, natural boundaries have served as crucial reference points in the construction of sovereignty and political authority among states. The Danube River functioned as a pivotal boundary - both geographical and political - between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Within this framework, the *hududnâmes* served as the principal legal instruments for defining, regulating, and protecting the frontier. These documents were formally drafted to establish the precise line of demarcation between the two states and to codify their respective rights and obligations. The *hududnâmes* prepared along the Danube were not limited to marking territorial limits; they also sought to regulate the social, economic, and administrative organization

107 BOA, PLK.p, 819.

108 BOA, A.MKT. MHM, 175/16.

109 BOA, Sadaret Mektubî Kalemi Meclis-i Vâlâ (A.MKT.MVL), 98/72 (3 Z 1274 / 17 January 1860).

110 BOA, A.MKT.UM, 545/25.

of the frontier zones. A close examination of their content demonstrates that natural features - such as the riverbed, islands, currents, and shoreline formations - were described in meticulous detail. This precision was particularly significant in addressing the ambiguities inherent in a geographically complex riverine boundary such as the Danube. The *hududnâmes* of 1830, which delineated the Ottoman-Russian and Ottoman-Wallachian-Moldavian borders, defined the frontier in both concrete and technical terms using trigonometric measurements, cartographic representations, and the systematic identification of natural landmarks. By doing so, they aimed to pre-empt future disputes in the borderlands. This methodological rigor reflects contemporary advances in cartography and boundary demarcation practices and illustrates the increasing technicization of border-making in the early nineteenth century.

Another essential function of the *hududnâmes* was to define the legal status of settlements, economic centres, and natural resources situated along the frontier. In the case of the Danube, these boundary protocols clarified sovereignty over riverbank villages, commercial hubs, and, most notably, the islands within the river. By situating everyday life in the borderlands - ranging from settlement patterns to cross-border movement - within a clearly articulated legal framework, the *hududnâmes* contributed to both regional stability and the facilitation of trade. The documents also contained detailed provisions concerning border security. Military presence and activity along the frontier, procedures for crossing the border, and mechanisms of surveillance and control were all specified with considerable precision. In this respect, the *hududnâme* evolved into a multifaceted instrument that extended beyond the mere delineation of a geographical boundary to function as a comprehensive tool of border governance. The implementation of *hududnâmes* along the Danube initially addressed the Ottoman-Wallachian and Ottoman-Moldavian frontiers and subsequently marked a decisive phase in the emergence of modern border concepts within Ottoman-Russian relations. The systematic use of scientific measurement and cartographic techniques, rather than reliance solely on natural features, signalled a new approach to resolving interstate boundary disputes. As diplomatic texts grounded in mutual recognition of sovereign rights, the *hududnâmes* provided the legal foundation for the frontier regime. Consequently, a relative degree of stability was established along the Danube between 1830 and 1857.

The *hududnâme* examined in this study demonstrates that the process of border determination was conducted with considerable precision, through on-site surveys and the systematic use of measurement instruments such as the planchette. Disagreements between the parties were largely resolved through negotiation and consensus. In delineating the boundary, priority was given to criteria such as the geographical position of islands within the river and the principle of the river's midline as the line of demarcation. Despite difficulties arising from illness and adverse weather conditions, the demarcation proceeded in a planned and orderly manner. Following approximately two months of fieldwork, 88 islands were assigned to the Ottoman Empire and 79 to Wallachia, while none were allocated to Moldavia. This outcome reflects a clearly defined tripartite boundary regime among the Ottoman Empire, Wallachia, and Moldavia. The determination of the Danube frontier within the framework of Ottoman-Russian relations constituted one of the most complex and strategically significant border demarcation efforts of the nineteenth century. Grounded in the legal framework established by the Treaty of Adrianople, this process was decisive not only in fixing geographical boundaries but also in shaping the political and military spheres of influence of the two empires. The river's intricate morphology characterised by multiple branches, numerous islands, and extensive uninhabited zones - posed

substantial technical and diplomatic challenges, rendering the demarcation both methodologically demanding and politically sensitive.

The demarcation efforts conducted in accordance with the *hududnâme* protocols reflected not only topographical and geostrategic considerations but also the imperative to safeguard the economic, military, and commercial interests of both parties. The multifunctional use of the Danube islands - as sites of settlement, agricultural production, and military activity - significantly complicated negotiations over their allocation. The careful placement of boundary markers and the emphasis on their preservation, as documented in official records, attest to the sensitivity attached to these arrangements. In defining the Danube frontier, that offered military and economic advantages became strategically important, as they ensured the continuity of navigation between the Black Sea and the Balkan hinterland. Russia's control over the river's northern bank, its islands, and key waterways underscores its broader objective of consolidating regional influence. Consequently, the demarcation of the Danube border was not merely a technical exercise in territorial division but a process with profound implications for the regional balance of power and the application of emerging norms of international law. As such, it constitutes a concrete example of the historically complex, multidimensional, and geopolitically entangled nature of nineteenth-century border demarcation.

In conclusion, the determination of the Danube border following the Treaty of Adrianople demonstrates that the parties pursued a consensus-based, scientifically grounded, and methodical process, which allowed major border disputes to be resolved - albeit temporarily. The *hududnâmes* prepared for the Danube frontier functioned as multidimensional legal instruments that defined not only the physical boundary but also the sovereign rights of the parties and the socio-economic organization of the borderlands. By integrating geographical, technical, and diplomatic considerations, the *hududnâme* played a critical role in sustaining regional stability between the two empires. In this respect, *hududnâmes* possess enduring historical and legal significance as documents that illuminate the complex nature of border relations and underscore the necessity of mutual interstate cooperation. At the same time, their frequent revision in response to successive Ottoman-Russian wars highlights the inherently contingent and unstable character of nineteenth-century frontier arrangements.

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