

# The Ottoman-Venetian Border (15th-18th Centuries)

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## 1 The Words

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### 1.1 Comparisons

At the beginning of his book on the creation of the Ottoman state, Cemal Kafadar states, by means of a nice image, that Osman was for the Ottomans what Romulus was for the Romans, namely the eponymous hero of a political community that succeeded in a foreign land.<sup>1</sup> Proceeding along the same path, however, some antithetical elements may be noticed: Romulus began his adventure as the sovereign and the priest who marked out the primeval furrow of the city of Rome carving the ground with his ploughshare; crossing it, and therefore negating that holy border, spelt death for his brother Remus. Romulus' power lay in that furrow, in that split between the sacred and the profane, in that partition of competencies: in that idea of border. On the contrary, the so-called 'classical' historiography about the Ottoman Empire stressed the fact that Osman was a *gazi*, son of a *gazi*, that is to say a warrior who fought along the farthest frontier of the *dār al-islām* to defend and spread the faith. This is the so-called 'ideology of the holy war', namely a thesis that was advocated by Paul Wittek in the 30s of the twentieth century and that was never challenged before his death.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, there is the *rex*, who is invested with power by gods, marks out a straight line and creates not only a territory but also the *regula*, the law. On the other, there is the *gazi* who, fighting the *ḡihād*, moves the frontier further and further; the frontier is a vague and moving area where everything mingles and changes and it holds in itself the idea of a confrontation with a hostile element, while the law for which the *gazi* fights is the Islamic one that joins religion and state and divides the world into two opposing entities: the *dār al-islām*, whose future success is certain, and the *dār al-ḡarb*, namely the land of the infidels doomed to a defeat.<sup>3</sup>

1 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 1.

2 Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*.

3 Mélikoff, *Ḡhāzī*, 1068-1069; Johnstone, *Ḡhazw*, 1079-1080.

In the history of the first Ottomans, therefore, two well-defined ideologies would clash: on the one hand, there is the idea of border that was handed down by the Romans to the succeeding European states; on the other, there is the idea – which is of Islamic origin – of a frontier that is always expanding, to which only the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) put an end by the force of arms. If historiography could reckon only with theories, and not with facts, the question would be perfect and complete in itself. It remained as such for decades. Wittek himself did not delve into the subject of the Ottoman Empire's frontier, even though it was one of the bearers of his theory. Only in the last two decades, in the wake of the critical review of the 'ideology of the holy war' as the asset of the Ottoman advance, were specialised essays devoted to the idea of frontier/border between Christian and Muslim countries. Various aspects have been considered: not only political and military, but also religious, social and economic ones. At the same time, scholars also realised that, throughout the Middle Ages, the idea of border, which has been inherited from the Roman world, underwent changes due to the bursting of alien elements belonging to other cultures: those who are usually defined as barbarians brought different ways to consider and live one's own and other people's space into the Roman culture while, at the same time, the law men obeyed started to depend only on the group they belonged to and not on the country where they lived.

## 1.2 Frontier

Frontier and border are not synonyms, even though one often tends to employ them without perceiving their correct meaning. The frontier is a belt of territory that holds in itself the idea of 'front': the enemy who may advance or fall back is beyond it. The same applies to the French *frontière*, the Italian *frontiera* and the Spanish *frontera*. This term appeared in the Iberian peninsula for the first time: in Ramiro I of Aragon's first will, which was drawn up in the year 1097 of the Spanish era, equivalent to 1059 AD, we find the expression «ad castros de fronteras de mauros que sunt pro facere»; also in his second will of 1061 AD, we read «in castellos de fronteras de mauros qui sunt per fare et in castellos qui sunt in fronteras per facere»; at last, in a third act of the following year, the sovereign himself stated: «et tu quod cavallero et franco sedeas quomodo homine debet esse in frontera francho et caballero». With regard to the first use of the word 'frontier', it may be observed that, first of all, it appeared in a military environment linked to the state power; then, that it was used to refer not to a defence line but to a dynamic space turned towards the Muslim enemy and, finally, that the term was linked to a behaviour that was necessarily

far from set patterns and characteristic of a land of conquest and freedom.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of frontier as an entity that is essentially political and military was then mainly used in the French state ambit, since Valois' times to Richelieu's, and was later welcomed by European historiography in general. On the contrary, the American epic made the frontier a passage area that was open to any possibility and where the enemy was the hostile nature in place of the neighbour: it became a region inhabited by free and self-sufficient men. American historians were notably influenced by this concept, which was later passed on to overseas colleagues too. Moreover, it should be underlined that right in the US, in the 20s of the twentieth century, Frederick Jackson Turner was perhaps the first to regard the frontier as a valid historiographic subject and to dedicate a volume to it, even though this was focused on the history of his country and on the meaning the concept had had in that reality;<sup>5</sup> it was mainly by means of his work that the American idea of frontier spread to the extent that it influenced also people that studied completely different contexts: it was the case of Wittek as for the origin of the Ottoman Empire, or of Claudio Sanchez Albornoz as for the Christian advance in Spain.<sup>6</sup>

Originally, however, speaking of frontier meant, first of all, making reference to two opposing worlds, the Christian and the Muslim ones, which shared out the Iberian peninsula.

### 1.3 *Ṭaġr*

According to Philip Sénac,<sup>7</sup> the idea of bounding the space does not seem to have been an important element in the ancient Arab-Muslim civilisation of Spain; for instance, in al-Andalus, the frontier was not a line but an area. Thus, in the Omayyad era, once the Ebro Valley had been conquered, it began to be identified as *al-Ṭaġr al-a'lā*, the upper frontier (or marchland).

The word *ṭaġr* (plural *ṭuġūr*) was, therefore, used in this way by Arab writers. It comes from the root *ṭġr*, which holds an idea of opening, mouth and, thus, of frontier and teeth. It cannot be found in the Koran but in the pre-Muslim poetry; it appears also in some *ḥadīth*: Abū Dāwūd al-Siġistānī (d. 275 AH/889 AD) uses it right with the meaning of frontier referring to

4 Du Cange, *Glossarium*, vol. 3, 421; Sénac, *Islam et Chrétienté*, 100-101; Sénac, *Ad castros de fronteras*, 205-221.

5 Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 1-38.

6 Bazzana, Guichard, Sénac, *La frontière*, 56-57; Power, *Introduction*, 1-12.

7 Sénac, *Islam et Chrétienté*, 106; *La frontière et les hommes*, 109-114.

the caliph 'Umar's era.<sup>8</sup> During the Ottoman advance in Asia Minor, this word was used to mean, par excellence, the regions of the north of Syria and Mesopotamia close to the Byzantine Empire. Within these confines, *tuġūr*, in the plural, evoked the line of strongholds that guarded the likely arrival of the *basileus'* armies, beyond which a proper no man's land extended, purposely depopulated by Heraclius (610-642) when he withdrew from Syria; the *basileus* had purposely ravaged the plain of Cilicia between the Anti-Taurus and the Taurus to defend Anatolia and Armenia, pushing away its garrisons and its inhabitants. This area was subject to recurrent attacks and was called *al-ḡawāḥī*, i.e. the outside place, the exterior, or else *ḡawāḥī al-Rūm*. On this side, a compact territory with a series of strongholds extended. These were known as *al-'awāšim* (or the protectresses) since Hārūn al-Rašīd's times (786-809) and the warriors could take refuge there after their raids.<sup>9</sup>

In the singular, the word *taġr* was also used for meaning the big harbours of the Syrian coastline – Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre and Acre – that safeguarded against enemy attacks coming from the sea.<sup>10</sup> With the meaning of commercial stronghold, it may be found in the Mamluks' times in Egypt: the Muslim *tuġūr* were the harbours 'protected [by God]', frequented by infidel consuls and merchants, mainly Venetians, but Florentines too. Two documents written in Arabic at the turn of the fifteenth century state: "in the previous kings' time, their consuls and merchants had frequented the Muslim *tuġūr* to sell and buy just like the Venetians' little state did".<sup>11</sup> In the documents of the time, Alexandria almost seems to be the *taġr* par excellence, even though it shared that appellation with Damietta, Ashkelon, Tyre, Sidon and other seaboard towns, just like Crete, Cyprus, Sicily and other islands were called *al tuġūr al-ġazariyya*.<sup>12</sup>

In the Far West, instead, as we saw, *taġr* was widely used to mean the areas close to the realms of the north of al-Andalus and, more generally speaking, took on the meaning of 'marchland'. The most recent historiography believes that, in this region, the system of the recruiting centres (*ġund*, plural *aġnād*) that the Omayyad caliphs had constituted in Syria was

8 Cf. Manzano Moreno, *La Frontera de al-Andalus*, 31.

9 Canard, *al-'awāšim*, 783-784; Keiko, *Migration and Islamisation*, 87-91.

10 Miquel, *La perception de la frontière*, 130-131; Bianquis, *Les frontières de la Syrie*, 140; Bonner, *The Naming of the Frontier*, 17-21.

11 «Ai tempi dei re predecessori, i loro consoli e i loro mercanti avessero frequentato i *tuġūr* musulmani per vendere e comprare al pari del piccolo stato dei veneziani» [translation of the Author of the text]. See Amari, *I diplomati arabi*, 184-209 (year 1496); see also 218-220 (year 1507).

12 For example, cf. al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, vol. 10, 357, 439, 446; vol. 11, 32, 405; Udovitch, *Islamic Treatise*, 37-38.

re-created, giving the name of *tuḡūr* to those that were placed in frontier areas. Thus, the territory of Saragossa and the entire north-eastern region of al-Andalus were called ‘the upper frontier’ (*al-ṭaḡr al-a’lā*) or ‘the remote frontier’ (*al-ṭaḡr al-aqṣā*), while the area near the central Cordillera was known as ‘the middle frontier’ (*al-ṭaḡr al-awsaṭ*) or ‘the near frontier’ (*al-ṭaḡr al-adnā*).<sup>13</sup>

The word *ṭaḡr*, therefore, generally indicated an area of encounter or clash between Christians and Muslims: on the one side, there was the *dār al-islām*, of which it was a part; on the other, there was the *dār al-ḥarb*: to take it into account, observers must necessarily place themselves on the Muslim side. Once the frontier had been violated, the *ḡihād* (the legal war) became a duty for the Muslim sovereign. Among his tasks, as a matter of fact, there were the support to religion, the maintenance of a correct fiscal administration and the safeguard of the frontiers,<sup>14</sup> namely the *tuḡūr al-muslimīn* that, at least theoretically, could never move back. It was not a constantly expanding frontier, however: for instance, right in the Iberian peninsula, after the Battle of Poitiers (732), in front of a Christian front that kept advancing, a Muslim one was founded, but this tended to switch, even though it was politically, socially and economically more definite.<sup>15</sup>

#### 1.4 *Limes*

In the course of time, the Muslim frontier in the Iberian peninsula shrank more and more. Even though there are the due differences, a similar contraction occurred also in the case of another state entity whose expansion, almost theoretically, should have had no limits: the Roman Empire, an “*imperium sine fine*” as Virgil writes. The concept of *limes* came about right with regard to the Roman troops’ advance.

In general, the *limes* is considered to be a fortified line placed in defence of the Empire; however, this word underwent several changes throughout the centuries. According to Benjamin Isaac, three phases may be identified in its evolution: a) in the first century AD, in a moment of expansion, it meant the military road built to penetrate into the enemy territory; b)

13 Manzano Moreno, *La Frontera de al-Andalus*, 44-69.

14 Laoust, *La pensée*, 56. According to al-Māwardī, the defence of the frontiers is the fifth of the caliph’s ten personal obligations.

15 Cf. Manzano Moreno, *The Creation of a Medieval Frontier*, 38-40; the author recalls that, according to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150AH/767AD), the transformation of the *dār al-Islām* into the *dār al-ḥarb* was possible in three circumstances at least: when non-Muslim laws were enforced, when the *dār al-ḥarb* was near and when Muslims’ life and goods were not safe. The problem of the passage from an entity to the other came up again with colonialism (cf. Pedani, *La dimora della pace*, 54).

from the first to the third century, it was adopted to define a frontier region of the Empire, without referring to military structures; c) from the fourth century onwards, it was a frontier district with a connotation that was more administrative than military, while the *turres* and the *praetendurae* that studded it were, above all, an element of political control of the territory.<sup>16</sup> S.T. Parker, on the contrary, points out that, throughout the second century, a 'scientific frontier' was created. He uses the adjective 'scientific' because it was either marked by a series of forts linked by roads or made of an uninterrupted barrier such as, for example, the Hadrian's Wall.<sup>17</sup>

Since the Roman Empire extended up to the Persian borders, the concept of *limes* did not belong only to Europe, but also to the Near East. According to George Tate, the frontier between Byzantium and Persia in the north of Syria and Mesopotamia underwent a drastic change around the seventh century: between the fourth and the seventh century, it looked like a linear series of forts and fortified towns linked by roads; between the seventh and the eleventh century, when Muslims made their appearance and became more and more dangerous, the situation changed and the line became an area that, moreover, was placed no more according to the north-south axis, but in an east-west direction.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.5 *Munāṣafa*

Even though it is rarely used, another word deserves to be taken into account when we talk about frontiers, borders and territories divided between Christian and Muslim countries: it is the Arab word *munāṣafa* (fifty-fifty, co-ownership). The text of the armistice reached between the Mamluk sultan Baybars and the Hospitallers of al-Marqab on the 1st *ramaḍān* 669/13 April 1271, thoroughly debated by Urbain Vermeulen,<sup>19</sup> explains what this word means in detail: namely a territory that is placed under a joint sovereignty. More specifically, this agreement implied that buildings and produces, tilled lands and deserted areas, rights, duties, income taxes on the al-Marqab's suburbs and the neighbouring area pertained both to the sultan and the knights, and that the customs of the country could not be modified. Both states were responsible for the safety of those passing from the Muslim territory to the Christian one, and vice versa, and they both had also to jointly supply men for the escorts. With regard to the

16 Isaac, *The Meaning*, 125-147.

17 Parker, *Romans and Saracens*, 7-9.

18 Tate, *Frontière et peuplement*, 151-155.

19 Vermeulen, *Le traité*, 123-131; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 34-35.

criminal law, Muslims had to be judged according to the *šarī'a*, but the proceeds of fines and penalties had to be confiscated and shared between the two parties. If the goods that had to be seized belonged to a Muslim merchant or a *ḍimmī* living in the sultan's lands, the latter would confiscate them; instead, if they were of a Christian who came from Christian areas, then they would be due to the knights. Also police' tasks had to be carried out jointly, since the Mamluk officers guarded the Muslims, while the Hospitallers' ones repressed the Christians' abuses; however, nobody could be imprisoned without the consent of both parties and the fugitives – Christians as well as Muslims – had to be sent back to their place of origin; in that case, even the Churches could not grant the right of asylum to a Muslim that sought refuge there. Finally, the inhabitants of al-Marqab and its suburbs could not come into contact with the inhabitants of the close citadel of al-'Ullayqa, neither could they allow anybody to enter the sultan's territories with malicious intent. Further clauses concerned the prohibition for the knights to restore crumbling buildings and fosses; even some jobs that had already been undertaken had to be interrupted.

The last two conditions concern the mobility of the population and of the knights themselves and the restoration of houses and fortifications; they clearly represent the Christians' waiver of a part of their sovereignty in the Muslim sovereign's favour: it was not an agreement with equal rights and duties. The political and military situation proves it: Le Crac des Chevaliers (Ḥiṣn al-Akrād) had been conquered a few days before; a few years later, in 1285, al-Marqab would suffer the same fate. It is interesting to note, however, the idea of *munāṣafa* that equated Christians and Muslims living in the same territory as for safety and coexistence, while the revenues were shared by the two states. Thus, even for a very short period, two ancient enemies created a state where Christians and Muslims lived together, each of whom kept their own law, while the police and escort services were jointly performed.

The agreement that was reached by Baybars and the Hospitallers of al-Marqab was not the only one that implied a kind of co-ownership between Franks and Muslims, even though it is probably the best known. Looking at the historians' papers, we find out that there were other agreements of this kind; for instance, the one signed by Baldwin I of Jerusalem in 1108-1109, which implied that a third of the revenues of the territory east of the Jordan Valley went to Damascus' authorities and two thirds to Franks and peasants.<sup>20</sup>

20 Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 8.

## 1.6 *Dār al-ṣulḥ*

Throughout the centuries, then, not only times of war between Christians and Muslims followed one another, but also times in which the agreements were kept. It is enough to quickly count the years of peace and war throughout the almost five centuries of relations between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire to realise that the years of peaceful or armed coexistence outnumbered the years of open war by far, even though Venetian historiography usually depicts ‘the Turk’ as the enemy par excellence. It cannot be always clear what sultans and viziers really thought of a state that agreed to pay thousands of ducats for the renewal of a peace agreement or to keep territories, such as Cyprus or Zakynthos, that were officially under Ottoman sovereignty. Their point of view varied according to the periods of greater or lesser Ottoman power. Some documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain words that make us think about, for example, the use of the word *zābit* (officer) with reference to the doge of Venice, or else of *haraç* (Arab *ḥarāğ*) to mean the tax Venetians paid for Cyprus and Zakynthos, or the statement that the Republic was under the sultan’s ‘protection’. All these expressions shift towards the thesis that, sometimes, Ottomans regarded Venice as a somehow tributary state. Some other papers speak of the Republic’s devotion (*ubudiyet*), submission and obedience (*itaat ve inkıyad*) and of a *akd-i maun* or *akd-i ahd* between the two states. All the letters written in such harsh and incisive a language belong to the second half of the sixteenth century or the first half of the seventeenth century and were addressed to the doge either by Ottoman princes or by the Porte’s high-ranking officials. The sultan usually expressed himself in that way only when he wrote to his own subordinates and not when he directly addressed the Republic.<sup>21</sup>

By now, we cannot refrain from observing that, in the Muslim law, there is a concept that could fit this specific case, even though it is not welcomed by all legal schools and, in particular, by the Ḥanafi one, followed by the majority of Ottomans. It is the *dār al-ṣulḥ* or *dār al-’ahd*, namely a territory where the war condition is somehow suspended. It was recognised by the Šāfi’ī school, who specifically regarded it as a land of infidels whose inhabitants, in exchange for a kind of protectorate, paid a joint *ḥarāğ* to the Muslim ruler. Once peacetime ended, however, the *dār al-ṣulḥ* fell

21 ASVe, *LST*, f. II, c. 105, no. 127 (1562, prince Selim to the doge); f. III, c. 118, no. 296 (1576, the Grand Vizier Mehmed pasha to the doge and the Seignior); f. IV, c. 138, no. 433 (1589, Sinan pasha to the doge); NB f. IV, cc. 154-155, no. 443/A where the agreements with the ‘king of Vienna’ are called *ahd ve aman* and *ahd ve misak*; Pedani, *Documenti turchi*, no. 1163; Pedani, *La dimora della pace*, 38; cf. also Gökbilgin, *Le relazioni*, 289 (1548, Sokollu Mehmed pasha states that Venice is an allied Republic, like all the Ottoman countries); Lesure, *Notes et documents*, 131-132.



under one of the two previous categories again and became either *dār al-ḥarb* or *dār al-islām*. As often happens in the Muslim law, this theory originated from an episode of the Prophet's life and, precisely, from the agreement made by Muḥammad and the Christian population of Najran. Another striking example was the peace reached in 31/652 between the emir 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'd and the Nubians. The concept of *dār al-ṣulḥ* usually is not clearly defined and, according to David Santillana, the existence of a neutral land, neither *dār al-ḥarb* nor *dār al-islām*, is a legal institution unknown to the Muslim law.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.7 Border

The idea of border as a line or a furrow cut in the ground was part of the Roman world since its founding myth. The king-priest who founded Rome reproduced the cosmic order on earth; he had the task of *regere fines*. For Romans, the *cardo* and the *decumanus* were at the root of the orientation of every town and the *cardo* had the same direction of the celestial axis, whereas the *decumanus* went from east to west, following the course of the sun.<sup>23</sup> During the fifth century, however, the Western Roman Empire ended and the so-called barbarians introduced a different culture. Therefore, for instance, in the *De Bello Gallico*, Julius Caesar tells that Germanic peoples used to devastate the borderlands since they considered the *terra vacua* safer than the land where a different people lived (4.3, 6.10, 6.23). Thus, the word *marka* that comes from the word 'wood' of the old Gothic German language was then used to mean a district placed right close to the border.<sup>24</sup> In English, but not in Italian, there are two words for border that do not exactly coincide: one is the *border*, namely the state border, identifiable with a line; the other is the *boundary*, namely an ideal border, which includes neighbouring peoples who share the same culture, land and blood. Thus, in practice, *border* and *boundary* can or cannot coincide.

Luciano Lagazzi set up the idea of an external and agrarian border, derived from the Roman centuriation, against the idea of a circular, centralised border, coming from nomadic peoples. The Medieval parchments show that the borders of monastic or private estates often bounded a circular area, whose centre was represented by a building: in the first half of the seventh century, for instance, the monastery of Bobbio possessed

22 Santillana, *Istituzioni*, vol. 1, 90-91; İnalçık, *Dār al-'ahd*, 116; MacDonald [Abel], *Dār al-Ṣulḥ*, 131; Pedani, *La dimora della pace*, 6-7; Vercellin, *Istituzioni*, 27-28.

23 Piccaluga, *Terminus*, 174; Benveniste, *Il vocabolario*, 295; Zanini, *Significati del confine*, 6-8.

24 Werkmüller, *Gli alberi come segno di confine*, 465.

four miles of the land around it. In that period, there were borders marked by heaps of stones or rivers or mountains as well as borders identified by more intangible elements such as the sound. In the *Chronicon Novalicense*, Charlemagne gratified the Longobard jester who had taken him to unknown lanes to avoid Desiderius' army and gave him all the land where the sound of his horn played from the top of the mountain could be heard. Still today, on the Belluno mountains, parishes' borders follow the trend of the valleys, marked only by the sound of the churches' bells.<sup>25</sup>

Besides the quadrangular typology there was also a territory structured in a circular way. It was the contribution of a nomadic economy made of hunting and harvesting. During a halt, men drove a stone, a pole or a pike into the ground to re-found the space and re-create the cosmic order: in this way, the surrounding area became habitable, safe and protected by god. Only another equally holy element, like river water, could interrupt this circle and create a different border, as the Danube waters did during the barbarian invasions. Turks and Mongols as well as Avars and Huns were among the nomadic peoples that used to create a holy space in this way.<sup>26</sup> The elements at our disposal allow us to make only vague hypothesis of old ties between different cultures.

While the idea of border changed in this way, territorial and juridical borders split asunder in the West. *Lege romana vivens, lege langobardorum vivens, lege salica vivens...* These sentences abound in Medieval notarial deeds at least since the Carolingian era until the twelfth century: they are used for men obeying different laws but involved in the same legal transaction or living in the same area. All individuals made reference only to the law of their own ethnic group and not to that of the country where they were. This idea had a nomadic origin, belonged also to the European society for a long time, and was in force when Franks, Longobards and other peoples shared the same land.

### 1.8 *Ḥadd, sınır, hudud*

It has often - and rightly - been repeated that, since its foundation, the Muslim state was not bound up with territorial divisions, that Islam's impassable borders regard gender or relations with the neighbour and not those marked on the land and based on artificial conventions, and that they do not prevent the transfer of people and concepts from one area

<sup>25</sup> Alessio, *Cronaca di Novalesa*, 154-155 (it should be noted that who suggests this system is not a Frank, but rather a Longobard); Lagazzi, *Segni sulla terra*, 32-36.

<sup>26</sup> Eliade, *Immagini e simboli*, 38-54; Zanini, *Significati del confine*, 42-43; Goetz, *Concepts of Realm*, 78; Roux, *La religione dei turchi*, 288-291.

to another. The idea of a clear-cut separation of states, sanctioned by a border line, however, was not completely extraneous to the history of Muslim peoples, at least in practice. If, on the one hand, among the caliph's duties, there was the defence of the strongholds along the frontier, on the other, the historical circumstances sometimes led to settlements that could provide for a proper border: for example, the story goes that Abū 'Ubayda, one of the Prophet's companions, and some Christians of the north of Syria granted a truce of one year, and that a line of demarcation – symbolised by a column on which there was Heraclius' portrait († 641), the ruling Byzantine emperor – was placed between the territories of the Christians and those of the Muslims; later on, according to a legend, probably of Christian origin, an eye of the image was destroyed by mistake and, as a reparation, an eye of one of the caliph 'Umar's statues was equally disfigured.<sup>27</sup>

In Arabic, as well as in Ottoman, the word *ḥadd* (plural *ḥudūd*) is used to mean the border. It expresses the concept of an object that is sharp like a knife blade or, else, a mountain ridge. Arab geographers used this term to mean, in general, any limit and, especially, the *dār al-islām* one; *ḥadd* became also the technical term used to mean the sanction of certain acts that were forbidden or sanctioned with punishments in the Koran and considered to be crimes against religion. The Arabic word passed on to Ottoman (*hudud*) to mean, above all but not exclusively, the state border: *ehl-i hudud* were the inhabitants of the frontier areas, namely the guardians of the spirit of the war against the infidels. Instead, *had* was the limit and, especially, the individual limit that was bound up with the behaviour rules of an individual who was fully integrated into the Ottoman society. The *had* of a person was determined by factors such as the social or family environment, the class one belonged to, the rank one had achieved: within this sphere, everyone was rather free to act, and this was greatly important mainly for those who operated in the state apparatus: crossing that border and invading other people's space was considered to be coarse, uncivil and a complete lack of etiquette.<sup>28</sup>

Besides the word *hudud*, Ottomans used the word *sinir*, or *sinur* (from *súnoros*, 'neighbouring' in greek). Even though they are synonyms – and, thus, used in the same way –, the second term was mainly used to mean the limits within the Ottoman state, such as for example the borders of the *vakfs*, while *hudud* was preferably used for sea and water borders; *sinir* was used also in the second half of the fifteenth century to identify the imperial

27 Piacentini, *Il pensiero militare*, 26; Scarcia Amoretti, *Il mondo musulmano*, 40; Laoust, *La pensée*, 56; Manzano Moreno, *Christian-Muslim Frontier*, 88; Grabar, *Arte islamica*, 63, 100-101.

28 Miquel, *La perception de la frontière*, 130; Carra de Vaux, Schacht, *Ḥadd*, 21-22; Shaw, *L'impero ottomano*, 97-98.

documents establishing borders with foreign countries (called *sınırname*), but later *hududname* was preferred. The *sınırname beratı*, instead, were the imperial diplomas that defined the borders of a territory or an estate given to a governor or to an important man. At last, in some documents – according to my experience, mainly the seventeenth-eighteenth century ones –, the two terms were used together in the formula *hudud ve sınır*.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.9 Ġazw and gaza

According to Colin Heywood, Ottomans had clear ideas as to the difference between the border meant as line (*hudud/sınır*) and the frontier meant as area or marchland (*uc*). According to Wittek's well-known theory of the 'holy war', which will be later more widely referred to, this was the limit, the furthestmost point, the end, beyond which the land of unbelief extended and whose inhabitants were the keepers of the spirit of the raid against the infidels (*gaza* in Turkish and *ġazw* in Arabic). Some historians, however, considered the fact that theory and facts do not always match of minor importance. As a matter of fact, the *uc* were the marchlands that existed only in the Balkan area, in the west of the Empire, and not towards the Muslim Persia. Maḥmūd al-Kāšġarī, who wrote a dictionary of Turkish in Arabic in the eleventh century, regarded *uc*, namely the border of a country (*el*), as a translation of the word *taġr*. Other historians, from Imber to Heywood himself, observed that the most ancient Ottoman chronicles employed the word *gazi* as a synonym of *alp* (hero) or *akıncı*, (the raider of the frontier), as Aḥmedī himself (about 1400) says in his *İskendernâme*.<sup>30</sup>

The Balkan marchlands were ruled by *ucbeyis* (i.e. the lords of the frontier), and they were some of the very few Ottoman estates bequeathed to the owner's descendants and not given back to the sultan after his death.

<sup>29</sup> Kreisler, *Osmanische Grenzbeschreibungen*, 165-172; Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 58; Pedani, *The Ottoman Venetian Frontier*, 171-177. A Greek document of 10 July [1480] (*Documenti turchi*, no. 17) was defined *sınırname* in the subsequent Venetian-Ottoman peace of 1482 of which the Ottoman original exists, cf. Theunissen, *Ottoman-Venetian Diplomats*, 131, 362. As for the use of both terms together see, for example, ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 254, reg. 348, cc. 81-82, second ten days of *safer* 1132 (24 December 1719-2 January 1720); as for the use of *sınır* for the sea borders, cf. b. 253, reg. 346, non-numbered cc., first ten days of *rebiyülevvel* 1121 (11-20 May 1709) and b. 254, reg. 349, cc. 80-82, first *cemaziülevvel* 1133 (28 February 1721). Two facsimiles of *sınırname beratı* are published in *Calligraphies ottomanes*, nos. 61, 64, pp. 166, 170-171. Cf. also Kovačević, *Hududnama*, 365-436 and his monograph *Granice*.

<sup>30</sup> Heywood, *The Frontier*, 233-235; Tryjarski, *Kultura*, 157-159, where the author's passages concerning the Uygur border *kumi talās*, which is probably the name of the town situated on the frontier, and the town of Qazvin, which Turks believe to be situated within their borders because it was founded by Afrāsijāb's daughter, are mentioned (my acknowledgements go to Elzbieta Swiecicka for the reference); Imber, *The Legend*, 73-74.

The *ucbeyis* were the last descendants of Ottoman ancient nobility and belonged to the great households founded by the first sovereigns' companions (Malkoç, Mihail, Evrenos, Turahan). Their families were removed from the court during the fifteenth century when the *kapıkulu*, i.e. the Porte's slaves, seized the power and men uprooted from their homes and totally devoted to a lord to whom they owed everything reached the highest positions of the state.

Instead of paying taxes to their lords, Balkan peasants were enrolled in a special army corps, that of the *akıncı* (from *akın*, 'raid'), and they did not receive the pay but could keep the booty they took. They were irregular soldiers and they had not to conquer a hostile country permanently but only to scout or to divert the enemy's attention from the true objective of the regular army. These raiders of the frontier used bows and swords and often had more than one horse with them, so that they could quickly run away with their booty made of things and people; they fought in groups of ten, were led by an *onbaşı*, and did not use to camp in the same place for long: for instance, in the second half of the fifteenth century, their forays in Friuli lasted a minimum of four days (July 1478) and a maximum of ten days (November 1477), even though these quick raids went down in history as 'the Turkish invasions'. It has been proved that, at least in the sixteenth century, when these corps were becoming unfashionable, not only Muslims but also Christian peasants were enrolled as *akıncı*. By that time, the *gaza* spirit had little to do with men pushed to fight in the name of the Ottoman Empire by interest, profit or necessity.

The *akıncı*'s epic deeds ended at the beginning of the sixteenth century; other corps, such as the *gönüllüs* (volunteers) – that have been studied only recently –, took their place and borrowed their techniques. They too were soldiers coming from frontier areas, but their conscription was on a voluntary basis; they had to provide for their own equipment and the food; their highest ambition, supported by the Ottoman propaganda, was either to be rewarded with a *tımar* (estate) for their brave deeds or to join a regular corps.<sup>31</sup>

### 1.10 *Militärgrenze*

The presence of Ottomans in the heart of Eastern Europe, from the borders of Dalmatia to Podolia, created an area of political instability northwards and that situation influenced also the names given to some territories.

31 Fodor, *In Quest of the Golden Apple*, 278-279, where also the ambiguity of the Ottoman vocabulary as for the use of the words *gönüllü* (voluntary, brave), *garib yiğit* (strange, curious, foreign, homeless, poor), *gönüllü garib yiğit* and simply *yiğit* (young, hero, brave) and the groups of soldiers to whom these words were referred can be noticed.

Ukraine simply means 'marchland' and this word was used to point out that the land was the last strip of Poland/Lithuania (and later Muscovy), placed in front of the khanate of Crimea.<sup>32</sup>

The history of the Habsburg-Ottoman border along Croatia, Slavonia and Hungary was peculiar and complex. Since the sixteenth century, Christians equipped several areas with strongholds to protect themselves, but no agreement was made to mark a border line. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, instead, after the Treaty of Karlowitz and the creation of a real border line, the House of Habsburg organised the territories close to the Ottoman Empire into the so-called *Militärgrenze* (military border), entirely and directly controlled by Vienna and removed from the Croatian kingdom. Strongholds already existed in that area: from the Adriatic to the north of Transylvania and from Senj to Košice, however, the territory was organised in six regions, which were divided in captaincies (1. the Croatian border or Karlowitz generalship; 2. the Slav border; 3. the Hungarian border from the Drava to the Lake Balaton; 4. the Hungarian border from the Lake Balaton to the Danube; 5. the border of mining towns; 6. the upper Hungarian border); the system of strongholds was defended by German regiments. This was not the only characteristic and important element of the new territorial organisation; the lands were assigned mainly to south Slav peasants who took refuge there, found a house, and in return committed themselves to defend and protect their new land; thus, they became border men.<sup>33</sup>

The Ottoman territory ran on the other side of the *Militärgrenze*. It was studded with fortresses placed in defence of an empire. In the first years of the seventeenth century, the number of Ottoman strongholds reached the number of Habsburg fortresses and thus remained almost until the end of the century. As Rhoads Murphey observed, such strongly militarised an area had obviously a great geo-political importance for the Ottoman rulers; in comparison, the Ottoman-Safavid border, which was almost twice as long, was much less defended and more vulnerable.<sup>34</sup>

The Treaty of Karlowitz established a border line between the Ottomans and the House of Habsburg for the first time, and for this reason historians considered it as the moment when the Porte finally welcomed the

32 Power, *Introduction*, 6-9.

33 Pálffy, *The Origins*, 3-5, 60-63; Lazanin-Štefanec, *Habsburg Military Conscription*, 91-94. According to Dieter Werkmüller (*Recinzioni*, 650), the German word *grenze*, like the Russian *graniza*, comes from the word used in old Slavic to mean the oak; likewise, in the Middle Ages, the word *marka* was used to mean a wood; other (see Zanini, *Significati del confine*, 10) affirm that it originates from the habit of marking out the border with a cross - the Slavic *gran' -*, carving it on the trees. On the Croatian and Serbian words *kotar*, *meda*, *krajina*, cf. Roksandić, *Stojan Jankovic*, 240-241; Roksandić, *Ottomans*, 415-425.

34 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, xviii; Ágoston, *The Ottoman-Habsburg Frontier*, 287-296.

European legal principle of the state border. By now, this historiographical idea has been challenged, but it is important to note that it was between the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, when the concept of the linear border was widely known, that political, juridical and fiscal relations became more definite, ideological, religious and sanitary controls more common, and the military defence of a state easier not only in Europe but also in the sultans' Empire. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Peace of Westphalia marked the end of two universalisms, i.e. the Catholic and the imperial ones. Thus, European states could no longer settle their quarrels appealing to a superior authority. The equilibrium policy was the winning formula necessary to prevent a great power from getting the supreme hegemony. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire, which was coming out of the long period of crisis called the 'Sultanate of Women', partially recovered its strength. In the past ages, it had to face either a single Christian enemy or fragile alliances that were soon broken off but now it had to fight against a strong and close-knit alliance of sovereign states. For this reason, both in the European capitals and Istanbul, the art of diplomacy and negotiation played a more and more prominent role, together with the art of defining borders, which is one of its most important elements.<sup>35</sup>

35 Carassi, *Topografi e diplomatici*, 192-194.

