

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

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## 2 The Frontier

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### 2.1 The Frontier: Symbol and Myth

The frontier is a belt of territory facing the enemy, that may expand or fall back, and where different laws and religions can find a way to live together more easily than elsewhere. It is a land of clash and heroism, but of pragmatism and coexistence too. In the history of Christian-Muslim relations, this frontier way of living was, perhaps, more important than what people usually believe: between Turks and Europeans there were not only the battle of Lepanto and the two sieges of Vienna, but also many years of peaceful or armed coexistence, over land and sea, from the Balkans to the Mediterranean Sea and from the Black Sea to the Indian Ocean. It may be argued that it is easier to remember the won or lost battles and the hate for the enemy than the silence of a truce. Public papers gathered in the archives support this partial view: they are produced when people clash and not when they live in peace.

Beside the land frontier there was a sea one too. It may be affirmed that the concept of frontier suits sea waters better than land: as a matter of fact, it is impossible to place boundary stones or *metae* there to distinguish what belongs to one or the other state; everything mingles and merges; the army corps continually advance or withdraw without finding a safe heaven there. It is usually thought that a shore or a rocky coast can be a border. During the most ancient times of Islam, harbours themselves – such as Alexandria, Damietta and Ashkelon – were called *ṭajr* and were linked more to the concept of frontier than to the border one. Finally, sea people, namely those who knew and sailed it, were perhaps nearer to a society that lived in an area of uninterrupted war, or armed truce, rather than in an area of peaceful coexistence.

If we go over the history of the Near East, we may draw a parallel between the sea and other two similar elements: the steppe and the desert. It was difficult to mark the limits in all of them. Food and water usually had to be brought from afar by those who ventured there; only groups sur-

vived, such as the Turkish and Mongolian tribes that advanced westwards, or the caravans that crossed the deserts, or the ships and the convoys of ships (the Venetian *mude*) that sailed the Mediterranean Sea. The raid, the fight and the assault on the enemy or the weakest were characteristic of those who inhabited these places where nature looks hostile and only the sky – by night with the stars or by day with the sun – seems to be able to show the way. Desert and sea could appear as two similar realities: it is not by chance that Arabic employs the word *mağrā*, which denotes the daily distance covered by a camel, to mean the distance covered by a ship in a day; the verb *rakiba*, namely ‘riding’, is employed to mean the act of sailing.

The desert and the sea, together with the forest, were considered to be places of tests and initiations, meditation, peregrinations, hallucinations and demonic snares also in the western imagination for a long time. As Jacques Le Goff showed in his classic essay, these realities were geographical and symbolic at the same time, namely places where believers could find their way to Heaven. The *Life of Antony*, written by the bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (about 360), focuses on the desert; shortly after, Saint Jerome moved to the desert of Qinnasrin in Syria, not far from Antioch. Many other eastern hermits lived in those extreme areas. Instead, Celtic and Nordic monks decided to wander from island to island; the sea was their desert, cold like the one described in the *Voyage of Saint Brendan* and studded with islands just like the desert is studded with oases.<sup>1</sup>

In the Middle Ages the sea, such as the desert, could appear to be an extreme place, where a hermit could more easily get closer to God. In the ninth-century Near East, another character-type, i.e. the warrior literate, thought that the stay in a frontier area was an élite devotional practice. As Houari Touati stated, in this period people widely accepted the idea that living or visiting a frontier facing an infidel enemy was a praiseworthy act. It was a new concept that was developed by the traditionalist thought in the preceding century and that, as a consequence, did not meet with the first Muslims’ approval. According to this author, the chronological anteriority of the use of the word *ğazw* (raid) – compared to *ğihād* – to mean the fight along the frontier, is one of the elements that allow to state that this ideology, unlike what many argued, was a belated fact. The myth of the frontier, together with the experiences linked to it, was ideologically parallel to the Islamic pilgrimage: advancing towards Mecca was a similar praiseworthy act that symbolised getting closer to God. The journey to the farthest lands of the *dār al-islām* was performed also by learned men and scholars in search of new masters – therefore, the wells of knowledge –, or

1 Le Goff, *Il meraviglioso e il quotidiano*, 27-44; Gast, *Un espace*, 165-172.

of legitimation. A scholar who had lived in those extreme areas, even for a short period and without fighting the infidels, gained a new charisma in front of ordinary people; thus, he could be considered to be a real martyr and witness of Islam. In that society, just like the utmost centres of Muslim religion, from Mecca to Medina and Jerusalem, the border too could appear to be holy; it was considered to be a source of spiritual energy. Those who approached it received strength and legitimation.<sup>2</sup>

This ideology was then drawn on in the most well-known myths of the origins of the Ottoman dynasty as well: Osman and his son Orhan, as *gazi* warriors, received their right to rule an empire by their fighting against the Byzantine infidels.

Since its arising as an independent discipline, more than a century ago, historiography regarding the Ottoman Empire had to face the concept of frontier and it became so important that Heywood stated that in this field it is necessary to espouse a historiographic point of view rather than a historical one.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars, inflamed by the nationalism of the Kemalist era, read only the evidence of a cultural and political old-Turkish inheritance in the most ancient Ottoman chronicles.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, using the same sources, other scholars stressed the importance of the Islamised Byzantine element in the first Ottoman administration.<sup>5</sup> Wittek,<sup>6</sup> still recognising that not only did these two worlds and civilisations fight but also met, suggested the so-called 'ideology of the holy war': from this moment on, the state created by Osman and his first successors was considered to be a political entity fighting in the name of Allah and scholars began to look only for the influence of that ideology in every aspect of the life of this period. At the beginning, a few, such as Köprülü and Friederik Giese,<sup>7</sup> rose up against this thesis but it soon became indisputable. Only around the 80s did a considerable number of opponents rise up: Gyula Káldy-Nagy, followed by Heywood, challenged Wittek's thesis from a historical and methodological point of view; Rudi Paul Lindner regarded the first warriors as fighters in the name of the shamanism rather than in the name of Islam; Imber encouraged his colleagues to consider if Turkish sources were reliable or not; then, also other scholars such as Ronald C. Jenning,

2 Touati, *Islam et voyage*, 9-18, 96-121, 237-249.

3 Heywood, *The Frontier*, 228; cf. Wittek and the *Austrian Tradition*, 7-25; *Boundless Dreams*, 32-50.

4 Cf. Mehmet Fuat Köprülü's many works, for example *Alcune informazioni, passim* (Italian translation).

5 Cf. Gibbon's 1916 work, *The Foundation of the Ottoman State*.

6 Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire; Deux chapitres de l'histoire de Turcs de Roum, passim*.

7 About Giese, see what Heywood states in *Boundless Dreams*, 46-48.

Aldo Gallotta and mainly Kafadar went on this way, severely criticising Wittek's thesis.<sup>8</sup>

Lately, the issue of the ties or the independence of the first Ottomans from the 'holy war', instead of draining away, gave rise to further research and closer examinations, probably linked to present-day events and the subsequent interest in everything that is Muslim.<sup>9</sup>

Ottomans found relevant material for their 'tales of the origins' in the epic of the frontier against the Byzantines: the first fixed date of their history is a battle won against the *basileus*, namely the Battle of Bapheus (27 July 1302). At the beginning, they were only one of the several Islamic states fighting against Christianity in a narrow strip of Anatolia, but they soon amplified their field of action and, in the following centuries, the word 'Turk' became a synonym of Muslim. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, their empire kept expanding and it had no longer to fight in a narrow piece of land; many frontiers made their appearance both eastward and westward, southward and northward, and their opponents were not only Christians or Europeans anymore, but also Shiite Persians, or Berbers living in the inland regions of the Maghreb.

## 2.2 The Peace Agreements and the Frontier

If we take into consideration the Ottoman *ahdnames* issued for the European states, we realise that, from a diplomatic point of view, this type of document may be divided into two sub-categories, even though their effects were often the same. The most ancient group derives from the armistice (*hudna*), whereas the other derives from a general safe-conduct (*amān 'amm*) granted by a Muslim leader to a group of people. The former implied not only the oath on the part of those who issued them, but also a similar document issued by the other state's sovereign, who in turn had to swear not to break the agreement: they were *instrumenta reciproca*. The latter, instead, were unilateral decrees issued by the sultan in the form of *nişan* or *berat* (imperial privilege), and did not need any ratification on the part of the opposite party. Over the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the latter was prevalent and also the *instrumenta reciproca* started to take some of the formal characteristics of the privileges. Western diplomats, generally speaking, did not notice the slight difference existing between the two types of document, so much so that both were known by the name

8 Káldy-Nagy, *The Holy War*, 467-473; Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans*; Imber, *Paul Wittek*, 65-81; *The Ottoman Dynastic Myth*, 7-27; *The Legend*, 67-75. See Jennings, *Some Thoughts*, 151-161; Gallotta, *Mito Oguzo*, 41-59; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 1-59.

9 Cf. Linda T. Darling, *Contested Territory*, 133-163.

of *capitulations*, even though the nineteenth-century ones, which were imposed by European states and once and for all abolished only in the 20s of the twentieth century, originated from the Ottoman *berat* rather than from the armistices.<sup>10</sup>

If we take into consideration the states in which one or the other document was drawn up, however, we might make some remarks. First of all, the documents included in the category of the *hudna* were issued for states like the Habsburg Empire, Venice or Poland, whereas those who were classifiable as *berat* were given to the representatives of France, England and Holland since the end of the sixteenth century. Therefore, on the one hand, there were state entities with which the Porte not only had fought some wars, but which were also territorially neighbouring; on the other, instead, they were states that were geographically very far and with which the Ottoman Empire had come into contact mainly because of their commercial and sea activities.

In particular, three capitulations deserve a more thorough examination since they seemingly contradict what was stated before. The first document was granted by Selim I to the Republic of Venice in 1517, right after the conquest of Mamluk Egypt, namely a state that had been providing for ages protection documents to Venetian merchants that went there to trade: it is an *ahdname* that falls under the category of the general safe-conduct, i.e. a type of document that had never been granted before by an Ottoman ruler to Saint Mark's subjects. However, if we start from the assumption that Selim wanted to act as the heir of Egypt, as well as its conqueror, and that what was said for Ottomans applied to Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers of Egypt – namely that they had granted *hudna* to overseas sovereigns that were their neighbours and *amān 'āmm* to the merchants of Italian towns –, then also the diplomatic characteristics of the 1517 *ahdname* seem to be easily understandable.

Another document may be more hardly intelligible. It is a question of the capitulations that were granted to France in 1536 and that, on the basis of the existing copies, probably were a proper treaty drawn up between two states that placed themselves on the same level. In this case, it may be observed that the original of the act cannot be found today and could not be found in 1569 either, when a new document was granted to King Charles IX in the form of a *berat*, but modelled on the clauses usually granted to Venetians. Historians have defended the validity of these capitulations for a long time, to the extent that the history of international law, forgetful of other agreements that are older of more than a century, has often regarded them as the first capitulations granted to a European state by the Porte. The most recent historiogra-

10 İnalçık, *İmtiyâzât*, 1208-1219; Wansbrough, *İmtiyâzât*, 1207-1208; Pedani, *La dimora*, 32-35; Papp, *Der ungarisch-türkische Friedensvertrag*, 67-68; Papp, *Christian Vassals*, 719-730.

phy prefers to believe it was just a draft wanted by the Grand Vizier İbrahim pasha, who was to be executed soon after, probably because he had become too powerful and intolerant of the sovereign authority. Kanûnî Süleyman – the sovereign who, more than anyone else, left traces of farsightedness, self-confidence and strength in the history of the Empire – ordered the execution: this sovereign, who had defeated the Habsburgs in Mohács, would hardly have demeaned himself by undersigning a document in which he appeared on the same level as Francis I, the ‘king of the province of France’, who had been defeated by the Habsburg armies in Pavia.<sup>11</sup>

As for the third document, namely the agreement of 1581 with Spain, it has been observed that it appears in the form of a *temessük* (receipt) that confirms what was established between the second vizier Siyavuş pasha and the Spanish ambassador Giovanni Marigliani, i.e. the keeping of the peace between the two countries, on earth and at sea, for three years. As Dariusz Kolodziejczyk showed for the following period, Ottoman practice could provide for an exchange of provisional receipts among official representatives of two states that had to be confirmed by means of an *ahdname*. The explanation of the diplomatic peculiarities of the Ottoman-French document of 1536 may be found in this observation. So far, the importance of the *temessük* in the drawing up of international agreements has not attracted the attention it deserves; instead, it is useful to understand the development of the peace agreements between Europe and the Ottoman Empire and to place well known international documents, such as the ‘Peace of Zsitvatorok’ or the ‘Treaty of Karlowitz’, in their real dimension; contrary to what has often been said, they do not represent a renewal of the diplomatic practice, but rather the enforcement of what had already been employed. The *temessüks* – that were very flexible and, if used with other European states, easily influenced by western terminology and diplomatics – played an important role on the occasion of the delimitations of borders, as will be shown later.

Now we can come to the statement with which we started this speech. Whether or not the other state shared a frontier with the Ottoman Empire influenced the kind of agreement the sultan made with the Christian ruler. A document that derived from the armistice was used for the inhabitants of the neighbouring areas, whereas a privilege or a general safe-conduct that might protect people and goods could be granted to those who lived in distant countries.

<sup>11</sup> Skilliter, *William Harborne*, 1; Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, 131-133; Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 47-49. See also Matuz, *Capitulations*, 182-192, who employs two documents in support of his thesis: the first makes reference to the Venetian capitulations and not to the French ones; the second follows the capitulations of 1569 as may be clearly read in the published facsimile text. A document of 1541, where a confirmation of the friendly settlement with the king of France is mentioned, is more intriguing on this point (*Documenti turchi*, no. 455; edited by Gökbilgin, *Venedik*, vol. 1, 153, no. 26).

## 2.3 The Society of the Frontier

Before taking into consideration the Ottoman frontier, we should go over the customary stereotypes of a society of the frontier. It is usually a male environment, where women are few and children do not exist; the living conditions are violent; killings and heinous crimes are committed in the name of religion (or profit or the necessity to appropriate someone else's space). Also heroic and savagely romantic characters, however, belong to this category of men: spurred by an ideal drive, they fight against the enemy – the hostile nature or a people different as for religion, culture and origin. Society and men are barbarian anyway, mainly if compared to the life led in the furthest and most central areas of the state. The other, i.e. the different, does not need comprehension and does not have to be understood, but must be only politically and, if possible, physically, wiped out. Similar ideas may be found not only in historiography, but also in the chronicles or contemporary literary works or works that came slightly after the narrated events, if the author wrote mainly to support a certain ideology or to create a founding myth that had to be politically used. Thus, we should pay more attention to the sources than we usually do, mainly if we use papers written for a wide public and not documents drawn up for practical or administrative reasons.

With regard to the first Ottomans, we have to settle for few available evidence, mostly chronicles, and try to understand their real dimension divesting them of the ideology to find only their true elements. The revisionism of Wittek's thesis has led also to study again the ancient chronicles, i.e. 'Aşıkpaşazâde's, the so-called anonymous ones and Uruc's, as well as to reconstruct the political ideology of the environment that produced them and to imagine what their sources, namely the *takvims* (annals), the *menakib-names* (semi-legendary tales), the *gazavat-names* (heroic deeds, mainly in frontier areas), which are missing today, could say.<sup>12</sup>

If for the first period of Ottoman history almost exclusively subsequent literary works exist, for the following one (since the capture of Constantinople onwards), the documents that allow to look at men's deeds from different angles increase in number. Therefore, it is easier to observe that not only opposing entities existed but contacts and encounters too, and that the good and the right were not the prerogative of a single part but everything mingled and crisscrossed.

An illuminating example of this frontier society may be the so-called

12 Cf. Woodhead, *Ta'rīkh*, 313; Taeschner, '*Ashık-pasha-zâde*, 699; Ménage, *Ottoman Historiography*, 168-179; Inalcık, *Ottoman Historiography*, 152-167. For a historiographical survey carried out in this way, see Yerasimos, *La fondation de Constantinople*, 1-4, 247-249, which is essentially based on the Turkish legends created after the conquest of the town in 1453 for ideological reasons.

'blood brotherhood' (*pobratimstvo*), which was created with a proper rite and was present in the Balkan area since the seventeenth century at least. Similar customs strengthen the idea of a society where the ideal of the *ḡihād* made room for different lifestyles. Also the great traveller Evliya *celebi*, who was witness to a similar episode in 1660, gapingly talked about it. He told the story of a *gazi* who took part in a skirmish with the troops of the close Republic of Venice and was discovered while hiding a Christian. When it was time to kill the prisoners who had been captured, the Ottoman warrior prostrated himself before the pasha asking to have mercy on his enemy: «Mercy, Grand Vizier! I have sworn brotherhood with this captive on the battlefield; we have pledged each other our faiths. If you kill him, he will go to paradise with my faith and that will be an injury to me, wretch that I am; and if I die, the faith of this captive, with whom I have sworn brotherhood, will stay with me and we will both go to hell, so that again I am the loser».<sup>13</sup> The pasha was told that a Christian and a Muslim, by means of the ceremony of the blood brotherhood sealed by the formula «your faith is mine and my faith is also yours», committed themselves to save the other if this was taken captive, because otherwise the hell promised by their religion would wait for them. Even though he was astonished, the pasha decided to free them both. As Wendy Bracewell explains, the *pobratimstvo* was a form of false relationship spread among the Slavs of the south and still known and practised in the twentieth century; it was a way to create new ties and family obligations. It was often practised between people who belonged to similar groups, for example between two Orthodoxes, or two Catholics, or two women or two men (in which case, but only rarely, this relationship implied also a homosexual relation). In the case of two Catholics, this relationship might also be officiated in front of a priest and made more solemn with a mass, to the extent that Zadar's and Split's archiepiscopal synod banned such rites. Epic songs of frontier areas among Slavs, inhabitants of Veneto, imperials and Turks often tell of examples of blood brotherhood and heroisms linked to it. The *pobratimstvo*, thus, appears to be an important factor of coexistence in the Balkans and testifies that this world experienced not only splits between different faiths, cultures and empires, but could also find unifying elements and common interests. If on the one hand religion and politics were dividing elements in that society, on the other sharing common values such as heroism, honour and virility made peoples living along the Balkan frontier move closer.<sup>14</sup>

The society of the frontier, however, was not an idyllic environment; disorder, anarchy and brigandage marked that area, together with pil-

13 Official English translation made by Bracewell (see *Frontier Blood-Brotherhood*, 29-30).

14 Bracewell, *Frontier Blood-Brotherhood*, 29-45; see also İnalçık, *Foundation*, 59-62.



lages, famines and plagues, whereas people hardly appeased their hunger and resorted to any means to survive, as Vesna Miović-Perić states while describing the several heinous crimes that occurred outside the state of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) during the Morean War (1686-1699).<sup>15</sup>

## 2.4 The Sea as a Frontier

In 1377 the great Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun wrote in his *Muqaddima* that, in the time of Byzantines, Franks and Goths, Muslims watched most of the Mediterranean Sea and no Christian board could float there.<sup>16</sup> That statement was taken up again in the twentieth century by the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, who also wrote: «With Islam a new world was established on those Mediterranean shores which had formerly known the syncretism of the Roman civilization. A complete break was made, which was to continue even to our own day. Henceforth two different and hostile civilizations existed on the shores of *Mare Nostrum*. And although in our own days the European has subjected the Asiatic, he has not assimilated him. The sea which had hitherto been the centre of Christianity became its frontier. The Mediterranean unity was shattered».<sup>17</sup> Pirenne's very much debated thesis focused on the idea that the barbarian invasions did not break the Mediterranean unity, which was broken once and for all by the coming of a different faith and a different culture, i.e. Islam; since then trades stopped definitely and, as a consequence, a recession occurred in the West, while Muslims became the absolute masters of the Mediterranean Sea in the ninth and tenth centuries, as Ibn Khaldun observed.

Many historians were prompted to reject that theory for various reasons: Dopsch, Lopez, Ehrenkreutz among others asserted that the recession of the Carolingian period had many causes, that Christianity and Islam were never two rigidly opposing worlds, and that trades did not stop so abruptly, even though – as Elihau Ashtor maintained trying to mediate – there was a severe crisis of the sea trade from the seventh to the ninth century. In his introduction to a recent reissue of Pirenne's famous work, Ovidio Capitani argues that the historiographical debate ended without losers or winners, even though that book is still somehow stimulating: the use of other disciplines, such as archaeology, allowed to detect the key role of the Arab and the Muslim in the Mediterranean trade, whose spreading was more the product than the cause of western economic crisis.<sup>18</sup>

15 Miović-Perić, *Brigandage on the Ragusan Frontier*, 41-54.

16 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, vol. 2, 41-42.

17 Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, 152-153.

18 Pirenne, *Maometto e Carlomagno*, v-xxxiv.

Without entering into this debate again, we may still employ Pirenne's words as a spur to delve into the problem represented by the stormy relation that existed between Muslims and the sea, namely a subject that has been the main field of research for several historians in the last few years, e.g. from Bono to Bonaffini, from Picard to Khalilieh and Planhol among others.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the new civilisation that overlooked the Mediterranean coasts regarded the sea as a new frontier along which they could advance, but many believed that it was an entity that was hostile in itself. One of the very first tales of Islam tells that the caliph 'Utmān (644-656) would have let Mu'āwiya go towards Cyprus only if the expedition would be completely safe and if his wife would go with him to prove it; then, Mu'āwiya sailed not only with his wife, but with his sister too, thus organising the first Muslim sea expedition.<sup>20</sup>

Arabs very rapidly moved from desert sands and camels to waves and ships: there were three expeditions against India in 636; Alexandria became Muslim in 645; the expedition against Cyprus was in 648-649. Therefore, the new conquerors immediately found themselves in front of two different ways of considering the sea and their position would be inherited by Ottomans. On the one side, there was the Mediterranean Sea where raids alternated with wars and pirates and privateers with sovereign states' warriors and armies; on the other side, there was the Indian Ocean, especially the Persian Gulf, whose waters were characterised by a thriving trade that was constantly hampered by a piracy that was endemic and lasted for more than a thousand years. Episodes of proper war were fewer than in the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, at the beginning of the European expansion in those seas, the Portuguese, given their technical superiority, got the better of the warship sent forth by the Mamluks. Only after the British intervention, the conquest of Aden in 1839 and the agreements of 1853, did the 'coast of the pirates' (as the southern area from Rams to Dubai was called) finally become the 'coast of the truce' (*ṣulḥ*).<sup>21</sup>

In his classic work on Philip II's times, Fernand Braudel considers piracy as a supplementary form of the great war by sea.<sup>22</sup> Examining the Mediterranean of the sixteenth century, he observes that, after the big conflicts made of fleets, expeditionary forces and great sieges that ended in 1574, this activity substituted much bigger conflicts. This probably happened

19 See, among the recent ones, these volumes: Bonaffini, *Un mare di paura*; Bono, *Il Mediterraneo*; Khalilieh, *Islamic Maritime Law*; Picard, *La mer et les musulmans*; Picard, *L'océan Atlantique*; de Planhol, *L'Islam et la mer*. As for the Indian Ocean, see also Özbaran, *The Ottoman Response*.

20 de Planhol, *L'Islam et la mer*, 25.

21 Kelly, *Ḳurṣān*, 511.

22 Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi*, 919-920.

at intervals in the previous centuries as well. There was an uninterrupted alternation of moments when state fleets acted and moments when mainly pirate ships acted during the historical development of Muslim navy. A quick *excursus* throughout the centuries,<sup>23</sup> however imprecise and superficial it may be, shows that both dynasties or sovereigns interested in sea operations and state entities completely committed to piracy existed. Most dynasties and Muslim reigns, however, despised and looked down on sea activities, considering them as unworthy of true warriors, even though the sea frontier was not very different from the land one as regards the lifestyle it allowed, the society it housed and the clashes that occurred there. The Muslim sea frontier obviously experienced the counterstroke of such behaviours; when the sovereigns committed themselves to the improvement of the fleet, or supported the pirate forays, it usually advanced; instead, when they took no interest, it tended to fall back.

23 It may be observed that, under the Umayyads, there were some clashes where the fleet was used: for example, in 716 Maslama, the caliph's uncle, employed both the fleet and the army in the siege of Byzantium, but he was driven back by Leo III the Isaurian and by the 'Greek fire'. After this clash, the first Mediterranean conflict between Muslims and Byzantines ended. With the Abbasid Empire, however, the caliphs turned their back on the sea and the sea expansion was carried on by smaller and more organic formations with more limited means and goals. Since the end of the eighth century, squads coming from the caliphate's fringe territories reft and traded. It was an activity that kept an economical considerable significance for ages; coast peoples usually lived by both fishing and piracy; they did not want to achieve great military feats or to take part in a destructive war, but to capture slaves and goods. The more and more urgent request of slaves on the part of the court of Córdoba, or a chaotic situations within Muslim Spain could push men to turn into pirates. Vikings' piratical expeditions of 844-976 against Spanish coasts caused a revitalisation of the harbours and of the military organisation of the Omayyad of al-Andalus. Also the Aghlabids' dynasty (800-909) stood out for an intense naval activity that culminated in the conquest of Sicily when also Naples, Gaeta and Amalfi sailed across the Mediterranean with their fleets; they earned considerable incomes thanks to the piracy undertaken along the Italian coasts as well. Also the Tulunids, who reigned in Egypt from 868 to 905, mustered a powerful army and a good fleet, followed by the Fatimids who inherited Sicily (909) and conquered Egypt (969). Saladin, who possessed a fleet of 80 ships in 1179 and defeated the Franks that had penetrated the Black Sea in 1183, dealt with the needs of the war to hinder the crusaders also at sea; the events of the third crusade caused the collapse of this navy in 1189-91. After the Ayyubids, also the Mamluks, who had taken power in mid-thirteenth century, did not care much about the sea: only the great Baybars seemed to be aware of the importance it might have, even though only low-level people engaged in the sea activity. Then, also Byzantines, urged by big economical issues, dismantled their fleet. Therefore, mainly Genoese, Venetians or Catalans sailed across the seas of the East until the arrival of the Ottomans.

## 2.5 Sea People: Privateers, Pirates and Others

Wars and fights between Christians and Muslims took place not only along the land front but also along the sea one. The ideology of the *ḡihād* was not restricted to fights on foot or with horses; rather, it was often used in connection with those who opposed the Christians at sea both in the most ancient times and in the modern era. The atavistic fear of a hostile and unknown element for people used to the desert sands such as the Arabs was justified by a series of traditions that – however generically in favour of naval expeditions, the pilgrims' sailing towards Mecca, the use of sea resources and the expansion of the sea trade – mainly encouraged those who decided to fight against the infidels by sea and promised to these martyrs twice the recompense of those who died fighting on the mainland.<sup>24</sup> The Muslims who regarded the sea as their battlefield resorted to this *corpus*.

Sailors, pirates and privateers inhabited this liquid frontier, but these categories very often mingled, even though, at least theoretically, the difference between privateers and pirates was clear, at least within the European world: privateers had to attack only the enemy ships of the sovereign who gave them the licence to sail, whereas the pirates did not follow any law or legality.<sup>25</sup> If we take into consideration some Ottoman *ahdnames*, we find out that, in this regard, the Muslim point of view was slightly different: if on the one hand there were the pirates (*harami levend*) who were clearly recognisable as law-breaking fighters, on the other the privateers (*korsan* in Turkish) were solely those who acted in the name of a western sovereign; instead, the Barbaries were not given this appellation but were called *levends*<sup>26</sup> of the Maghreb suggesting that their fighting against Christian warships did not fall within the activities accorded by a sovereign, but it was a due behaviour every Muslim must display. We can find the same distinction between the Ottoman word *levend* and the Arabic *qorṣān* in some Arabic peace agreements issued by the sultan of Morocco in the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Beside *qorṣān*, the Arabic language employs *liṣṣ al-baḥr* (thief of the sea) to mean the pirate and *ḡāzī al-baḥr* to mean the Muslim who fights against the infidel.

Even though the distinction among pirate, privateer and *levend* was clear, such strict a classification could not exist in practice: those who fought by sea in the name of a state (sometimes as soldiers by profession)

24 Khalilieh, *Islamic Maritime Law*, 160-176.

25 Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo*, 9-15.

26 *Levend* means 'irregular Ottoman serviceman', from which *deniz levendleri* (*levend* of the sea) comes, namely the *levend* par excellence. As for the use of *levend* in the Ottoman fleet, see Bostan, *Osmanlı bahriye teşkilâtı*, 241-244.

27 Pedani, *La dimora della pace*, 43-44.

could act as an outlaw when the circumstances were favourable. Therefore, sovereigns often did not hesitate before taking pirates into their service in order to get military benefit they could not gain differently. Also Ottomans applied that logic mainly between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries when their navy was not on the same level as some European ones. For instance, in 1501 after the clash with Venice and in 1515 on the eve of the conquest of Egypt, the sultans Bayezid II and Selim I mustered the *levends' fustas* to fight against the Christian ships. If at first the measure proved to be effective, then it was clear that the central power had to keep a careful control to prevent the captains (*reis*) from breaking the law and denying any authority. Thus, after arousing such a devastating strength, the latter had to be fought. Kara Tumuş, who was one of the most famous captains who had already fought in the Venetian-Ottoman conflict, was taken prisoner in 1503. In 1506 the janissaries and *silahdars*, embarked on galleys, defeated many pirates, whereas after 1517 it was necessary to fight against the pirate Kurtoğlu, who was to support the sultan's armies again in 1522.<sup>28</sup>

The fight of the Ottoman sailors against the Christians could fall within the *ġihād*, at least theoretically. Once the great season of the yearly Ottoman war campaigns ended in the second half of the sixteenth century, the *gazi* ideal, which the sultan did not want to set aside despite the changed political and military conditions, was devolved on the Barbary privateers. These seamen, at least nominally, were under his high sovereignty and continued his due fight against the infidels by means of their raids. Both the Porte and the Maghrebis often followed that ideology to argue points of view that were also opposing and based exclusively on economic and political reasons. Thus, peace could exist among the land armies while war could continue at sea, or vice versa. The sovereign of Morocco, Sīdī Muḥammad (1757-1790), displayed a similar behaviour and used to give the same importance to two factors that could seem antithetical at first sight: an inducement to the *ġihād* and the opening of his markets to Europe. For example, in 1774 he wrote to Charles III of Spain and suggested a distinction between the sea war and the land one and, shortly after, he announced to foreign consuls that his men, who were camped before Melilla, made war during the day, but smuggled during the night, while peace reigned at sea.<sup>29</sup>

28 Vatin, *L'ordre de Saint-Jean*, 126-129, 133-134.

29 Caillé, *Les accords*, 31, 65, 78-81.

## 2.6 The Sea Frontier: the Case of the Venetian Piracy

Going over the history of the Ottoman-Venetian sea frontier means, at least partially, writing another *histoire événementielle*. The fights between these two states were eleven and were characterised mainly by naval clashes, since the strength of the lagoon city lay in its fleet and it would be impossible to face the sultans' Empire solely by means of its land forces: the disparity would be unbridgeable. Besides the periods of sworn hostility when the sea turned into a theatre of clashes, the Mediterranean was a frontier area between Venice and the Porte during many periods of peace as well. The lack of general limits unanimously set brought about a situation of potential advances, clashes and skirmishes between the boats of the two parties. Thanks to their flags, ships represented small shreds of a state wandering in a water immensity that did not belong to anyone. There were state fleets busy with police tasks, merchant ships, boats, caiques, *fustas* of pirates, ships of privateers, ships belonging to Maghrebis who were Ottoman subjects. When we talk about the sea frontier in peacetime, we have to consider privateering and piracy and their historical development. A diachronic analysis shows that these activities, apart from their outcomes, were not always consistent. The fields of action, the forces and the support they had from the states involved in that endemic conflict changed across time.

In addition to the great war, there were often episodes of piracy, both on the Venetian and the Ottoman side. The same Venetian seamen sometimes acted as pirates, conforming to what happened in the Mediterranean where a real difference among pirates, privateers and regular soldiers did not exist. An example of this behaviour was the one held by the *governatore delle galee dei condannati*, Gabriele Emo, when in 1584 he raided Mehmed bey of Djerba's ship and killed also the young bey's mother and wife and many maidservants. The Republic paid about 60.000/70.000 ducats to settle this affair: maintaining the whole Venetian military apparatus in the Levant cost only the double. Emo paid it with his life, but other Venetian officials, who behaved as pirates, took no consequences. This was the case of the Venetian *provveditore all'armata* (admiral) Nicolò Pesaro, who crashed into a Turkish ship with a squadron of five galleys on 3 August 1499 and killed the entire crew. This episode, however, fitted in a situation that was degenerating more and more. Perhaps it was a cause, perhaps a consequence; the fact is that the war began a few months later. The beginning and the cessation of the hostilities, before a proper declaration of war and after peace had been signed, were characterised by episodes of piracy on the part of Venetians as well. Because of a difficult communication, tense minds and a desire for booty, the captains did not let slip the opportunities that could occur, even if their actions were opposite to the agreements in force. For example, there is an episode we may recall: in

1479, after the cessation of the hostilities, the *sopracomito* Scipione Bon attacked two Turkish ships loaded with goods in the harbour of Thasos. The painter of the sultan Sinan, together with his cousin Panteley Arfara, was a profit-sharer; Venetians hastened to refund them in order to avoid retaliations in the court. At the beginning of 1504, after peace had been agreed but not yet sworn, Venetians sank a ship of the sanjakbeg of Vlorë and Albany, Mustafa, near Ragusa and drowned its crew.<sup>30</sup>

The episodes of Venetian piracy against Ottoman subjects are not many; they were fewer than those perpetrated by other European states such as Malta and the Order of Saint Stephen that, committed to that activity, got mixed up with privateering; moreover, the Venetian state retained a high control not only on its men, but also on the sources of information. In general, Venetians knew how to get wealth elsewhere, mainly thanks to trade, while the state protected them taking upon itself the right of revenge and retaliation on the strangers. Moreover, the peace with the Porte was considered to be important, when it existed, and they did not want to exacerbate the souls; besides, the agreements always provided a mutual exchange of prisoners. In this way, many Muslim slaves managed to come back home just crossing Saint Mark's lands.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.7 The Ottoman Sea Frontier

We have more information regarding Ottoman attacks to Venetian ships in peacetime than the other way round. Whether they were pirates, privateers or simple sailors is of little consequence; on the contrary, the outcomes of this activity and its diachronic development are important. To simplify things we will talk about 'Barbary privateers' as for the Muslim world (like traditional historiography has it) and of 'pirates' for those who, coming from Ottoman Albanian and Greek coasts, attacked the Christian ships they met in order to rob them.

In the very first years of the fifteenth century, Venetians sent ten galleys to fight the pirates who had attacked them near Constantinople but they were not Turks - probably Genoese, Biscayans and Catalans. Soon afterwards, an Ottoman navy began to make its weight felt in the Mediterranean, even though in 1416 it clashed with the Venetian one near Gallipoli and lost.

When the war of 1463-1479 ended, Ottomans conquered Vlorë, namely the town placed right in front of Leuca in Apulia, and made

30 Fabris, *Un caso di pirateria veneziana*, 91-112; Zago, *Emo*, 628-631; Gullino, *Le frontiere navali*, 90; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 20a-d, 137, 147.

31 Bono, *Schiavi musulmani*, 32-34.

their appearance in the Adriatic. According to Venetians, there was an imaginary line that marked the ultimate border of their Gulf. After the peace, Venetians were completely ousted from the Aegean, where they kept the protectorate of the dukedom of Naxos. By then, the Muslim frontier between Venice and the Porte moved towards the Adriatic more and more.

Vlorë, together with other close harbours, was a nest of pirates for those who ventured out to those waters. When peace was signed in 1479, Mehmed II ordered Gedik Ahmed pasha to pay damages done by Vlorë's *fustas* to the Venetians ships that sailed within the Gulf. He prohibited his privateers from entering the Gulf with offensive aims against Venice and threatened to punish them if they would disobey. The local population did not abandon that activity: in 1488 his successor, Bayezid II, confronted with the doge's complaints, guaranteed the damages would be refunded and the malefactors punished. In 1479, outside the Venetian state, small Turkish groups carried out attacks in Grottammare (Ascoli Piceno); in 1485 in Montemarçiano, Marzocca and Mondolfo (between Fano and Ancona); in 1488 in Sinigallia and in 1506 in Apulia.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the sixteenth century, the mouth of the Adriatic was a dangerous area for ships. In 1533 Venetians complained about acts of piracy committed by Ottoman subjects; in 1536 Hayreddin Barbarossa occupied Castro for about ten days spreading terror in the neighbouring areas. In 1553-1554 another privateer, Turgud *reis*, attacked Apulia's coasts twice and reduced the 6.000 inhabitants of Vieste to slavery; in 1560 the Turkish fleet reached the Abruzzi. Watch-towers were built on the Adriatic western coasts; they were used to alert peasants and villages about the arrival of enemy ships so that they could plan the defence and be ready to fight or at least take shelter in fortified small places. In 1563, the *levends* that had captured 22 ships charged with olive oil in the Adriatic resold the booty to Vlorë, Durrës and Lezhë, and the following year the sultan protested because Süleyman *reis*'s, Parmaksız Mustafa's and Arab Hasan's galliots had been captured by Venetians; the Venetian *bailo* Daniele Barbarigo gave 25.000 gold ducats to the damaged as a compensation.<sup>33</sup>

Piracy and privateering were becoming more and more frequent, mainly after the end of the great Mediterranean war where the Ottoman Empire fought against Spain and other Christian powers. Senj's Christian and imperial pirates, i.e. Uskoks, joined the Muslims, while skirmishes between Venetian and Ottoman ships occurred more and more often in the

32 ASVe, *Comm*, reg. 16, no. 122, cc. 141-141v (=143-143v); *Documenti turchi*, nos. 4, 39; Nardelli, *Incursioni e minacce*, 42-43.

33 *Documenti turchi*, nos. 295, 305-306, 785-786; Nardelli, *Incursioni e minacce*, 43; Volpe, *Le torri di guardia*, 47-73; Cresti, *Le difese marittime*, 23-38.



Aegean. The Ottoman local authorities, pressed by the Porte (which was in turn pressed by the *bailo's* complaints), intervened to call their subjects to order. For example, in 1586 Murad III ordered the sanjakbeg and the qadi of Vlorë to prevent Mehmed *reis* from shipping with his galliot to pillage Venetian lands. In 1590, instead, the sanjakbeg Karlı-eli was ordered to prevent Lefkada's armed caiques from going out. Thirty-nine former Muslim slaves, who had been freed from a privateer Christian ship by Venetians, joined these *levends*. On 5 May 1594, the *rettore* (governor) of Šibenik, together with his three sons and other nobles, was attacked near Rogoznica by two Muslim frigates and three galleys, one of which had the insignia of a high-ranking officer, i.e. a lamp and a flag. The crew was killed, whereas the marshal and his relatives were taken prisoner.<sup>34</sup>

Papers relate what happened to the Venetian ships that anchored to take water but were looted, as in 1590 near the harbour of the Bojana river (close to Shkodër), and what happened to the inhabitants of Herceg Novi who got ready to attack Venetians and to the *reises* of Vlorë's galleys and galliots that ventured as far as Crete.<sup>35</sup> Since 1593 onwards, the sultan's orders, which enjoined the authorities of Herxegovina, Shkodër, Herceg Novi and Neretva to prevent the building of boats fit for privateering and to burn the ships built by the subjects to go in for piracy, increased.<sup>36</sup> People from the Maghreb penetrated into the Gulf more and more frequently: for example, in 1591 Murad *reis* of Algiers reached Split, Perast, Kotor and Budva; in 1595 Kara Deli arrived with five *fustas* and took two Venetian vessels.<sup>37</sup>

In the first half of the sixteenth century, only occasionally do we find the sultan preventing the inhabitants of the coast from helping the *levends*<sup>38</sup> but, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, these pirates have either Maghrebi or Albanian nouns from Valoë or Durrës. For instance, in 1605 the sultan ordered to restrain the wrongdoings of İbrahim *ağa* of Durrës, Mustafa *ağa*, Ahmed *kahya*, Bali, Mustafa, Hasan *kahya*, who were joined by Zafer *reis* of Algiers, *Arabacı* Hüseyin, Hasan of Tunis, Mehmed

34 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 330, cc. 13ab; b. 252, reg. 343, cc. 87-89; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 947, 1057.

35 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 330, cc. 6ab (1589), 15ab (1590), 32ab.

36 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 330, cc. 16, 136; b. 252, reg. 343, cc. 14, 33, 55, 57, 65, 66, 68, 76; b. 250, reg. 331, c. 14, 22; b. 250, reg. 332, c. 28, 42, 47, 64-68; b. 251, reg. 334, cc. 44, 46, 57, 75, 99; *Provveditori alla camera dei confini*, reg. 243 bis, fasc. *Cattaro, passim* (from the end of the sixteenth century to 1634). The issue was resumed in the eighteenth century, cf. ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 253, reg. 347, *passim*; b. 254, reg. 348, cc. 14-15; BOA, *MM*, reg. 6004, c. 26; *Documenti turchi*, no. 1240.

37 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 330, c. 98; b. 252, reg. 343, c. 62; Villain-Gandossi, *La Méditerranée*, 26-27, 36 (fifth part).

38 *Documenti turchi*, no. 295 (1533).

*reis* and Ömer of Herceg Novi's sons. People from the Maghreb, Valoë, Durrës, Herceg Novi and Risan were united in their attempt to penetrate into the Gulf of Venice with close-knit squads; moreover, there were *fustas* of *levends* built in Methoni, Koroni, Monemvasia and, in general, in the Peloponnese and in Lefkada.<sup>39</sup> The new pirates who lived along the coast started to treat Muslims and Christians in the same way when it was time to attack and raid. Also eminent characters, such as in 1611 the former sanjakbeg of Karlı-eli (Mehmed bey) and the sanjakbeg of Dukagin (Mehmed bey) did not disdain to leave Durrës with their galliots, caiques or *fustas* to plunder the Adriatic. Maghrebi *beylerbeyis* too did the same, such as Kasım pasha of Tunis, who sent Bizerte's galleys as well as his own one into the Adriatic around 1624. There were several attacks between 1622 and 1627 when Maghrebi privateers had already organised a complicity network along the Ottoman coast; the orders given by Istanbul to the *beylerbeyis* of Tunis or Algiers were more and more disregarded, to the extent that in 1626 the sultan turned to the *şeyhülislam* to have a *fetva* by means of which he could impose on them the obligation to return the Venetians who had been made prisoner, since Venice freed the Muslims that had fallen into its hands.<sup>40</sup>

Piracy continued all through the century, as the uninterrupted building or rebuilding of coast watch-towers bears witness. After the Cretan war (1645-1669), the piracy within the Adriatic resumed but it was not concealed by war reasons anymore. In 1670, the sultan ordered his local commanders to put an end to the attacks against Venetians on the part of the people from Ulcinj. The name of this place, which rarely appeared in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century documents that regarded the relations between Venice and the Porte, is cited more and more often from this moment on. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, after other wars, this place was on the same level as Vlorë and Durrës with regard to Ottoman piracy against Venetian ships; to restrain that activity, on the basis of the Treaty of Passarowitz of 1719, the inhabitants' galliots and other ships were confiscated and they were prohibited from building others.<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, Maghrebi flags that were hoisted on the yards started to be desired also by other Ottoman subjects who wanted to practise pi-

39 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 331, cc. 58, 60 (first *cemaziyülahır* 1014/14-23 September. 1605), 79, 85-86; reg. 335, cc. 7, 11, 41; b. 251, reg. 335, c. 29, half *receb* 1034/19-28 April. 1625; *Confini*, reg. 243bis, fasc. *Cattaro*, *şevval* 1037/4 June-2 July 1628 (the sultan to the sanjakbeg of Herzegovina and qadi of Herceg Novi for Risan).

40 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 332, cc. 22, 23, 38, 47; b. 251, reg. 334, cc. 121b-122a, 130, 56; reg. 335, cc. 56, 81a-82; BOA, *MM*, reg. 6004, cc. 34-35, 52, 104-105, 109, 126; *Documenti turchi*, no. 1196; Bostan, *Garp*, 67-69.

41 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 253, reg. 247, nos. 13, 14; b. 254, reg. 348, cc. 14-15; Volpe, *Le torri di guardia*, 62-63.

racy without being recognised – as a 1720 imperial order bears witness: in this occasion, people from Ulcinj hid themselves under the flags of the Maghreb. Therefore, we may ask how many attacks that the inhabitants of the western Adriatic coast and also historiography considered to be Maghrebi were actually carried out by other Ottoman subjects. Another imperial order, issued in 1723, prohibited the inhabitants of Ulcinj not only from using those ensigns but also from leaving their harbours. The ties between Maghrebis and people from the Ottoman Adriatic coast did not loosen; for example, in 1726 a man from Ulcinj took refuge in the Maghreb with a Barbary tartan and the sultan gave orders to Tripoli and Tunis to have the *marcigliana* he had robbed returned. Then, in 1728-29 the inhabitants of the town were ordered not to help Barbary privateers. The Republic was in such a sharp contrast with the people of Ulcinj (also because of a dramatic episode that occurred in Venice) that it obtained a *name-i hümayun* from the Porte, which was later reasserted in May 1729 and in March 1731, and which prohibited their ships (the only ones among the merchant ships of the Adriatic East coast) from entering the lagoon for any reason. In any case, the inhabitants of Ulcinj' habit of erecting Barbary ensigns continued to enjoy great favour, to the extent that the sultan had to prohibit it several times at the end of the 40s.<sup>42</sup>

The use of a fake flag was more common than we might think and the frequency of *name-i hümayuns* prohibiting Ulcinj subjects from hoisting the Barbary flag is astonishing. This is indicative of a practice that was not bearable by the Ottoman authorities anymore. Every ship that used to sail across the Mediterranean and elsewhere hid, together with its own, also other states' ensigns for protection in case of suspect sightings or to hide and be able to attack from a favourable position. The same Venetian admiral Angelo Emo – who was famous for the bombarding of Tunis and La Goulette and to whom the Naval Museum of Venice dedicated an entire room – led a little squadron of three ships towards Gibraltar and sailed under the English flag's protection, i.e. a banner it hoisted and substituted with the Venetian one only when, after having met the Spanish xebecs, the reciprocal visits began.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, in 1712 Hasan *reis* brought the fact of having disregarded a flag he thought to be fake (since the employment of others' ensigns was very common at the time) in his defence for having attacked an English tartan led by Peter Davis near Souda.<sup>44</sup> Saint Mark's flag was well-known and respected within

42 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 253, reg. 247, *passim*; b. 254, reg. 348, cc. 221-223; b. 255, reg. 351, cc. 1-2, 6-7; b. 256, reg. 353, c. 11, 12-13, 44-45, 292-294, 312-313, 324-326; reg. 354, cc. 30-34; b. 358, reg. 359, *passim*; b. 359, reg. 361, cc. 47-48; b. 259, reg. 362, cc. 27-28.

43 ASVe, *Arsenale*, b. 546. My acknowledgements go to Guglielmo Zanelli for this report.

44 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 253, reg. 247, first *ramazan* 1124/2-11 October 1712.

the Mediterranean, to the extent that the convoy of ships that left Venice on 8 July 1797 (i.e. after the fall of the Republic) could foist the ancient banner in its defence.<sup>45</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century, besides piracy, there was also the outbreak of some conflicts between the Most Serene Republic of Venice and the Barbary regencies that were more and more independent from the Porte. In 1766 Giacomo Nani and his squadron forced the *beylerbeyi* of Tripoli to pay for damage caused to Venetians by his privateers. In 1784-1786 Angelo Emo ordered his ships to draw up in battle order against Tunis and La Goulette, even though the conflict faded into peace in 1792 after his death, which was probably caused by poison. Other two wars, however short, broke out between Venice and North-African countries. In June 1795 the sultan of Morocco declared war on the Republic since the money of the yearly payment it had to give him had not yet arrived. The conflict ended at the end of October after the capture of only one Venetian ship and with the delivery of the due money. On 10 October 1796 the *dey* of Algiers declared war as an answer to the aggression experienced in İzmir by his *vekilharc*'s men on the part of a group of Venetian Slavonians; in this case, diplomatic contacts did not lead to any settlement of the conflict that ended, after the capture of some ships by Algiers, with the vanishing of the millenary Republic of Saint Mark from the international scene.<sup>46</sup>

Napoleon's armies, after the destruction of ancient state entities such as Venice or Malta, upset an equilibrium that had been slowly formed between Christianity and Islam throughout the centuries; after years of stagnation, the resumption of the Barbary privateering in the Mediterranean at the beginning of the nineteenth century was another indication of the fact that the political situation had changed.

## 2.8 The Sea Frontier: Final Remarks

Sea was a real frontier between Venice and the Porte both during declared wars and peacetime for centuries. Venice – together with its islands, harbours and, most of all, with his squadrons that sailed from Saint Mark basin every year – generated a barrier for the Ottoman armies right in the field where they were weaker, i.e. the sea one. It was an effective barrier and all Europe took advantage of it, even though it was fragile, destined to shatter here and there because of the Ottoman attack and then to regroup. As Braudel argues, «perhaps after all the Venetian line held because the

45 Zordan, *Il codice*, vol. 1, 52-54, 94.

46 Pedani, *Marocco*, 96.

Turks had already made breaches in it, doors and windows through which they could reach the West».<sup>47</sup>

When the great sea war left the Mediterranean for a wider space in the Atlantic, piracy and privateering in this inland sea were the proof of endless undeclared hostilities. At the same time, the government of Istanbul underwent a dramatic series of dynastic problems caused by repeated successions and infant or imbecile sultans, and it delegated (at least ideologically) the legal Muslim war against the infidels to its Maghrebi subjects. This was the period when the privateer activity was in the best: Algiers became gorgeous and rich thanks to the activity of its *reises'* booties, the first between 1560 and 1570, the second between 1580 and 1620. In the first years of the seventeenth century, Barbary ships penetrated into the Adriatic more and more often, in conjunction with the outbreak of the Uskok phenomenon, i.e. the pirates of Senj who, supported by the imperials, incessantly attacked both Venetian and Muslim ships. At the same time, Maghrebi and Dalmatian-Albanian, and even Aegean, Ottoman subjects acted hand in glove and created squadrons that used to go plundering together. We might suggest that Barbaries taught great piracy (or privateering) to the coast inhabitants; the latter appropriated their flags and started to act along the Adriatic coasts by themselves, blaming their ancient lords for their own massacres and raids.

Istanbul's behaviour towards this uncontrolled situation was contradictory: on the one hand, they could not totally disavow the Barbaries' privateering in the name of the sultan; on the other, their unjust attacks risked causing reprisals and clashes in a time that was ill-suited for a declared war. As a *name-i hümayun* of the first part of the moon of *muharrem* 1034/14-23 October 1624 says to the *beylerbeyis*, the beys, the Janissaries *ağa* and the chiefs of the Tunisian armies, after the attack of Perast by thirteen galliots,<sup>48</sup> «so far my subjects of those places accomplished heroic deeds and their swords are flashing, but now they must not upset the peace with my friends regarding them just like other Christian enemies... We have to distinguish between the friends and the enemies of the Porte». And Venetians, in peacetime, however Christian, were friends.

47 Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, 847.

48 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 251, reg. 334, cc. 122a-121b; BOA, *MM*, reg. 6004, cc. 109-110; Bono, *I corsari barbareschi*, 175.

