

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

Maria Pia Pedani

4 Living along the Border

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4.1 A Border Society

From a social and political point of view, a border area was different from any other. First of all, the political uncertainty was greater: not only war but also a renewal of peace agreements could lead to reallocate the lands to one or the other state. Peoples, especially if pushed by religious reasons, very often followed these changes and moved. Mercenary soldiers or companies were recruited more in those areas than anywhere else. Venice, for example, made good use of the Dalmatians' anti-Ottoman feelings, looked for alliances with local people and recruited many Serbians or Vlachs in its army. Ottomans found an element of strength in the *akıncıs*, mainly during their advance in the Balkans. Habsburgs created the *Militärgrenze*, namely an area where the male population was potentially formed by fighters.

In particular, according to various scholars, the structure of the Habsburg captaincies, inherited by the ancient Medieval states of Hungarians, Slovaks and Croatians, was imitated in the Ottoman captaincies, created in the Balkan conquered lands. The captaincy of Gradiška was created in 1537, the one of Krupa in 1565, the one of Bihac in 1592. In both states, they were military centres of local professional soldiers, both infantrymen and knights but in Ottoman Bosnia they were hereditary while in the Habsburg Empire they were not. Moreover, while in the latter they started to gradually decrease throughout the eighteenth century, the Ottoman ones stayed longer and still in 1829 they were thirty-nine in the *eyalet* of Bosnia.¹

A mountainous area placed close to a more fertile coast appears to be a special environment. Then, if also a border line runs in this territory, this may influence not only the customs of those who live there, but also the natural environment. Mirela Slukan, thoroughly analysing the area of the Triplex Confinium, showed that in such a zone a society committed to

1 Roksandić, *Stojan Jankovic*, 242; Moačanin, *Some Observations*, 241-246.

sheep-breeding and transhumance kept its customs longer than elsewhere, and only partially and very slowly changed into an agricultural society; an uncertain possession of the land, together with the fear of possible devastating wars, did not encourage to put down roots in certain areas.² This happened only when the international situation was stable and the state helped agriculture, as Habsburg and Venetian local administrations did. For instance, the introduction of the potato, promoted in the *Militärgrenze* at the end of the eighteenth century, greatly helped to convert the semi-nomadic population into a resident one.

Habsburg and Ottoman lands had also a different distribution of the villages that were structured in two different ways. In the latter, the houses were assembled in small family units (*zadruga*, 'extended family'): for instance, the village of Klenovac was formed by nine houses gathered in six groups placed on the side of a mountain among pastures, forests and lands, but without a road in the true sense of the word that linked them together. When Ottoman countries started to go over to the Empire, also their structure started to change and the houses assembled mainly along the trade roads.

In the Dalmatian area the transhumance was influenced by geography as well; the climate of a dry coast (into possession of Venice) was suitable for a winter permanence of the herds, whereas the mountains, however Imperial and mainly Ottoman, were wetter and more suitable for summer pastures. Moreover, men used to gather wood in the mountains for the needs both of the coast and the inland. This intense exploitation done before the agreement on the Triplex Confinium in 1699 contributed towards the creation of nude and barren soils in the Venetian part and towards a significant reduction of the forests in the Ottoman Lika region.

At least until the late eighteenth century, the shepherds of both states did not find a real blockage in the state border. They went in the inland each year in spring and in autumn they headed to the coast. This happened also in the area of Otton, Plavno, Strmca, not far from Debelo Brdo, where the Triplex Confinium had been officially established and where, as we already saw, the presence of shepherds had a peculiar influence on the border line.

2 Slukan, *Cartographic Sources*, 72-75.

4.2 Trade

A border society usually shares two cultures and two ways of living, speaking, being. Even in Dalmatia, or in the Aegean zone, where Venetian and Ottoman, Christian and Muslim territories were neighbouring, people usually exchanged goods, did business together and, in general, talked. In the Modern Era and, even more so, in the previous period even a river or a mountain did not create an almost impenetrable 'rolling shutter' border, which is common today and due mainly to technical progress.

As Ottoman and Venetian sources testify, Christians and Muslims who lived in those area traded and attended the same fairs. For example, in 1527 the *provveditore* (governor) in Zakynthos sent some of his men to buy horses at the fairs held in the sanjak of Morea; in the same area, in 1537, some Venetian merchants were attacked and robbed of 500 or 600 Venetian ducats; in 1533 a Venetian merchant was attacked and killed by a gang of criminals of a close village while he was going to the famous and renowned market of Podgorica; in 1533 voivodes and *subaşı*s of Dulcinj tried to prevent the sultan's subjects, putting many obstacles in their way, from going to trade in Venetian Shkodër; in 1599 Fabrizio Salvaresa thought to create a port of call where the wood that Turks and Venetians used to chop in the deserted woods between Obrovac and Karin (that belonged to the imperial estates beyond the river Kerka in the sanjak of Klis) could be sold to Venetians. Documents obviously relate only of extraordinary events, thefts or murders; of course, it is difficult to find memories of exchanges that took place without quarrels. Sources make reference to merchants who took advantage of their status of foreigners to buy goods without paying them immediately and to take refuge in their motherland straight after, as happened in 1527 for some corn among Methoni, Chlomotusi and the Venetian island of Zakynthos. If some objections arouse abroad, an Ottoman subject could sue a Venetian trader in the court of the place where he was; only if he was in the 'guarded Empire', could he call him to answer either locally or at the Porte. As for them, Venetian merchants were sometimes explicitly protected by *name-i hümayuns* addressed to the Ottoman local authorities and issued on the *bailo*'s request.³

The produces the Venetian state exchanged with the Ottoman Empire were not only those freighted by the *mude* after a long journey at sea as far as Istanbul or to the harbours of the Syrian shoreline: this was not the only way through which Ottoman produces arrived in Venice. Others (mainly stock) arrived right from the Balkans or from Morea (wheat, olive oil, raisins). In the second half of the sixteenth century, because of the

3 ASVe, *LST*, f. II, c. 126; BOA, *MM*, reg. 6004, c. 17; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 217-218, 231, 302-303, 392, 751, 753, 755. As for the reasons that pushed to create the harbour of Split, cf. Paci, *Spalato*, 45-70.

Uskoks pirates and the Barbary privateers that overran the Adriatic and the basin of the Mediterranean, overland journeys from Istanbul to the Adriatic coast were preferred. Diplomats, Ottoman merchants as well as goods that were brought by Venetians more and more frequently at the Ottoman fairs beyond Dalmatian borders followed the same land route, while the journey by sea was reduced to the crossing of the Adriatic from Dalmatia and Albany to Venice. We know of stock either shipped in this area or brought by land. When there was a famine in the Ottoman territories, however, also the exports suffered a slowdown, as in 1566 near Klis, when the exports of oxen and provisions were totally interrupted to meet the needs of local people. It is important to observe that the necessities of sailing boosted a coast trade too: a ship had only to fire a cannon shot to make the peasants of the close inland villages dash bringing commodities and animals to sell.⁴

When the goods left a territory, either Venetian or Ottoman, they had to pay a tax that was equal to a licence of export, as the sultan stated in 1569 in a *name-i hümayun* concerning a trade of arms: once paid the customs duty, one of his subjects was on the point of loading weapons in Venice when Venetian authorities stopped him since their export in Ottoman territory was forbidden by the Venetian law; as a consequence, long cases between the two states started. In the Empire, the duties were collected by the *emins* that had usually purchased the contract, paying out a tax for the *berat* of appointment and a yearly sum to the imperial treasury; the title of privilege was usually valid for three years and then had to be renewed. These officers sometimes were Turk, often Jewish, but a few times they bore Christian names. The duty on the Turkish salt sold in the Venetian harbours, such as Split, Trogir, Šibenik, Zadar or Kotor, was collected by *emins* who often, even if not always, asked and obtained to live in those places, or at least close by, so that they could check the trade. Others could settle in farther areas; for example, in 1531 the *emin* of Neretva and Makarska, who checked the trade with Split and Trogir, often went to these two towns with the aid of the Venetian authorities to collect duties and tolls. If an *emin* did not pay the contract to the sultan, he was sought by the law of his country, even though he was in another state; since this money belonged to the imperial treasury, it was possible to get legal redress even abroad, as Haydar, the sanjakbeg of Herzegovina, stated in 1561. The contractors sometimes were in a ruthless competition, lowering the percentage due to them to push the merchants to sell in a certain Venetian harbour; but if the sultan sold all the contracts of a zone to the same person, as happened in Šibenik, Split, Zadar and Trogir in 1591, then, the rates increased to Venetians' great disappointment. On

4 ASVe, *LST*, f. II, c. 175; BOA, *MD*, reg. 23, c. 47; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 722, 990. As for the trade of raisins, cf. Fusaro, *Uva passa*; Tucci, *L'alimentazione*, 601.

the basis of the capitulations, the tax on the salt or other goods was of 5% for Venetians: there is evidence of merchants who maintained they had been compelled to pay more, up to 12% and, in a resounding occasion, up to 150%. The subjects of the Most Serene Republic theoretically did not have to pay other taxes, even though sometimes they were compelled to sustain other taxations and were subsequently exempted after several protests they made to the sultan. For example, in Morea in 1526-1537 they had to pay the *ağırılık* and around 1599, in some Ottoman harbours, were compelled to pay the *kassab akçesi* on the stock like the local merchants. Such contrasts with the *emins* went on also in the following century.⁵

In the Venetian harbours, however, it was possible to meet not only merchants subjects of the Most Serene Republic but also of the Ottoman Empire; they were often Jews, but there were also Muslims; in Dalmatia they were mainly of Balkan origin, i.e. of Bosnia, Herzegovina or Albany; in the Hellenic islands, instead, mainly inland Greeks arrived. It was both a local and an international trade and it induced people from Lefkada, Arta or Ioannina to reach Cephalonia or Corfu, or people from Morea or Aitoliko or Angelokastro to go to Cephalonia or Zakynthos. Surely, given the few miles of sea between Ottoman and Venetian lands, these people knew the places, the language, the merchants and how to meet the local requirements. Nevertheless, they went abroad, in a state with a different justice, other laws and other judges; thus, a peculiar institution was created to meet local needs and to protect Ottoman merchants: a Venetian was charged with defending Ottoman subjects as their consul. The first one was created in Corfu in 1598 at the Ottoman merchants' request; then, others were created in Cephalonia, Nafplio and Zakynthos, whereas in Split and Zakynthos there were also consuls for the Ottoman Jewish subjects. At the end of the eighteenth century, there was still one in Zakynthos that dealt not only with the merchants of the close Morea, but also with every Ottoman who arrived in those waters and needed his help.⁶

Besides regular exports, there was smuggling too: both in the harbours and along the borders, people arrived ready to challenge the harshness of the law not to pay duties and tolls, or to illegally export forbidden goods. The Empire forbade to export mainly gunpowder, lead, leather of tanned bullock, wheat, copper, cloth for sails, arms, wax, horses, pitch and tallow, as a list of 1589 says. Sometimes also Venetians were involved in those illegal trades, as some imperial orders of mid-seventeenth century show.

5 ASVe, *LST*, f. II, cc. 78, 280; f. V, cc. 212, 213; BOA, *MM*, reg. 6004, cc. 17 (Morea and Euboea), 41 (Split); *Documenti turchi*, nos. 223, 226, 241, 243, 253, 258, 280, 347, 384, 395, 526, 537, 557, 571, 572.

6 ASVe, *Mercanzia*, 1st s., b. 600, fasc. «T. Condulmer» (14 January 1793); 2nd s., b. 44; *SM*, f. 218 (12 July 1618); f. 430 (25 October 1650); f. 677 (30 October 1688); f. 752 (9 January 1700); f. 878 (3 May 1721).

Venice produced many arms that were exported both via land and sea in the sixteenth century, as the *bailo* Marino Cavalli stated in his report in 1560: he was sad to see Venetians killed by the weapons they themselves had made. The goods sent from Muslim harbours to Ancona were another problem: Venetians often wanted the payment of the toll since they considered the Adriatic as their Gulf.⁷

4.3 Border Violation and Violence

Life was not always peaceful in a border area, especially when the border divided a Christian state and a Muslim one. Here quarrels could easily take on a religious value. As the historians synthetically say, wars usually are made out of hunger or religion: in the first case, when there is no more hunger, there is no more reason to fight, but in the second case stopping the war is much more difficult because it is necessary to change people's ideas and feelings. When a Christian and a Muslim country were near, a runaway could easily take shelter in a state with different laws, where extradition was not automatic, but could be obtained only after a thick exchange of letters with local authorities. What had been established by those who ruled in the distant capitals was not always accurately applied. Finally, wars often left a legacy of hatred, desire for revenge and retaliation that only many years of peace could somehow soothe. Speaking in broad terms of a border society is not always easy: we should constantly bear in mind the political situation and the wars just ended; in this way, we could realise that violent episodes were much more widespread just after a war than in other periods, when people had got used to a quieter life.

Some of the oldest Ottoman documents kept in Venice deal with criminals and fugitives who, in the neighbourhood of Nafpaktos in the years following the Ottoman-Venetian war that ended in 1479, left the Ottoman lands for the Venetian ones and then went back to destroy and damage the country they had abandoned. Vice versa, in the same years, there were people who, however still living in the 'guarded Empire', went in the other country to commit crimes and robberies. Between 1479 and 1481, not all the border strongholds of Dalmatia, Albany and Greece had already been destroyed or handed over to one of the two states, as peace agreements had established; thus, they had become a likely den of drifters instead of being a defence for the inhabitants. The governors were interested in keeping both the territory and its inhabitants: without peasants the soil was not tilled and the land easily became a prey for those who lived beyond the border. At the same time, in this way a state could lose part of its territory.

⁷ ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 330, cc. 5a-b; b. 252, reg. 343, c. 37; *LST*, f. II, c. 111; BOA, *MD*, reg. 90, cc. 43-44; *Documenti turchi*, no. 683; *Le relazioni*, vol. 3/1, 293; Faroqhi, *Die Osmanische Handelspolitik*, 207-222; Ágoston, *Merces prohibita*, 177-192.

Therefore, in 1487 Bayezid II asked the doge to give back or immediately stop his Christian subjects running away towards Venetian lands.⁸

Besides those who ran away for political or religious reasons, there were those who took advantage of an uncertain situation to commit thefts and robberies more easily: their targets usually were wheat, horses, stock and fruit and vegetable produces. The sources recall several episodes, equally distributed in the Modern Age and along the entire Venetian-Ottoman border. For instance, in 1527 the authorities of Chlomoutsi and Kyparissia complained to the Venetian *provveditore* in Zakynthos about several thefts of horses committed by the inhabitants of the island. In the same year, a swindler who pretended to become a monk in Vlacherna, in Ottoman territory, created much more problems: he promised to give everything he had to the monastery, but then, once he gained the other monks' confidence, sold some monastic properties and took refuge in Zakynthos. The qadi and the notables of Chlomoutsi strongly protested to Venetian authorities. The quantity of information regarding thefts and cattle-stealing depends, besides their concentration in a given time and a given territory, on the importance of the damaged people: for instance in 1577, after Venetians had damaged some salt marshes in Bastia, Piero Francesco Malipiero, *governatore delle galee dei condannati*, wrote to the doge saying that the local *emins'* estates had not been touched, otherwise, as usual, they would have already yelled.⁹

In a border area also water could be stolen. As a matter of fact, fresh water was of vital importance at the time as it is still today. Venetians knew very well the importance of rivers. There are few documents about the thefts of water, but we should not be amazed at the fact that some inhabitants of Vonizza in the Venetian *Stato da Mar* cut the banks of the river Berdas, which ran also in the Ottoman sanjak of Karlı Eli, diverting its waters so that they flew only in their territory. As a consequence, they made the Ottoman fields barren and the neighbours' mills ran aground. This happened not only in 1722 when an appeal to the Porte was necessary, but then almost twenty years later. Facts such as this one testify that fresh water was of great importance for the inhabitants of this zone.¹⁰

There was also the problem of nomadic peoples who could easily reach a state border during their wandering: for example, in 1528 several issues arose near Šibenik and Trogir because of nomadic groups of Vlachs who moved from land to land and destroyed olive groves, vineyards and fields, and seized the inhabitants to sell them as slaves. Other gangs of criminals pretended to be Turks in the land of the Most Serene Republic

8 *Documenti turchi*, nos. 10, 14, 35.

9 *Documenti turchi*, nos. 225, 227-230, 310, 373, 378, 387, 541.

10 ASVe, *Bailo*, b. 254, reg. 350, cc. 295-297; b. 258, reg. 359, cc. 325-328.

and Venetians in the land of the Porte so that they could bewilder those who asked for justice. For instance, in 1523 Venetians said that some Turks had attacked their villages while a group of Hungarians had stolen 15.000 sheep belonging to the Grand Vizier; on the contrary, the latter, together with his brother who was sanjakbeg of Herzegovina at the time, accused Hungarians of attacking the villages of the Republic and Venetians of cattle-stealing.¹¹

Detaining the soldiers at the guard posts in a long and forced inactivity was not always easy. The strongholds could not be dismantled, but at the same time the soldiers could create disorders. Sometimes they organised themselves into very big gangs and terrified the people. In 1523 and in 1530, for example, Süleyman I commanded the sanjakbegs of Bosnia and Herzegovina to check the *martoloses*, *azebis*, *akıncıs*, *subaşı*s and *sipahis* that terrified the Venetian territory; in 1532 there were other forays from Herzegovina; in 1533 some *hisar eris* of Chlomoutsi stole in the Venetian Kotor and then shared out the loot with the *dizdar* of their fortress who protected them; later on, in Kotor, after getting drunk, they attacked the local superintendent of the fortress with their swords unsheathed. At the same time, the *hisar eris* of Risan attacked men, lands, ships and fortresses preventing the trade via land and sea. In 1536 wrongdoers of Klis were supported and helped by the neighbouring Venetian castles, whereas from the Ottoman coast incursions were made in Kotor, which was attacked, together with Budva, by the soldiers of the Ottoman fortresses. Then, in 1545, after the war, Venetians damaged the area of Klis, as the sanjakbeg Mehmed complained to the doge: he maintained he had managed to put a curb on his subjects who, under his predecessor Veli, used to kidnap Venetian children; therefore, he wanted the Venetian authorities to do the same preventing their subjects from committing reprehensible actions.¹²

Sometimes, however, small local authorities themselves organised their bands and destroyed, stole and obstructed the trade. For instance, in 1534 the voivode of Montenegro, Hamza (subject to Skotor authorities) used to ravage vineyards and orchards in Budva, to the extent that the inhabitants were compelled to shut themselves up at the fortress. Then, he reached Kotor with his men, menaced the Venetian notables and blocked the approaches to the town. A few months before the war, in 1537, another voivode – he too subject to Skotor authorities – or the same one, but it is not possible to verify it, attacked with a band of thirty or forty knights and many infantrymen not only the villages but also the Venetian soldiers in their fortresses, killing some of them, seizing and putting the

11 ASVe, *LST*, f. I, cc. 1, 27 (translated in *Documenti turchi*, no. 198); f. II, c. 14; f. III, cc. 179, 184.

12 ASVe, *LST*, f. I, cc. 6, 8; f. II, c. 17; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 251, 285.

others into slavery. Right after the war, some Ottoman voivodes used to steal in Venetian vineyards and vegetable gardens in Zadar. Sometimes the sanjakbeks themselves protected their subordinates who did this or even made them carry out these actions. In 1545 the sanjakbeg of Bosnia, Ulama bey, backed Deli Mehmed when the latter started to repeatedly pillage forty-nine villages in the territory of Zadar that were disputed between Venetians and Ottomans: they hoped the inhabitants would declare themselves Ottoman subjects just to put an end to the assaults. Venetians apparently did not act in a different way and the following year Turks complained about robberies, border violation and forced transfers of the people from their territory to the Venetian one; at the same time, the *emin* Ferhad was busy with putting the subjects of Saint Mark into slavery in the same area. War had officially ended six years before, but the souls had clearly not subsided yet and the uncertainty of the border line helped to stir them up. The sanjakbeg of Klis was ordered to stay for some time in the fortresses of Karin, Nadin and Vrana to prevent border violation. We know of other gangs that, after twenty-five years, were active there: in 1581, with the connivance of the sanjakbeg of Lika and Kerka, Mehmed, a Turkish *kapudan*, advanced with flags flying from Karin with infantrymen, knights (*sancak aup*, as the document says) to attack the fortress of Novigrad near Zadar. The following year, two companies of knights were sent to pillage the villages of Gruziya and Draevac in the countryside of Zadar. These gangs took 57 men prisoner, killed 12 men, raided 520 oxen, 1250 sheep and 20 horses, and if someone started to plough the fields again, they reappeared to break the ploughs. Many years after, in 1599 the *dizdar* of a fortress near Omiš attacked again the Venetian territory.¹³

A last remark concerns the outbreak of the hostilities. As soon as a conflict between Venice and the Porte arose, also those who did not belong to the army could raid the estates just beyond the border. Nothing was safe anymore. In those days news spread by word of mouth and people could not immediately access to reliable sources for a confirmation or a denial; thus, even the rumour of such tragic an event could bring about episodes of retaliation. For example, in 1591 a big fleet was built by Ottomans and, to prevent people from thinking it was ready to fight Venetians, the sultan immediately sent an official denial to all his officers in control of border lands.¹⁴

13 ASVe, *LST*, f. II, c. 5; f. IV, cc. 78-79; f. V, c. 236; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 329, 394, 512, 553, 600-601, 891, 910-911, 918-919.

14 ASVe, *LST*, f. V, c. 34.

4.4 The Divided Land

Governors and local lordlings often sent bands of robbers to raid the lands of a neighbouring state not only to devastate the country but also to create a no man's land that acted as a buffer and to lay out the field for future silent usurpations. As we saw, borders were rearranged by officers sent by both sovereigns not only after a war – when the border line really needed to be re-established after new conquests – but also when an uncertain situation had been dragging on for years making the territory unstable and unsafe.

Men and lands were equally desirable: for example, in 1503 the sanjak-beg of Morea, Ali, did not care about the recent peace and burnt the harvests farmed in the Ottoman state by Venetian subjects who lived just beyond the border; the following year, he asked the *provveditores* of Nauplia to forbid their subjects to cross the borders to farm the land. He thought that, in this way, they would have lost their means of support and most of them would have preferred to become Ottoman subjects. In 1528, instead, the *emin* of Pontikos sent one of his men to Zakynthos to collect the tithe from the inhabitants of the island that had lands in that area. In 1524 and 1525 the Venetian ambassador in Istanbul paid 150 ducats as a tithe to Ayas pasha for the vineyards placed in the *kaza* of Argos in Morea, near the Venetian Nauplia. In 1532 objections arose because Venetian peasants had to cross the border when they wanted to grind their corn, since their mills were in Bosnia. Four years before, Venetian people from Šibenik had been attacked, robbed and made prisoners by Ottoman subjects of Skradin while they were going to their mills placed in the neighbouring state. Sometimes, however, the Venetians who lived along the coast longed only for plentiful fodder or woods of the close inland: in 1756 there were incidents in the area of Zadar because Venetians went in Ottoman land to scythe the grass or to chop wood.¹⁵

The examples we find mainly concern Venetians who went to farm the fields placed in Ottoman territory; the opposite practice appears to have been less common, even though in 1481 Mehmed II wrote that his subjects were allowed to possess and use lands placed in Venetian territory. On the contrary, an imperial letter addressed to the sanjakbeg of Herzegovina in 1529 seems to hint at the fact that the Ottoman subjects of the Poljica area could not have fields in the Venetian land. As a matter of fact, when a territory that had belonged to the Porte was vacated, Ottoman authorities immediately ordered its inhabitants to leave it and go to another part of the 'guarded Empire': this happened in 1531 to the ends of Bosnia and then in 1558, near Šibenik, to some villages that had been recognised as

15 ASVe, *LST*, f. I, c. 1; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 158, 202, 235, 273-274, 286, 865.

Venetian. The following year, near Trogir, Vlachs, who lived in three of these villages, refused to leave them and consented to pay 1/5 or 1/6 of their foddors as land taxes and royalties to the authorities of Trogir and, in the due time, other royalties made of neuters, lambs, kids and wood. A century later, the inhabitants of one of these villages, Šuhodol, were still paying the tithe to the Venetian family Fasaneo from Hvar, owner of the lands they farmed, and, at the same time, the *haraç* to the Ottoman treasury. Around 1579, instead, near Parga, all the inhabitants of a village chose to leave it and to move to the Ottoman country to avoid paying a double taxation. In 1623 the sultan himself exempted the inhabitants of some Venetian villages near Kotor from the *haraç*, as it was customary in ancient times. What happened along the Venetian-Ottoman border was not different from what could happen elsewhere. For example, in Hungary the towns (*mezővárosok*) of Nagykörös, Kecskemét and Cegléd obtained a certain administrative autonomy from the Hungarian feudal lords and then kept it under the new rule, but at the same time they agreed to pay the taxes to those who were entitled, no matter if they were Habsburg or Ottoman. The ups and downs of a border area could stir the inhabitants to submit to two masters just to live in peace: some Vlachs living near Trogir tried not to pay the taxes to Venetians anymore, arguing that the sanjak-beg of Klis had exempted them, but after a series of contestations they paid, partially on a voluntary basis and partially after legal proceedings. In 1591, instead, according to a letter of Hasan, the *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia, 10.000 families of Ottoman subjects paid *haraçs* to Uskok and Venetian infidels. The Most Serene Republic appears to have been more liberal on this point, either for sense of freedom or because it was compelled by the circumstances: after all, it is easy to send away a few hundred people, but it is harder to make a wide surface of land or a heavily populated area deserted. For instance, before surrendering Nauplia in 1540, Venetians carried the armaments away, but they agreed to leave some inhabitants there; this is why Süleyman I ordered his officers not to pester those who had decided to stay and to exempt them from various taxes, to respect priests, friars and churches, and not to constrain anyone to become a Muslim by force. In the same years, the sultan ordered the sanjakbeg of Herzegovina and the qadis of Shkodër and Montenegro to demand the due duties to the Venetians who farmed the sultan's lands.¹⁶

An estate belonging to a subject of the neighbouring state could easily create conflictual relations. Quarrels broke out not only when a small farmer had his only field halved by a border line, but also when a rich

16 ASVe, *LST*, f. I, cc. 8, 60, 65; f. II, cc. 24-25; f. IV, cc. 29-38 (file concerning the Vlachs of the area of Trogir); f. V, c. 4; *SDC*, reg. 5, cc. 142v and ff.; BOA, *MM*, reg. 6004, c. 143; Fabris, *Il dottor Girolamo Fasaneo*, 116-117; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 21, 490, 740, 746, 749; Beyerle, *The Compromise at Zsitvatorok*, 27; Veinstein, *Les provinces balkaniques*, 292.

landowner possessed wide estates in a border zone; this was the most common situation and, in this case, peasants were often compelled to pay the tithes to the two sovereigns to live in peace. We know that, in order to solve problems of this kind in advance, in the fifteenth century the Republic of Venice and Habsburgs created two border lines; one of them officially separated the two states while the other marked the limits of the estates so that peasants and owners were not compelled to pay the taxes to both sovereigns.¹⁷ This system was not applied between the Most Serene Republic and the Porte and, thus, innumerable quarrels arose.

Sometimes, however, in peculiar periods and in some territories, a sort of double sovereignty, at least theoretically, was in force: for example, the islands of Cyprus and Zakinthos were officially considered to be Ottoman by Ottomans and Venetian by Venetians, even if the Most Serene Republic agreed to give a yearly tribute to the sultan to keep them undisputedly.

Zakinthos, which already belonged to the Tocco family from Cephalonia, was conquered by Gedik Ahmed pasha in 1479; the following year it passed, together with Cephalonia, to Antonio Tocco again, but the latter had to give the two islands to Venetians in 1482 and 1483. In 1485 Venetians surrendered Cephalonia to Ottomans but kept Zakinthos in exchange for a yearly tribute of 500 ducats; the agreements of 1573 increased the contribution to 1.500 ducats, and this sum remained unchanged until the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 when the payments stopped.

As to Cyprus, instead, in 1427 king Janus of Cyprus accepted to pay a yearly tribute to Mamluks to be able to be freed and leave Cairo where he was a prisoner. When Cyprus became Venetian (1489), the Republic took upon itself the former dynasty's obligations and went on paying 8.000 ducats in silk clothes to Egypt every year. Venice granted also a yearly pension of other 8.000 ducats to the former queen of the island, Caterina Cornaro. In 1517 Selim I conquered the Mamluk reign and took possession of its revenues. Venetians entered into an agreement with the new ruler on 21 *şaban* 923/8 September 1517, and transferred the yearly tribute to the Ottoman treasury even if Selim I wanted ready money and not clothes. This payment lasted until the eve of the war, broken out in 1571, that led to the Ottoman conquest of the island.

The peace agreements say only that a certain sum had to be paid to the sultan for Zakinthos every year. On the contrary, the 1517 peace agreement, as well as the following ones, states that the tribute for Cyprus was a *haraç*, thus setting this tribute to an Islamic legal background.

17 Adami, *I magistrati ai confini*, vi.

4.5 Border Favours

Those who live along a border often consider the neighbour as an acquaintance and sometimes also a friend. Local authorities too used to exchange favours and gifts. It seems that sanjakbegs and qadis were more munificent towards the Venetian *capitanos* and *provveditores* than the sultan himself. In the sixteenth century, a large quantity of Ottoman diplomats were sent to Venice but the sultan's gifts they brought were very few and worth little even though they had a great symbolic meaning. On the contrary, the sanjakbegs who ruled in Bosnia sent expensive objects to the doge: for example, in 1522 two horses, in 1587 some carpets and in 1591 a falconry embroidered glove, a bow with some arrows and another carpet; other two horses were sent in 1551 by the *beylerbeyi* of Buda. There were exchanges of gifts also among the *provveditore* of Zakynthos, the sanjakbeg of Morea and the qadis of Chlomoutsi and Kyparissia: in 1522 the first sent a falcon, namely an animal that Turks greatly held in esteem, and the sanjakbeg answered with rams and some head of cattle; other falcons were delivered to the qadi of Kyparissia in 1525. Another occasion of contact was represented by the visits that were periodically paid by Ottoman authorities in the border districts; when Venetian *provveditores* knew their colleagues were arriving, they used to send them men and gifts and some sanjakbegs answered with letters of thanks for the *pişkeşes* (gifts given to a superior) that had been offered to them, as Mehmed, sanjakbeg of Shkodër in Albany, did.¹⁸

Border authorities exchanged not only gifts but also messengers. They often brought letters full of kind expressions, such as the one sent in 1592 by Hasan, *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia, to the *provveditore generale da Mar*, Almorò Tiepolo: the *beylerbeyi* stated his intention to abide by the agreements and assured to spare no efforts against the criminals that marred the peace; he also committed himself to preventing his subordinates from pestering the Venetian land and promised the respect of the ancient borders and the assistance by means of provisions and munitions. It seems that this Ottoman officer cared very much about the good relations with the Venetian authorities to the extent that he wrote to the count and the lords of Zadar praising their behaviour against Uskoks and asking them to let the merchants freely go to trade in Bosnia in the area of Banjaluka, where they would be treated well.¹⁹

Sometimes webs of relationships arouse in a border zone. Venetian nobles sent as *provveditores* or officers usually were not involved in them,

18 Sanuto, *I diarii*, vol. 33, 440; ASVe, *EP*, reg. 7, cc. 153-154v; reg. 9, cc. 157-157v; *Documenti turchi*, nos. 210, 219-221, 248-249, 705; ASVe, *LST*, f. II, cc. 32-33, 101-102; f. III, c. 173.

19 ASVe, *LST*, f. V, cc. 111, 148.

since their families could not easily become related to someone who was outside the small group that ruled the Most Serene Republic. On the contrary, local inhabitants, who were subject to one or the other lord, could easily create new family ties. In 1527 the *emin* of Pontikos was connected by marriage with an inhabitant of Zakynthos. Blood relationships were made easier also thanks to the recruitment of the Ottoman ruling class by means of the *devşirme* (i.e. the levy of Christian boys) or the kidnapping of children. Not always those who were torn from their home as children forgot relatives and friends: Ahmed Hersekoğlu, i.e. Stjepan Vukčić-Kosače, the duke of Saint Sava's son, wanted to keep the memory of his origin in his patronymic (Hersek-oğlu, namely son of Herzegovina); similarly, Sokollu Mehmed pasha, as Gran Vizier, protected his relatives from Istanbul. There were certainly other ties, perhaps less famous, but they too did not fall completely into oblivion. In 1550 the *beylerbeyi* of Buda asked Venice some prebends, from which his uncle the abbot already benefited, for his cousin Don Antonio from Šibenik. In 1564 Mehmed, sanjakbeg of Klis, wrote to the doge asking him to look after the Venetian nobles who were collaterals of one of his relatives, a certain Stefano who, after having abandoned his house and his faith, had become a Turk and then sanjakbeg of Herzegovina. In 1574 Ali, sanjakbeg of Ohrid, entrusted one of his relatives, Vincenzo Diva, who had blood ties also with the powerful *odabaşı* of the sultan, to the doge. Also Uskok pirates sometimes had such relations with Turks, of which they were always known as bitter enemies: in 1590 the chief of Senj, Yuri, was related to Hüseyin, his uncle and voivode of Zemunik, who was a great friend of İbrahim bey, sanjakbeg of Lika; in 1599 the sanjakbeg of Kerka, Halil, sent one of his men to Senj to start more friendly contacts off and entrusted him with wheat and horses that were to be given to Uskok chiefs.²⁰

20 ASVe, *LST*, f. II, cc. 32-33, 161; f. III, c. 44; f. V, c. 237; *Documenti turchi*, no. 222; *Bailo*, b. 250, reg. 330, c. 14.