Boundary Entrepreneurs: Manipulating Difference on the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman-Venetian Border

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Abstract

This thesis explores how different groups on the Ottoman-Venetian border in Dalmatia engaged in boundary-crossing and negotiations during the second half of the seventeenth century. The thesis focuses on the Morlacchi population and how they navigated complex networks of exchange and rivalry in establishing their power niches, as well as how other actors built their power claims based on their presence at the borderland. These interactions speak to the interdependency, shifting loyalties and precarious intimacy between all of the actors – Morlacchi or imperial and ecclesiastical elites, suggesting in turn that what in sources often reads as differences, clashes, or antagonisms actually belies strategies in political, economic, and inter- and intra-confessional competition. In doing so, it is possible to go beyond monolithic categories of identification when explaining what went on in such early modern spaces, and observe how boundary-making and relationships between groups and individuals were a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a given reality.

Acknowledgments

My relationship with this thesis has been as shifting and ambiguous as the loyalties I discuss in it. Suffice it to say here that its original conception bears little resemblance to what stands between these covers. The person most responsible for this is Professor Tijana Krstić, whom I admire and look up to. I am immensely thankful for her classes, guidance, and patience, and most importantly, for believing in me when I myself did not. I am also thankful to Professor Tolga Esmer, whose class, comments, and readings gave my work a very different and exciting dimension. I thank both of them for providing advice and support in tumultuous times of deciding on my future.

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occasions. Special thanks go to my “boon companion” Evren Sünnetçioğlu, with whom every day has been a joy.

Finally, in many strange ways, this thesis brought me to my own roots. As it turns out, I myself am one of those Morlacchi descendants, and it was indeed fun finding one of my family names running across the mountains as Venetian spies. Now that this thesis is over, my grandfather Periša has great expectations from me to tell him stories about the Morlacchi, the fierce heroes. Regardless of whether or not I will tell him what he wants to hear, this thesis is dedicated to him.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the relationships among various borderland groups, primarily the Morlacchi, the Venetian governing elites, and ecclesiastical representatives, inhabiting the Ottoman-Venetian borderland in the second half of the seventeenth century, particularly during and in the aftermath of the War of Crete (1645-1669). I argue that through constant negotiation and boundary-crossing these actors were bound together in a larger borderland entrepreneurial network that included material goods, offices, information, as well as human lives. Although the power relations among these actors were very asymmetrical, the complex borderland entrepreneurial network and a strategic usage of political and religious loyalties provided opportunities for many of them to carve their own power and economic niches.

In historiography, the Ottoman-Venetian borderland, only a part of the three-way border system of Habsburg, Ottoman, and Venetian Empires, has been primarily the "site of historical debate." As Wendy Bracewell points out in her excellent historiographical overview, the triple border was first and foremost a place of multiple fault lines that lay at the core of violent conflicts of the twentieth century.[1] The whole phenomenon received most scholarly attention for its military significance, especially the Military Border, established in 1550s, that stretched from the northern Adriatic to Carpathian Mountains.[2] Among the most contested issues of the borderland were undoubtedly demographic changes set in motion by the Ottoman expansion into the area in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This specifically refers to the Vlach or Morlacchi

[1] Wendy Bracewell, "The Historiography of the Triplex Confinium: Conflict and Community on a Triple Frontier, 16th - 18th Centuries," in *Frontiers and the Writing of History, 1500 - 1800*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser (Hanover: Werhahn, 2006), 217.

[2] For a succint discussion on the history of the Military Frontier see Geza Pallfy, "The Border Defense System in Hungary in the Seixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *A Millenium of Hungarian Military History*, ed. László Veszprémy and Béla K. Király (New York: Brooklin College Press, 2002).

communities who were transferred or migrated to deserted areas, or settled in the military service, and whose ambiguous religious identities and loyalties have been sources of confusion for those who want to tell history of these areas in "clean" national narratives.

Recently scholarship has moved in the direction of transcending the "fault lines" narrative about this borderland, trying to present a more comprehensive picture of an inclusive space instead. This approach found particular expression in the Triplex Confinium project, which produced three edited volumes on different aspects of early modern borderland life. A major work coming from this scholarly project is Drago Roksandić's monograph on the triple border in which he approaches the borderland in Braudelian way – as a convergence of its environment, its people, and competing imperial projects. While historians who participated in the project shed light on many important aspects of borderland inter-confessional, imperial, and eco-historical affairs, most of them remained at the descriptive, rather than the analytical level. For example, the volume entitled "Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium" presents variety of articles on inter-confessional relations across Habsburg, Ottoman, and Venetian border. They do so, however, without paying more attention to how these inter-confessional relations might have reflected complex power struggles and negotiations, including the intra-confessional one. Furthermore, the title itself – tolerance and intolerance – evokes the notion of clearly defined confessional categories imposed from above. Furthermore, Wendy Bracewell observes that when it comes to historiography on confessional relations across the Triplex confinium, it is the Habsburg incorporation of the Orthodox Vlach irregulars that always comes to the fore.[3] However, the whole story remains at the level of explaining this development as a product of jurisdictional jockeying of the imperial center, landed Croatian nobility, and the Orthodox

[3] Bracewell, "The Historiography of the Triplex Confinium: Conflict and Community on a Triple Frontier, 16th - 18th Centuries," 220.

Church tied to the Patriarchate of Peć. My work takes issue with precisely this kind of approach, trying instead to view confessional relations and categories as shaped in an ongoing negotiation from above and from below, and in which all actors, no matter how disparate in power, could make their own choices.

In the literature on the borderland, Vlachs or the Morlacchi assume a special place. They represent people on the move who populated these borders between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. It is challenging to say exactly who the Morlacchi or Vlachs were, given the formidably vast literature on them, which according to Marko Šarić is "indeed one of the main sources of disagreement and frustration in Croatian and Serbian historiography of the early modern time."[4] In one way or another, historians have tried to portray the Morlacchi as historical predecessors of modern ethnic communities, in that way "vindicating current conflicts."[5] Among notable exceptions is the essay by Drago Roksandić on seventeenth-century Morlacchi chieftain Stojan Janković, which steps away from treating Morlacchi as a depersonalized mass and places their members at the very center of the borderland affairs.[6] However, even the literature that has nothing to do with nationalizing Morlacchi, like the major work by Larry Wolff on the relationship between the Morlacchi and Venetian state-building in the eighteenth century, assumes that they were nothing more than impassive objects of representation.[7]

[4] Marko Šarić, "Vlasi na tromeđi: suživot u sukobima u graničnim društvima i kulturama Morlakije (16. - 17. Stoljeće)" (Phd diss.: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 2010), 123. For late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discussions on Morlacchi see Ivan Mužić, ed. *Vlasi u starijoj hrvatskoj historiografiji* (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika,2010).

[5] Bracewell, "The Historiography of the Triplex Confinium: Conflict and Community on a Triple Frontier, 16th - 18th Centuries," 216.

[6] Drago Roksandić, *Triplex Confinium: ili o granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti 1500 - 1800.* (Zagreb: Barbat, 2003), 117-73.

[7] Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs: Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002).

In this thesis I do not try to determine the relationship between the early modern Morlacchi and the modern-day inhabitants of the borderland. In fact, I do not treat the issue of Morlacchi's origin at all.[8] The question of who they "were" assumes some kind of pure, primordial category that these people belonged to, which both explains their actions and stays with them to this very day. Alternatively, I argue that a lot of the early modern categories of belonging, including that of "Morlacchi," were not fixed but were forged and calibrated through an ongoing interaction and contact.

Furthermore, studying the Morlacchi and their contacts and contracts casts a light on wider borderland power dynamics that obtained among powerful imperial and ecclesiastical authorities, and "backward" Morlacchi. Sebastian Prange notes that "study of actors on the fringes of political and legal regimes holds the potential to produce important theoretical insights into the construction of alternative, private-order institutions that are of significance beyond a particular period, region, or methodology."[9] This is indeed the case with the Morlacchi as it is possible to see how they established their own power structures across the vast area of the borderland. Drago Roksandić even notes that seventeenth-century inter-imperial wars were wars between the Morlacchi themselves.[10] However, Morlacchi were more than just a "private" order, as they were deeply implicated in political, social, and economic fabric of the borderland. As much as sources want to suggest that Morlacchi were indeed marginalized people, they were in many ways power brokers of the area.

[8] See Šarić, "Vlasi na tromeđi: suživot u sukobima u graničnim društvima i kulturama Morlakije (16. - 17. Stoljeće)". for discussion on different models for understanding early modern Vlach/Morlacchi identities. For the Morlacchi's transhumance see Snježana Buzov, "Vlaška sela, pašnjaci i čiftluci: krajolik osmanlijskog prigraničja u šesnaestom i sedamnaestom stoljeću," in *Triplex Confinium (1500 - 1800): Ekohistorija*, ed. Drago Roksandić et all. (Split: Književni krug, 2003). For the discussion of Morlacchi's social and political status in the Ottoman Empire see ——, "Vlaško pitanje i osmanlijski izvori," *Povijesni prilozi* 11(1992).

[9] Sebastian R. Prange, "Outlaw Economies: Doing Business on the Fringess of the State. A Review Essay," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 2 (2011): 427.

[10] Roksandić, *Triplex Confinium: ili o granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti 1500 - 1800.*

Literature on both early modern and modern south eastern Europe and Mediterranean stresses the "complex ambiguities" as one of the main characteristics of defining oneself and the space around, and in that respect seventeenth-century Dalmatian Morlacchi provide an ideal lens for observing how exactly these ambiguities played out, as well as what strategies particular actors employed in navigating them. Furthermore, Morlacchi's mobility and presence on various ends of the borderland, together with their participation in all channels of transactions, cast a light on how ambiguities and fluctuating alliances engendered entrepreneurial spheres that tied various borderland actors in common networks of exchange and power negotiation.

Morlacchi were present along the Ottoman-Venetian borders long before the outbreak of the war in 1645. They were mostly transhumant groups, who migrated annually from summer to winter pasturelands. In their economy and way of life, imperial borderlands did not mean much, and the Morlacchi were literally people on the move. Already in the Middle Ages they came to clashes with the people from the Adriatic urban communes over using the scarce land in the hinterland.[11] One of the examples is the Morlacchi's feud with people of Trogir, which stretched throughout the sixteenth century, presenting a challenge to the Ottoman and Venetian elites in setting the borderline after the Cyprus war in 1576. Significant movement of the Morlacchi occurred with the beginning of the War of Crete when a large number of these previously Ottoman military irregulars crossed over to the other side and carried out raids for the Venetians. Nevertheless, it is important to state that although for some of the Morlacchi families this crossing was a conscious act of changing political and military loyalties, for perhaps many more it was an act of compulsion, far from any rational choice. As I discuss in the third chapter, the

[11] Marko Perojević, "Vlasi na trogirskom teritoriju," in *Vlasi u starijoj hrvatskoj historiografiji*, ed. Ivan Mužić (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2010); Buzov, " Vlaška sela, pašnjaci i čiftluci: krajolik osmanlijskog prigraničja u šesnaestom i sedamnaestom stoljeću."

way in which the Morlacchi moved and were moved betrays a whole host of negotiations of Venetian, Morlacchi, and even Ottoman elites – negotiations that were often couched in violence.

I use three main published primary sources. *History of Kotar Uskoks* (*Istorija kotarskih uskoka*) is a collection of Venetian dispatches concerning the Morlacchi during the War of Crete (1645-1669).[12] It was put together by Boško Desnica in the 1930s and it is based on the materials in the Zadar Archive. The other two sources, *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la Guerra Candia*[13] and *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani tra le due guerre: Candia (1645-1669), Vienna e Morea* (1683-1699)[14] were both published by a Serbian historian Marko Jačov and are based on the Catholic missionary correspondence of Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatione de Propaganda Fide*) in Rome. *The History of the Kotar Uskoks* contains mainly letters sent by the Venetian Governor-General (*provveditore generale*, hereafter *provveditore*) of Dalmatia and Albania to the Senate, informing it about the Morlacchi, mainly on their military incorporation and war operations. The letters nevertheless echo many voices, and tackle various issues, including social and legal incorporation of the Morlacchi, confessional relations, economic and symbolic transactions, and even gender relations. Missionary correspondence, in turn, represents a real gem for historians, as it brings together half a century of competing confessional discourse. Although all of the letters center around Catholic *Propaganda* in Rome, they represent multiple voices, from local Slavic priests and Orthodox Archbishops to representatives of Italian Catholic orders. They are therefore invaluable for studying complex inter- and intra- confessional relations across southeastern Europe.

[12] Boško Desnica, ed. *Istorija kotorskih uskoka 1648-1684*, vol. 1 (Beograd: Naučna knjiga,1950).
[13] Marko Jačov, ed. *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, vol. 1 and 2 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana,1992).
[14] _____, ed. *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani tra le due grandi guerre: Candia (1645 - 1669) Vienna e Morea (1683 - 1699)* (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana,1998).

Chapter I of this thesis lays theoretical grounds that show the borderland's confessional, political, and social dynamics and its people beyond the obvious differences. In other words, I use some of the recent scholarship on the Ottoman and Venetian Empires that shows how differences and rivalries among imperial or confessional actors were means, as well as results, of negotiations and mediation. I also try to relate these negotiations of boundaries to larger entrepreneurial networks of exchange – material, discursive, and symbolic.

In Chapter II I concentrate on inter- and intra-confessional relations of Catholic and Orthodox clergy whom Morlacchi migration presented with new opportunities in religious jurisdictional hierarchy. By focusing on the two unions of the Orthodox clergy with the Catholic Church in Dalmatia in the second half of the seventeenth century, I show how slanders, praises, and bids for offices functioned as discursive tokens in jurisdictional competition, thus also forming part of the wider borderland exchange market. Religious claims raised and circulated in these discussions often betray intra-confessional competition, rather than inter-confessional animosities. In addition to engaging in jurisdictional rivalries, clergy regularly employed notions of general backwardness and violence, especially in writing about Morlacchi, which certainly contributed to an enduring image of the area as an uncivilized *terra incognita*, something that also found fertile ground in the Venetian state-building projects of the eighteenth century. However, this chapter argues that such categories and descriptions were less a matter of reality, than of competition for power.

Finally, Chapter III focuses on the Morlacchi themselves and how they – by being moved, as well as moving others, manipulated multiple power pretenders. For one, imperial warfare between the Ottoman Empire and Venice implicated the Morlacchi in the Venetian political and military goals. Even though the Venetian government treated them as a war-waging commodity,

some of the Morlacchi skillfully navigated Venetian governing hierarchy and carved their own, sometimes lucrative, power niches. Related to that, it seems that the Morlacchi groups were the masters of flourishing slave trade in the area, which was an enterprise that brought together Morlacchi, ecclesiastical representatives, and Venetian and Ottoman governing elites, thus blurring the boundaries between them, and complicating the matter of who belonged to what state, who was Christian or Muslim, and consequently – who was a legitimate target of violence.

I

Theoretical Background: Meanings of Difference

In trying to conceptualize what went on on the early modern Ottoman-Venetian borderland, I concentrate on the literature that emphasizes social and religious relationships and boundaries. The ways in which people defined and contested shared space and identities largely informed state actors, suggesting that borderland affairs were determined through constant negotiation and mediation, rather than by imperial politics, confessional antagonisms, or cultural misunderstanding. Amidst the extensive borderland literature, I find Wendy Bracewell's contribution invaluable. She points out that political and religious boundaries in many ways sustained the very existence of the borderland. In other words, the various proverbial fault lines were mechanisms that gave meaning to the border society and enabled its functioning by providing currency for action. This is important not only because it represents a check against an overly romanticized image of the borderland but because it also highlights how differences and divisions were "assets" in the hands of different actors who could capitalize on them. In Bracewell's words, "one could argue that they [the borderland groups] actively needed such divisions: not just because frontier oppositions were the reasons for their existence and their way of life, but more generally because an ideological framework was needed in order to explain and legitimate suspicion, competition, and aggression between people who differed only slightly in all other respects."[15]

[15] Wendy Bracewell, "Frontier Blood-Brotherhood and the Triplex Confinium," in *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, ed. Drago Roksandić and Nataša Štefanec (Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 40. To see how religious boundaries were mobilized in the Age of Confessionalization in a wider Ottoman context see

What Bracewell suggests is that "divisions of frontier society […] were not entirely imposed by outside authorities."[16] Rather, "religious identities and religious rhetoric [among others] also provided a set of referents adopted and used for local purposes." Therefore, Bracewell circumvents the usual notions of boundaries imposed by empires and suggests that these were ideological and rhetorical funds informing behavior of the borderland actors, standing at the intersection of state and group or personal interests.

Recently it has been Natalie Rothman who noted the same phenomena in making of the imperial centers and ideologies.[17] Furthermore, Rothman reverses the typical approach to the frontier in taking the frontier to the center[18] to show how "trans-imperial subjects," Venetian and Ottoman specifically in her case, calibrated metropolitan boundaries by "straddling linguistic, religious, and political boundaries."[19] Rothman revises Marie Louise Pratt's notion of a "contact zone," "where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power,"[20] by observing that cultures do not meet and grapple on their own. Rather, she argues that culture brokering was a product of specific activities of "trans-imperial subjects," who by "mobilizing their roots elsewhere" and by sustaining large networks across imperial borders simultaneously crossed and reinforced "distinct categories of difference."

While I do not claim that subjects in my own research are "trans-imperial," as this would require a rather different research focus, Rothman's work is important in emphasizing how boundaries, whether at the border or in the metropolitan, can be transgressed, exploited, and

Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). Importantly, Krstić highlights the ways in which the control and profiting from differences moved away from the state center.

[16] Bracewell, "Frontier Blood-Brotherhood and the Triplex Confinium."

[17] E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 7.

[18] Ibid., 14.

[19] Ibid., 3.

[20] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession*, no. 91 (1990): 34.

maintained. This is important also with respect to concepts such as "hybridity" and "creolization," to name just a few attempts to typologize the borderland and processes of cultural exchange that occur there. As Rothman herself observes, notions such as "hybridity" already presuppose that before the hybridization occurred, there existed a set of clearly defined cultures and identities.[21] In another piece, Rothman explores the notions of "syncretism" which she borrows from linguistics. She does not think of syncretism as "mixing together different elements," as syncretism "does not assume clearly defined and neatly bound cultures." Instead, it is important to realize that boundaries and identities that we note on the borderland are social currencies that are used and exchanged, rather than predetermined. Furthermore, this approach allows us to explore what actually went on in the borderland, shifting away from a general understanding of the border or boundary as an enclosing space, rather than as expanding. Perhaps most importantly, it directs the research away from obsession with typologizing the borders, which can end in conclusions as trivial and anachronistic such as the statement that the modern version of the triple borderland is an example of a "buffer borderland" where the "Serbs functioned […] to separate Croats from Muslims."[22]

The focus on the borderland differences, a common trope of the borderland historiography, goes hand in hand with the tropes of violence, war, and destruction. While it is pointless to argue against destructive and traumatic aspects of perpetual violence at certain historical moments, it is nevertheless necessary to qualify, as well as challenge it. In other words, it is necessary to challenge the assumed self-sufficiency of the idea of violence and delineate polyvalent meanings and exchanges that underlie it. In fact, I would argue that violence provides

[21] Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, 6.
[22] I. William Zartman, "Introduction: Identity, Movement, and Response," in *Understanding Life in the Borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and in Motion*, ed. I. William Zartman (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 1-2.

a context for exploring what sorts of benefits and contracts various groups and individuals could forge in these contested spaces. As Wendy Bracewell shows in the case of the Uskoks, their violent lifestyle stood at the intersection of imperial rivalries, raiding economies, profiteering, religious antagonisms, and shifting loyalties.[23] If one looked at violence solely in terms of its destructiveness, one would miss multiple power relations and exchange networks that get forged underneath it.

In some ways, violence in the early modern borderland is a useful lens for exploring social and political relations and power contestation, as well as a vantage point to begin to see how the general description of the borderland as a stage of general unruliness is indeed unsatisfactory. Looking at violent actions is not a concluding point, as in much of the historiography, but precisely the point of entry that allows us to see the borderland as a space of opportunities, in which the actors had recourse to expanding means of profit – whether materially or otherwise. Furthermore, this is especially salient methodologically, because how and what sources tell about violence should not always be taken at the face value. Rather, they reflect discourses of violence that were inherent in various levels of negotiations.

Focusing therefore on the period of the War of Crete, does not only signal the destruction, but also changing constellations of power and rivalries, as well as new emerging players on the borderland. This particularly refers to the Morlacchi population, who were no strangers to this borderland and entered Venetian territory and service in unprecedented numbers during this war. Among other things, the increased presence of the Morlacchi, who were of mixed confessional

[23] Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth - Century Adriatic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

background, also entailed the increased presence of various ecclesiastical representatives, all striving to both win the new souls as well as carve out their jurisdictional niches.

Importantly, however, the focus on violence, antagonisms, and competing discourses runs the risk of overemphasizing the image of clashes. As work of some historians poignantly underlines, clashes do not simply signal binary oppositions. On the contrary, and as I suggest above, differences are tokens in negotiation processes and boundary drawing. Tijana Krstić observes, "similarities and convergences between different groups" can actually "give rise to exaggerated and bitter contestation, precisely because of the need to obliterate similarities and produce difference where it is scarce."[24] On the seventeenth-century borderland, with an increased contact between ambiguous, Orthodox and Catholic people and their respective clergy, the clashes that are brought to our attention in many ways bespeak intra-communal, rather than inter-communal power rivalries. At the same time, these clashes and violent rhetoric also speak to the inter-state competition and specifically Venetian understanding of their domination over Dalmatia. Violence required from, and exerted on the Morlacchi (Chapter III) was crucial for asserting Venetian claims over these territories, as well as for winning the wars of the second half of the seventeenth century.

It is therefore possible to define the borderland in terms of contested religious jurisdictions and shifting loyalties. With respect to confessional relations, Wendy Bracewell observes that confession and conversion along the early modern Triplex confinium have been at the center of secondary literature, in the hands of which the history of religion turned into the

[24] Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011), 18.

history of "treason and apostasy."[25] It is important to emphasize that multiple conversions and Christian unions of the seventeenth century should not be approached in terms of their spiritual meaning. On the contrary, as Natalie Rothman points out, conversion stemmed "from shifting kinship and patronage ties, and not from deep conviction."[26] In that vein, conversion and unions of these people, as well as much confusion as to their confessional identities (Chapter III) speak to the shifting power relations and opportunities on the border.

Entrepreneurship and various exchanges played a role in the boundary making and crossing. In talking about various dimensions of understanding violence, Anton Blok notes that "exchange and war can be understood as two sides of the same coin,"[27] and work by Tolga Esmer underscores precisely this function of violence through his notion of "economies of violence."[28] By studying banditry at the turn of the nineteenth-century western frontier of the Ottoman Empire, Esmer shows how seemingly anti-state, inter-confessional violence actually more resembles a well-functioning arena of exchange between the bandits, Muslims and non-Muslims, and imperial officials. In other words, violence becomes a vantage point from which the historian can observe alternative ways of social relations and exchanges.

Drawing from Esmer's concept of the "economies of violence," I would like to propose a working term of "borderland entrepreneurship." Arguably, this notion captures a whole gamut of transactions, contacts, and contracts, allowing us to interpret them in the light of competing notions of power. In other words, just as Esmer observes that "complex economy of violence

[25] Bracewell, "The Historiography of the Triplex Confinium: Conflict and Community on a Triple Frontier, 16th - 18th Centuries," 218.
[26] Natalie Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 41, no. 3 (2011): 621.
[27] Anton Blok, "The Meaning Of "Sensless" Violence," 119.
[28] Tolga Esmer, "Economies of Violence, Governance, and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Banditry in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1800," in *Past and Present*, forthcoming, vol 214 (August, 2014). I thank Professor Esmer for sharing his work with me.

entails exchanges of resources, prestige, symbolic capital, and promotion," borderland exchanges comprise equally diverse and interrelated processes.[29] Specifically, inter-imperial warfare and ecclesiastical competition on the mixed and contested space, engendered a whole range of exchanges predicated on the rich vocabulary of what Rothman calls "metropolitan categories" and / of "competing notions of […] belonging."[30]

[29] Ibid., 2.
[30] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 601.

II

"*Dove si vive alla bestiale*:" Morlacchi's Confessional Loyalties and Alleged Backwardness as Tokens in the Struggle for Ecclesiastical Offices[31]

In 1677, a bishop of Trebinje, a town in the eastern Herzegovina, wrote to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatione de Propaganda Fide*, hereafter *Propaganda*) commenting on the union between the Orthodox monks of Trebinje and the Catholic Church. In the letter, the bishop says that the monks are worse than the Turks and that they sold the chalice they received from the *Propaganda* to the local *paşa* as soon as they returned from Rome.[32] What this case highlights is the very literal exchange process, where the profession of Catholic faith is traded off for material gain. In other words, the religious claim in this transaction becomes just a token of exchange and profit that binds together three major religious claimants of the early-modern Ottoman-Venetian borderland.

Whereas this case highlights the opportunist motives of the monks due to the rivalry between local Catholic and Orthodox clergy, exchanges predicated on religious loyalties are not limited to material gain. As this chapter argues, the close proximity of the religious and imperial "others" as well as the multiplicity of religious actors in the borderland served as a currency for personal promotion and exchanges in ranks. Notions of religious antagonisms, war, and "backwardness" to name just the few, became tokens themselves. In that sense, divisions and violence that pervaded the borderland do not simply mirror the reality of chaos and hostilities,

[31] Note: All translations from Italian and Croatian are my own.
[32] Mile Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1982).

but cast a light on how the proverbial "fault lines" are constantly subverted and employed in networks of exchanges and power claims.[33]

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the borderland is a special place that engenders and promotes different economies, where more nuanced types of economies flourish. In order to show this, I find Tolga Esmer's use of concept of "economies of violence" especially useful because it extends our understanding of economies from basic exchanges of goods to less manifest exchanges of symbols, prizes, titles, and offices.[34] This chapter suggests that the notion of "economies of violence" can be further developed into the concept of borderland entrepreneurship as a way of transcending the violent nature of the borderland and adopting a more active and productive understanding of the contracts, contacts, and exchanges that fueled social life in these spaces.

In the religious landscape and rhetoric of the early modern imperial borderland, the meaning of borderland transactions can be expanded even further by noting that religious claims become tokens of exchange between individuals, groups, and imperial interests. In the area where not only imperial but also ecclesiastical jurisdiction overlapped, religious claims and allegiances can be interpreted as currency of negotiation, particularly if religion is understood as "historically emergent field of practice and debate."[35] Furthermore, Tijana Krstić when talking about the policing of the inter- and intra-religious boundaries in the context of the early modern Ottoman Balkans, shows that these boundaries were "constantly negotiated from above, from

[33] Bracewell, "The Historiography of the Triplex Confinium: Conflict and Community on a Triple Frontier, 16th - 18th Centuries," 217.
[34] Tolga Esmer, "Economies of Violence, Governance, and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Banditry in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1800," 5.
[35] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, 19.

below, and laterally."[36] In the network of religious contestants, the borderland figures as a space of expanded opportunities for the multiplicity of actors involved in exchanges, simultaneously using and subverting the religious and other divisions.

As this chapter hopes to suggest, religious claims and rivalries indeed provided material for furthering individual and group interests, expanding the opportunities for power jockeying to players whose interests were not necessarily aligned with those in the imperial centers. Many of these individuals were people of "cross-border background and training"[37] who tried to straddle different "metropolitan categories."[38] By focusing on the Orthodox-Christian unions and conversions, as well as slanders, praises, and career appeals informed by religious discourse, I show that doctrinal differences and imperial competition belied precarious intimacies that are so often taken for fault lines.

Changing Sides: Orthodox-Catholic Unions in Context

The multi-religious collage at the borderland was indeed colorful. From the sixteenth century onwards, the area came under intense scrutiny of the Catholic Church in the aftermath of the Tridentine reform, from 1568 onwards. In 1578, Pope Gregory XIII ordered a special delegation to visit the Venetian provinces of Dalmatia and Albania during which its members discovered rather scandalous conditions of the local clergy, which was at the same time sanctioned by medieval communal laws.[39] The *Propaganda* in Rome was established soon

[36] Ibid., 148.
[37] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 602.
[38] Ibid. 623.
[39] See Tea Mayhew, "Tolerance in Practice - Immorality and Tridentine Rules in Rab (Arbe), Late 16th Century " in *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium: Appriaching The "Other" On the Borderlands, Eastern Adriatic and Beyond 1500-1800*, ed. Edigio Ivetic and Drago Roksandić (Padua: CLEUP, 2007). For the discussion on the case of clerical life on the island of Rab, and the convergence of local and cannonical interpretations of morlaity.

thereafter in 1622, and the Catholic missionaries flowed into the Balkans in their attempts to convert Muslims and bring the Orthodox to the Catholic fold. These developments arguably formed a part of a larger phenomenon of the early modern Mediterranean termed as the "age of confessionalization." In a strictly European sense, the notion signals political and social disciplining using the religious language, recently "enriched" with the Reformation and the post-Tridentine doctrines. However, as Krstić points out in her work on confessionalization in the Ottoman Empire, "groups and individuals in the government use religion and social discipline to further their political and state-building goals," signaling thus that confessionalization was a "decentralized process" related to but not reserved for the state.[40]

In the Ottoman-Venetian borderland along the Adriatic coast and hinterland, already vivid religious scenery was further complicated by the influx of the Orthodox Morlacchi population into the Venetian territory during and following the War of Crete. The war between the Ottomans and Venetians for the Island of Crete began in 1645 and lasted until 1669. The military operations and the state of war were confined not only to the maritime battles but were also deeply felt in the Venetian possessions of Dalmatia. While this borderland was never a part of the main theatre of war,[41] the area witnessed major material and human destruction, as well as demographic changes.[42] Demographically, and therefore socially, culturally, and religiously, the migrations of the large number of the Morlacchi from the Ottoman "side" created a new context for power claims.[43] The orthodox priests who migrated with the people looked for ways to

[40] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, 173.
[41] Domagoj Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)" (Phd diss.: Central European University, 2012), 16.
[42] Tea Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645 - 1718* (Roma: Viella, 2008), 217.
[43] With respect to the Morlacchi/Vlach groups in general, Marko Šarić suggests that "the Vlach communities were the subject of a struggle for influence and power in the confessional structure" throughout the early modern period,

establish their own jurisdiction independent of the Orthodox clergy on the Ottoman side of the border as well as of the local Catholic prelates. At the same time, the Catholic representatives, specifically the *Propaganda*, intensified their efforts to establish their own control over the newly arrived people.[44]

In his book on Orthodoxy and Catholicism in Venetian Dalmatia, Mile Bogović discusses several "unions" of Orthodox clergy with the Catholics. He also defines the union of Epifanije Stefanović as the first of such cases, but it is important to underscore that there are many indications that these professions of faith and loyalty to the Catholics occurred on multiple occasions by many individuals.[45] For example, a Dominican missionary wrote to the *Propaganda* in 1645 about the "two schismatic monks" who wanted to "recognize personally the universal leader of the Church" and he added that their "*vladika,*" or bishop, "had an intention of doing the same."[46] Four months later, the *Propaganda* wrote back with the decision that the monks "better not travel to Rome given the Turkish military moves and other related dangers."[47] This suggests that the matters of faith and religious loyalties were implicated in a larger context of the war and religious and political rivalries.

The union of Epifanije Stefanović occurred in 1648 with the guidance of the Capuchin missionary Bartolomeo from Verona. In a report to the *Propaganda* from 1649, Bartolomeo writes that it has been "his principal goal to bring the Orthodox to the Holy Catholic Faith

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Marko Šarić, "Inter-Confessional Relations and (in)Tolerance among the Vlachs (16th-17th Centuries)," in *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium: Approaching The "Other" On the Borderlands, Eastern Adriatic and Beyond 1500-1800*, ed. Edigio Ivetic Drago Roksandić (Pada: CLEUP, 2007), 183.

[44] For example, already in 1648, three years from the beginning of the war, the *Propaganda* decided to establish "*Scuola di l[ette]re latine*" in Zadar in order to educate the Morlacchi boys. See Marko Jačov, ed. *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, vol. 1 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana,1998), 187.

[45] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 31.

[46] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, 8-9.

[47] Ibid., 9-10.

(*ridutione*), as well as the conversion (*battesimo*) of the Turks."[48] Bartolomeo first refers to the "*Greci*," that is the Orthodox, and how "he takes every opportunity (*volgendo tutta la mira*) […] to introduce the primacy of the Roman Church." He specifically mentions the "Orthodox errors" which he wishes that the people would "forswear" – the independence of the Roman Pontificate, the existence of Purgatory, the use of the unleavened bread (*consacrar in azimo*) and belief that the Holy Spirit proceeded only from the Father. He exposes the dividing lines of Orthodoxy and Catholicism, the ones that Stefanović needed to cross in order to become associated with Rome.

As Stefanović's letter to the Pope shows, the theological differences enumerated by Bartolomeo all translate into political differences. Additionally, rather than a stumbling block, these differences present an opportunity for promotion. What one can deduce from Stefanović's writing is that all doctrinal problems boil down to a single issue – that of the highest authority over the clergy and believers. In the *inscriptio* Stefanović addresses (in an Italian translation from the Cyrillic) the Pope as the "successor of Saint Peter, the ultimate commander of the whole world, the universal master."[49] He then proceeds to state that the Pope is "the chief of all the Churches, and the Emperor of Christendom, and the sole successor of Christ." The acceptance of Catholic faith – the desire to "live and die in the fold (*grembo*) of the Holy Mother Roman Catholic Church" – really belies the exchanges in power relations and ecclesiastical authority.

As it appears, Stefanović's union and conversion was not a random migration to the Venetian territory that occurred in a vacuum. The move betrays a larger network of

[48] Ibid., 223-25.
[49] "*Alla Santita si No[st]ro Sig[no]re creato dall'Eterno Iddio con Volonta, er Prudenza ineffabile elletto sino dall'Utero Materno, et dallo Spirito Santo sanctificato, Successore di San Pietro, Supremo Maestro di Tutti'il Mondo; al grande, al misericordioso, all'Ecclesiastico, all'Universal Signore, al Santo Padre Papa Innocentio della Santa, et grande Citta di Roma, all'unico Conservatore della Christianita*." Ibid., 204.

communication and exchange implicated in the issue of the religious antagonism and loyalty. According to Bartolomeo's report, Stefanović was followed by people of important social status, like the "counts, jurists, *voivodas* and *harambasas*,"[50] suggesting that changes in religious alliances reflected in these unions betray in turn "shifting kinship and patronage ties."[51] Among the fifteen monks from the Monastery of Saint Michael, from which Stefanović originally came, was also a certain *Padre Petronia Salacovich* from Lika.[52] The same person is mentioned in a letter by the count of Zara Alessandro Diedo in 1647 to Frano Posedarski, the Count in the Zadar's hinterland, in which he discusses the logistics of transferring the Morlacchi to the Venetian territories. Diedo mentions the news brought to him by the monk (*calogiero*) about the issues of transfers, and the editor of published collection of Venetian dispatches from Dalmatia during the War of Crete, Boško Desnica, identified the monk as Petronije Salaković, who "used to capture the Morlacchi for the Venetians."[53] A year later, in April 1648, *proveditore* Leonardo Foscolo awarded "*Petronia Selacouich, callogiero da Chistagne*," with four ducats a month, for his "commitment and attitude that he proved on many occasions."[54]

It is possible to imagine that Salaković, together with the rest of the monks, maintained entrepreneurial ties with the Venetians. Particularly in the first years of the War of Crete, the Venetian authorities vigorously worked on capturing the Morlacchi from the Ottoman territory and incorporating them into the Venetian military forces.[55] As scholars of early modern German

[50] "*gl'altri Vescovi, e capi Ecclesiastici, da per tutto, ove ho potuto penetrare, stante il continuo periciolo d'essere fatto schiavo, ho procurator, ch'anco i Popoli med[esi]mi abiurono, e professino, et sopra questi tutti li loro Conti, Giudici, Carambassa, Vaivoda, Capitani Secolari, huomini, e donne*." Ibid., 224.
[51] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 621.
[52] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 280.
[53] *Istorija kotorskih uskoka 1648-1684*, 18.
[54] "*La divotione et attitudine […] che in tante occasioni ci ha fatto restar edificatissimi della sua persona*." Ibid., 32.
[55] Particularly in the beginning of the war, and contrary to majority of the written historiography on the Morlacchi migrations, the Venetian sources suggest that their crossing of the border was not a unified, voluntary phenomenon. On the contrary, the sources point at the violent and chaotic process, organized by the Venetian authorities and

confessional history note, religious changes "embraced all areas of public and private life," and these examples demonstrate how the question of religious identities and loyalties was only a part of the larger phenomenon of exchanges, contacts, and contracts.[56]

Confessional Discourse as Currency

Another case involving Orthodox clergy professing the Catholic faith is the "Union of Nikodim Busović" in the last decade of the seventeenth century. Arguably, Busović's adventure highlights how religious claims worked, as well as how the constant proximity of the religious "other" provided ample material to further one's own gains in the rapidly shifting power structure of the borderland. Furthermore, this case shows how supposed confessional differences really betray precariousness and close local knowledge, rather than antagonisms.

Nikodim Busović was an Orthodox priest, serving in the Church of Saint Julian in Šibenik belonging to the Greek community and used by both Orthodox and Catholic clergy. In 1692, Busović professed the Catholic faith in Venice under the auspice of Macije (Meletius) Tipaldi, a bishop of the Greek community in Venice, and in 1693 he sent letters to the Papal Nuncio and the Pope, expressing his faith and loyalty.[57]

In his letters, Busović does not stop at extolling the Pope as the single leader of the Christian churches.[58] He accuses Atanazije Ljubojević, of Dabar and Bosnia, the suffragan

certain Morlacchi leaders. See Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)", 212-45.

[56] Heinz Schilling, "Confessionalization: Historical and Scholarly Perspectives of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm," in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, Anthony J. Papalas (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 29.

[57] For the Greek Orthodox Church in Venetian Dalmatia see Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*. For the discussion on the Greek Orthodox connections in Venice in general see also Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merhcants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[58] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 44. See footnote 15.

bishop of the Patriarch of Peć and Busović's superior of "undermining the conscience" of the Catholics who follow the Orthodox rite, and leading them from the "oasis of the holy faith" (*dell'ovile de S. Fede*) to the "infernal den" (*nelle tane del'Inferno*). Furthermore, he charges that Atanazije called the Catholic Church "heretical and schismatic." The defamation ends rather dramatically, describing Atanazije's desecration of the Catholic Church, destroying the graves around it, and setting it on fire in order to purify it for the Orthodox service.

What this scurrilous description suggests is that Busović built his claim on the well-known rhetoric of difference and hostility. Himself an Orthodox, he successfully employed the rhetoric usually reserved for the Catholics. In other words, the accusations of heresy and schism are a common trope of the Catholic clergy, generally indisposed toward their Orthodox counterparts. It appears that Busović entirely appropriated what seems to be a widespread discourse to negotiate one's own status as a "religious other" in a contested religious and political landscape.

In his ultimate attempt to slander Atanazije, Busović accuses him of calling the Catholics worse than the "Turk," thus bringing the third religious "other" of the borderland the Muslims into the picture. This suggests that identities never really worked alone, but always in relation to one another. The "Turk" therefore appears as a yardstick against which all the negative character traits are measured. In 1677, a Catholic bishop of Trebinje, a borderland town in Herzegovina, declared that those Orthodox entering into union with the Catholics "cause more evil than the Turks."[59] In yet another example, a certain *Propaganda* missionary in Montenegro complained

[59] Ibid., 35.

that in his attempt to bring more Orthodox Christians to Catholicism, he used the Orthodox rite while other Catholics then accused him of employing "some Muslim rites."[60]

Busović finally proceeds to describe in a detailed manner the way that Atanazije allegedly desecrated a church used by the Catholics of the Orthodox rite. The desecration of the church is another trope of the borderland's religious exchange, reserved for the Muslims and closely related to the notion of the "Turk."[61] In the already mentioned letter from 1648, Epifanije Stefanović also describes the troubles he had with the "Turks," who took away all the supplies from his church, including crosses, chalices, and garments.[62]

A more revealing case is the one described in a letter from 1645 in which Mardarije Kornećanin, the Orthodox *vladika* of Cetinje,[63] writes to the *Propaganda* praising the Catholic missionary Giovanni Pasquali for his diligent instruction to the ignorant people at the "Turkish" borderland (*affatticandosi e sudando insegna la Dottrina Christiana alli ignoranti e predica l'Evangelio di Christo qui […] ne'confini di Turchi*).[64] In Mardarije's reasoning, Pasquali's promotion would be beneficial (*a noi con esso lui sia meglio [overo utile]*) for him as well because it could help restore churches brought down by the "Turks." Three months later, Mardarije received an answer from the *Propaganda* informing him that upon his

[60] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 361.
[61] The discourse of the "Turk" was widely present in Catholic-Protestant polemics. The notion of "the Turk" was also present in the area of the Triplex Confinium from the late fourteenth century onwards, and for more information on the "anti-Turkish polemics" in the Croatian context, see Vjeran Kursar, "Antimuslimanski karakter protuturskih govora," *Radovi* 34-35-36(2004).
[62] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 205.
[63] In Montenegrin case, *vladika* was a sort of a theocratic ruler – having both a religious and political function.
[64] *"[E] non dimanda ne chiede da noi ne da alcuno cosa alcuna, anzi ci presenta, et honora, e pasteggia, et i nostril Calogeri (cioe Monaci) e Sacerdoti acetta e da loro le limosine in modo che ci confunde tutti, Iddio lo rimunera, e la V[ost]ra Sacra Congerg[atio]ne la quale esalta ciaschedun sou fedele, e lo fa felice e glorioso. Per quanto confidamo che in q[ues]to ci farete piacere, per essere a noi grato, molto amato, e caro, e pero pregamo que ci lo confermate, al magior domino (overo grado) esaltate come Prelato degno di ogni honore e lode, e che lo sovvenite dale vostre venerande mani, accio anche a noi con esso lui sia meglio (overo utile)et alle Chiese le quail ci hanno depredate e rovinate i Turchi." Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 12-13.

recommendation, Pasquali was granted not only the books necessary for the instruction but also an allowance of 25 *scudi* for the following three years (*provisione annua di 25 scudi di q[ues]ta moneta p[er] tre anni prossimi*).[65] The correspondence between the two does not show the usage of the usual accusations of schism or heresy. On the contrary, they build mutual support based on the proximity and destructiveness of the "Turk." It seems apt here to recall and paraphrase Natalie Rothman's observation that religions do not "simply 'meet, clash, and grapple' on their own."[66] Rather, the discourse of difference is mobilized for purposes that are not intrinsic to religion but are constructed and maintained in a specific context of power contestation.

The case of Mardarije and Pasquali also speaks to the value of praise. That slanders indeed functioned as a currency of promotion is further supported by looking at the exchanges of exaltations. The case of Giovanni Pasquali who in his missionary work during the 1640s in the Venetian Albania developed a wide network of people, mainly the Orthodox clergy, shows how the representatives of opposing confessions developed a symbiotic relationship of mutual advancement. Based on Pasqualis reports to the *Propaganda,* his main ambition was to become a bishop of Sapa/Sapë in today's Vau i Dejës in Albania. He claims the knowledge of Albanian and Turkish (*parte anco della Turca*), and he states that "[he] has been exchanging letters in Cyrillic (*nel caratere Serviano*) with Orthodox (*Serviani*) bishops, monks (*Calogeri*), and priests for four years."[67] In addition to that, Pasquali regularly sent reports to Rome about his success in converting the Orthodox and was always asking for some provisions, either in cash, or in

[65] Ibid., 13.
[66] E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 4.
[67] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia,* Vol. 1, 85.

supplies.[68] At the same time, various Orthodox priests who wrote to the *Propaganda* asking for assistance always included Pasquali's name and highlighted their good relationship with him.

Both slanders and praising are techniques that tied multiple borderland actors in constant competition for power. That this is not an isolated borderland phenomenon is suggested by works that explore the function of orality in early modern period – specifically gossip and rumor. David Coast's work, for example underlines precisely this kind of relationship between slanders and career building at the seventeenth-century English court, in which gossip functioned as a commodity.[69]

The events between Busović's appointment as a bishop and his death in 1707 further complicate what seems to be a rather straightforward case of defamation and opportunism. To begin with, in his letter to the Papal Nuncio in 1693, not only does he slander Atanazije, but he makes it clear that he does not want any interference from the Catholic priests (s*enza che […] posono inferirmi molestia o impedimento*).[70] It seems that Busović was looking for a way to establish his own jurisdiction over the Orthodox Morlacchi who migrated to the Venetian territory, independent from both the traditional Orthodox and Catholic authorities. To Busović's ambition speaks the reaction of Atanzije himself: upon hearing about Busović's union, Atanazije remarked that if he wanted to become a bishop, he could have come to him personally, instead of going to the "foreign land."[71]

Indeed, it was not long before Busović went back to Atanazije. At this point it is important to note that Atanzaije belonged to the Ljubobratić family of Herzegovina, which

[68] Ibid., 172-74.
[69] David Coast, "Misinformation and Disinformation in Late Jacobean Court Politics," *Journal of Early Modern History* 16(2012).
[70] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 44. See footnote 17.
[71] Ibid., 45.

according to Marko Šarić was one of the Vlach/Morlacchi families that gained prominence with the rise of the Patriarchate of Peć after 1557.[72] Furthermore, Šarić notes that Orthodox clergy tied to monasteries like Krka and Dragović in the Dalmatian hinterland came under the jurisdiction of the Peć Patriarchate well within the Ottoman interior. It is interesting that Busović asked precisely for the Dragović monastery from the Venetian authorities following the union, which they granted him in 1694.[73] Possibly, one of the motives of the union was the tension that existed between local low-ranking clergy and powerful clans tied to the religious center.

Some sources suggest that communication with Atanazije started already in 1695, two years after Busović's union was recognized by Rome. In 1696 Atanazije recognized Busović as a legitimate bishop of the Orthodox people in Dalmatia. It is not clear why and how Busović renewed his contacts with the metropolitan, but it is clear that his service in Venetian Dalmatia was not smooth. It would be expected that the most vigorous opposition against him came from the Catholics, but they kept silent until 1703, supposedly because the *Proveditore Generale* for Dalmatia and Albania Alvise Mocenigo especially appreciated the information that Busović provided.[74] After 1702, when Mocenigo quit his appointment, even before the Catholic clergy expressed dissatisfaction with his service, it was Busović's former Church from Šibenik that sounded grievances against him because he allegedly interfered in their internal affairs. Macije Tipaldi, greatly responsible for Busović's appointment, reacted by stating that "Busović was not appointed in order to administer [Tipaldi's] churches but in order to serve other people of our

[72] Šarić, "Inter-Confessional Relations and (in)Tolerance among the Vlachs (16th-17th Centuries)," 192.
[73] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 44.
[74] Ibid., 48.

[Orthodox] rite who are on the other side [of the border]."[75] He also added that he allowed Busović only to visit the Church of Saint Julian in order to "provide certain information."

What this rather intricate case of Busović and his appointment shows is a complex picture of power pretenders, all brought together in a peculiar convergence of borderland war, religious precarious intimacy, and ambition. Busović tries to navigate politically, religiously, and demographically shifting conditions of the border by exploiting the discourse of religious antagonisms. Importantly, however, it seems clear that religious claims on the borderland exploited the historical schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism not exclusively in service of inter-confessional, but especially of intra-confessional rivalries. Missionary activities, as well as new political space opened with the Venetian acquisitions of the Dalmatian hinterland provided opportunities for the low-ranking clergy to carve their own power niches. In that sense the rich repository of religiously based claims and accusations proved invaluable. At the same time, religious righteousness was not exclusively directed at the "other" but had a function of leveling power structure within a single group.

Confessional Claims, "Backwardness," and Bids for Offices

A series of letters addressed to the *Sacra Congergazione de Propaganda Fide* between 1670 and 1674 showcases the promotion of Gregorio Zoglievich, a local (*Illyrico*) priest serving at the fortress of Klis. Zoglievich aspired to be appointed a *Patente di Missionario di Morlacchi*, in order to better carry out his work among the Morlacchi families in thirty villages, some of them on the Ottoman side of the border.[76] Seven recommendations and opinions of Zoglievich's work are illustrative of the way the borderland conditions informed religious and political

[75] Ibid., 49.
[76] The fortress of Klis was reconquered by the Venetians in 1648, but the rest of the Dalmatian hinterland remained Ottoman until the Morean War and Peace of Karlowitz in 1699.

rhetoric. More specifically this case also highlights the way in which precisely the unfavorable conditions of the borderland propped people's claims for promotion, claiming the "local knowledge" and special abilities to cope with the place where, in the words of an archbishop of Split, "*si vive alla bestiale*."[77]

In recommending Zoglievich to become *Missionario Apostolico delli Morlacchi*, one of the letters states that the priest has "served these ignorant people with great piety, reducing many of them to the Catholic truth."[78] Moreover, the priest has undertaken many sacred services "*con pericoli grandi*," and without requiring any "provisions" (*provisione di sorte alcuona*) but desiring only "their souls." In this exposition of Zoglievich's abilities it is the ignorance of the people and the "difficulties" and dangers of working at the border that sets the basis for his promotion. Particularly, the ignorance and dangers originate from the fact that the majority of the Morlacchi belong to the "*rito Greco Schismatic[o*]," and that they, after all, live in the "Turkish lands." Both the physical border and religious boundaries bolster Zoglievich'c claim to the position, as it is he that possesses the local knowledge and ability. The letter attests, Zoglievich is "often asked for" (*viene spesso ricercato*) by the Morlacchi, moreover, even the "Turks like him" (*Turchi […] portano grand'affeto, et riverenza*).[79]

Interestingly, the letter does not highlight the fact that Zoglievich is obviously a local man. Only once it states that he is "*Illyrico*." In its stead, the discourse of the letter is based on the dangers of the borderland reality, as well as Zoglievich's merits as a priest and the fact that he built a church in Klis at his own expense. The need for Slavic-speaking clerics was acute, as

[77] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani tra le due grandi guerre: Candia (1645 - 1669) Vienna e Morea (1683 - 1699),* 320.
[78] "*[C]on grande pieta ha servito quelli popoli idioti con molto profito dell'anime loro riducendoli all cognitione della verita Catolica,"* Ibid., 315.
[79] Ibid.

attest many letters sent to Rome asking for literature in Slavic language. Nevertheless, *Propaganda* and the Venetian authorities regularly appointed Italian-speaking people. Arguably, the claim to the local knowledge therefore does not rest merely on being a local but on the ability to navigate the boundaries, languages, and difficulties of the border. Seen in the perspective of entrepreneurship, the precariousness of the borderland here figures as a commodity of promotion, of advancing one's own rank and skills.

The letters of recommendations sent on Zoglievich's behalf by the Venetian authorities further elaborate this case. In 1670, one year after the end of the War of Crete, the governor of Klis, a Venetian possession since 1648, recommended Zoglievich on the basis that during the previous war he proved loyal to the Venetians, continuing to provide sacred services to the Morlacchi, who happen to be "very inconsistent" (*fluctuanti*).[80] Furthermore, the *provveditore* claims that because of his services, Zoglievich might as well be given a title of the "populating agent of the Venetian domains" (*populatore delli luochi di Sua Serenita*). The three letters of different Venetian governors all praise Zoglievich's success as a priest to the "*popoli idioti*," and associate his success with binding the fate of the Morlacchi's souls with the success of the Venetian state. It can be said that the state combined the discourse of confessional boundaries, conversion and political interests. For them, the activities of Zoglievich converged with the state interests.

The Venetians had an uneasy relationship with the Orthodox population and were not happy about the fact that a considerable number of the Morlacchi was of the "Orthodox rite" (*rito schismatico*). According to Tea Mayhew, they were afraid of their communication with their coreligionists across the border, as well as the ties that the Orthodox prelates could have

[80] Ibid., 316.

maintained with the Patriarchate in the Constantinople.[81] At the same time, the Venetians' relationship to the Catholic Church and the Pope was similarly strained, because the authorities sought to keep an upper hand over the church affairs.[82] Although it was not in Venetian interests to endorse the Orthodox, their presence in the area raised concerns as to their loyalty.[83] The Catholic missionary work presented them with an opportunity to further control the Morlacchi population who even during the eighteenth century continued to wander between the Ottoman and Venetian territories.[84]

Interestingly, in the exchange of letters and opinions on the Zoglievich case, the only person opposing his appointment was the Archbishop of Split. Before making its decision, the *Propaganda* asked the Papal Nuncio, as well as the Archbishop of Split to give their opinions regarding Zoglievich's fitness to the post, to which the Archbishop replied that he deems him very exemplary but not very knowledgeable (*di puoca cognitione*), as he had to rebuke him for some past superstitions.[85] He added in the end that in such wild areas (*alla bestiale*) Zoglievich would not be suitable to carry out this assignment. In his rather laconic declaration, what clearly stands out is that the Archbishop is constructing a boundary between his own diocese and Zoglievich with "his own people." Moreover, he is using the same rhetoric of backwardness that Zoglievich is using to further his own case. This further relates to the larger context of ecclesiastical power contestation in the area, especially between the local Catholic bishops and

[81] Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645 - 1718*, 218-19.
[82] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 146-47. Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645 - 1718*. Ivan Pederin, *Mletačka uprava, privreda i politika u Dalmaciji (1409 - 1797)* (Dubrovnik: Časopis Dubrovnik, 1990), 61.
[83] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 149.
[84] See Elisabetta Novello, "Crime on the Border: Venice and the Morlacchi in the Eighteenth Century," in *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, ed. Drago Roksandić and Nataša Štefanec (Budapest: CEU History Department, 2000). For a specific example see Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645 - 1718*, 218.
[85] Jačov, ed. *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani tra le due grandi guerre: Candia (1645 - 1669) Vienna e Morea (1683 - 1699)*, 320.

Propaganda's missionaries. Mile Bogović notes that "the more the local bishop had control over the newly acquired territories, the lesser was the jurisdiction of the missionaries in the same area."[86]

The notion of general backwardness figures prominently in the correspondence. Notably, both Zoglievich and the Archbishop of Split make opposing claims based on the same idea of backwardness of the borderland people. The idea of the "*popoli idioti*" was a constant trope of this borderland, so much so that the French author who wrote history of Venice in 1669 referred to the Morlacchi as the "Iroquois of these parts."[87] Larry Wolff's work on the relationship between the Morlacchi, Venetian Republic, and Enlightenment stresses the relationship between the "empire and barbarism" and argues that "Dalmatia was also an ideological base on which to construct a culturally convenient vision of the Venetian Empire."[88] However, as the story of Zoglievich's promotion poignantly shows, the discourse of barbarity was up for grabs. Even the Morlacchi employed it when petitioning for positions in Venetian military, saying that they want to liberate themselves from the "barbarous yoke" of the "Turks." In other words, the discourse of violence and backwardness was not a monolithic rhetorical device reserved for the state. On the contrary, it was a dynamic and prevalent trope actively exploited by various borderland entrepreneurs much earlier than the self-conscious enlightened authors did.[89]

Zoglievich himself is a person of the borderland, the one that can use his knowledge of its dangers to trade and promote his own position there. At the same time, he is deeply implicated into this same borderland and the people from the other side. The reports suggest that he is on

[86] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 39.
[87] Quoted in Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)", 213.
[88] Larry Wolff, "Venice and the Slavs of Dalmatia: The Drama of the Adriatic Empire in the Venetian Enlightenment," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 3 (1997): 428.
[89] The same can be said for the trope of the "Turkish yoke" which can be found in many documents, actively used.

good term with the "Turks," that he even performs some exorcisms that they also like, and that, ultimately, he serves as a spy. Clearly, Zoglievich is the one who transcends those boundaries, but who also uses them. Moreover, in this case it is possible to draw parallels with the "paradigmatic early modern trans-imperial subject,"[90] dragoman Giovanni Salvago, who himself some fifty years earlier than Zoglievich travelled across Dalmatia, inspecting the border conditions for the Venetians.[91] According to Natalie Rothman, Salvago straddled both Ottoman and Venetian spheres: "claiming expert knowledge of Ottoman society, history, and culture," and at the same time commented on the things Ottoman using "classicizing language of humanist learning."[92] Arguably, as a local priest, Zoglievich is a "trans-imperial subject" of his own kind, maintaining networks and knowledge of both "sides" of the borderland divide.

To conclude, it is important to underline that the point of examining cases of Busović, Zoglievich and countless other social actors-entrepreneurs who found themselves in the borderland is not to claim that this same borderland was a paradise for all sorts of scheming individuals. For example, Mile Bogović's remark about Busović's case is that he "possessed that typical sense of an oriental (a byzantine!) [sic] for an easy adaptation to opportunities."[93] Stating that means falling into the trap of the contemporary sources, in this case the Catholic ones, and missing a much larger phenomenon at work. By interpreting borderland irregularities as matters of personal character and chaos, one obscures the fact that antagonisms often really signaled precarious intimacies and shifting alliances, and these in turn created space for opportunities and

[90] Natalie Rothman, "Self-Fashioning in the Mediterranean Contact Zone: Giovanni Battista Salvago and His *Africa overo Barbaria*," in *Renaissance Medievalisms*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 124.
[91] See Giovanni Battista Salvago, "Dragoman Salvago o reviziji tursko-mletackih granica u Dalmaciji godine 1626," in *Mletačka uputstva i izvještaji*, ed. Grga Novak (Jugoslavenska Akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1972).
[92] Rothman, "Self-Fashioning in the Mediterranean Contact Zone: Giovanni Battista Salvago and His *Africa overo Barbaria*," 125.
[93] Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine*, 47.

entrepreneurship. In that sense even the constant reports of backwardness are not matter of reality but powerful assets that could uphold or ruin people's claims for power. Furthermore, when commenting on unions, Bogović tends to question the sincerity of the conversion, which fits to the discussion on "incomplete or superficial" conversions.[94] However, rather than speculating about their spiritual dimension, unions reveal processes of polyvalent and shifting contracts, alliances, and loyalties.

Another important point concerns the historiography and identity politics of the Ottoman Venetian borderland. The religious divides that are deeply implicated into contemporary national and territorial claims are said to originate precisely during the seventeenth century and war-ridden migrations. For example, Marko Jačov, a Serbian historian who published sources from the *Propaganda*'s missions across the Balkans and whose publication is used in this chapter, refers to all the Orthodox in the seventeenth-century borderland as "Serbs." Furthermore, Bogović sees the ecclesiastical struggles that played out during the seventeenth century as early attempts of establishing the Serbian Orthodox Church in Dalmatia. These are rather anachronistic attempts to impose modern ethnic and religious concerns on much more complex inter- and intra-confessional relations. Rather than outcome-based understanding of the religious discourse, the power jockeying shrouded in religious discourse is a part of a larger borderland entrepreneurial network.[95] One aspect of the *Propaganda*'s archive is the close ties that the Patriarchate of Peć had with Vatican, constantly considering the union with Rome, and working against the Patriarchate of Constantinople or the Archbishop of Ohrid.[96]

[94] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, 17.
[95] See Chapter Five in Ibid. For a discussion on how the Orthodox Church in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire employed narratives of martyrdom and resistance to conversion in their intra-confessional competition.
[96] "*Li popoli medesimi per la buona inclinatione che ha il patriarcha con li suoi Metropoliti alla unione con la Santa Chiesa Cattolica Romana non sono alieni dalla conversione, n'abboriscono i Cattolichi, come fanno i Greci*

With respect to the Morlacchi, Marko Šarić states that that "[t]he stance of the Vlach leaders […] in the face of the Venetian, Habsburg, and Papal representatives was to put a stress on ideological-religious motives," but that these "ideologies" cannot be traced in the contemporary folk poetry that supposedly reflects wider social sentiments.[97] If this chapter shows anything, it is how identities and boundaries cannot be taken for granted. The religious claims from this period should be understood as "ongoing, at times mundane, ways in which religious, social, and political boundaries were drawn and redrawn [….] revealing the historical contingency of these boundaries themselves" and highlighting exchanges in ranks and power claims based on the skilful manipulation of borderland identities, loyalties, and interests.[98]

Scismatici, da qualli in deta provincioa nonv'e alcuno." Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia, 704.

[97] Šarić, "Inter-Confessional Relations and (in)Tolerance among the Vlachs (16th-17th Centuries)," 189.

[98] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 602.

III

On the Move: Morlacchi's Strategies in Straddling Different "Sides" of the Border

In the last days of 1659, Ivan Božanović, *missionario apostolico* and *sacerdote Illyrico* (*glagoljaš*) from Vranjic, near Split, directed a list of specific questions to the *Propaganda*. Božanović was appointed as a *Morlacchi capelano* and provided religious guidance to the Morlacchi in the area near Split. However, he had been experiencing troubles with the Morlacchi, and in his letter he composed a list of puzzling situations he found himself in with them.[99] He wondered what to do when Christians kidnap and enslave other Christians, whether in the Christian or "Turkish" dominion; when Christian parents "out of necessity" sell their own children to slavery, or to other Christians; when Christians sell arms to the Muslims; when Christians know that the Muslims will strike a village or other property but they do not report it because they are promised "a tip" (*mancia*) for collaboration; or what to do when Christians and Muslims simply plunder together and split the booty?

This all must have been particularly puzzling to Božanović, or so he claimed, because otherwise his flock was very pious. In another letter of the same year, he complained to the *Propaganda* that his request for another priest had not been granted, that his people "attend the mass every morning, and that they also participate in the litanies twice a day. There are those who attend confession every week, and a good part of these people live as good Christians."[100]

[99] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia* vol. 2, 94-95.
[100] "*hanno […] il costume di sentire ogni mattina la messa, et intervenire doi volte alle letanie, cioe la mattina e la sera. Ogni settimana vi e della gente che si confessa […] e buona parte di loro vivono christianm[en]te*" in ibid., 76.

The contradictory actions of the Morlacchi showcase the multiple conjunctions of borderland economies in their fullest. While the previous chapter focused on how the borderland clergy described and justified very worldly exchanges by couching them in religious discourse, this chapter seeks to situate the Morlacchi themselves in the contested and complex arena of borderland entrepreneurship, focusing in particular on their trading their own and other people's bodies, loyalties and identities. This chapter therefore focuses on the notions of moving, being moved, or causing to move across various real and conceptual boundaries. According to Drago Roksandić, "history of south eastern Europe and Mediterranean is a history of changing borders and population movements," and it was these changes that were key to Morlacchi's strategies in benefiting from the geographical, political and religious context in which they existed.[101]

In many ways, Morlacchi population itself was an important borderland commodity. With the offset of the War of Crete in 1645, Morlacchi military services became crucial to the Venetians, and Domagoj Madunić shows that the need to control the Morlacchi was one of the most important issues on the Venetian agenda.[102] Nevertheless, Morlacchi – or at least some of them – quickly learnt the rules of the game that worked at the borderland, and they were able to simultaneously appeal to the Venetian authorities and to the representatives of the Catholic Church, while at the same time participating in a wider network of borderland exchange. A great deal of Morlacchi's activities, including the negotiations with their new masters, were accompanied by violence, confirming in a sense the image of bloodshed, destruction, and misunderstanding between them and the Venetian urban elite. However, just as Anton Blok notes,

[101] Roksandić, *Triplex Confinium: ili o granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti 1500 - 1800.*, 130.
[102] Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)", 213-14.

"exchange and war can be understood as two sides of the same coin,"[103] and the other side of this coin is a complex network of negotiations between the parties. The violence and tensions between them therefore belie mutual dependence, a precarious intimacy, interwoven with material benefits and jurisdictional struggle for offices.

To a large extent, the borderland entrepreneurship included trading in human life – i.e. slavery. Placing the Morlacchi within the slave trade network does not only highlight their entrepreneurial activities, but also convergence of exchanging goods, knowledge, loyalties, and careers. They participated in a shared, albeit unequal, arena of power in which boundaries between the actors were constantly calibrated. Importantly, these convergences betray the essential ambiguity and uncertainty as to how to imagine imperial spaces, and how to set boundaries in the face of war, migrations, and competition.

Benefits of Moving and Being Moved between Empires: Morlacchi as a (Self-Conscious) Commodity

The Morlacchi's movement to the Venetian territory with the outbreak of the War of Crete was hardly a matter of the "Turkish yoke," as some of the sources want us to believe.[104] Rather, the Morlacchi migrations must be understood in line with their pastoral economies, administrative changes within the Ottoman Empire that affected their communal status, as well as Venetian treatment of them at the beginning of the war. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Morlacchi communities (*katun*, *cemāʿat*) lost some of their privileges in the Ottoman Empire, and their role as the borderland guards (martoloses) also became much less profitable

[103] Blok, "The Meaning Of "Sensless" Violence," *Honour and Violence*, ed. Anton Blok (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 119.
[104] For example, a letter from a group of harambašas in 1646 to the Venetians in Zara states that they "long for ridding themselves of the barbarous yoke," (*habbiamo bramato occasione […] di sottrarsi del barbaro giogo*) in *Istorija kotorskih uskoka 1648-1684,* 11.

and prestigious posts.[105] At this time, many of the members of the Morlacchi elite lost their positions as *timar* holders, and the overall population was affected by fiscal changes in the Ottoman Empire since the end of the sixteenth century.

Dispatches from the *Proveditore Generale* for Dalmatia and Albania, Leonardo Foscolo, show that Venetians employed harsh measures in order to keep the Morlacchi on their territory very early on in the war. In 1647, Foscolo was giving orders to burn the Morlacchi property on the Ottoman territory so that they had to cross the border.[106] The Morlacchi themselves brought other Morlacchi back with them, as in a particular event when a party was about to cross the Velebit, a mountain in Zadar's hinterland, had to re-route due to the bad weather, and it used this detour as an opportunity to bring more Morlacchi they found on their way back to Venetian territories.[107] Although the evidence is scant, the Ottoman authorities did make attempts to reclaim their subjects. For example, in 1647 the cavalry commander Marcantonio Pisani alerted the authorities that the Morlacchi should be moved to the island of Pag because the "Bosnian pasha" had descended to Knin with a plan to recapture the fugitives.[108] What these cases show is that Morlacchi presence in the Venetian lands can hardly be understood as a logical outcome of the war or Ottoman oppression.

For the Venetians, Morlacchi in many ways represented a commodity. Domagoj Madunić in particular shows how the Venetian authorities in Dalmatia thought of using the Morlacchi forces. At the beginning of the war, they represented "heart and body" of the "military frontier"

[105] Šarić, "Vlasi na tromeđi: suživot u sukobima u graničnim društvima i kulturama Morlakije (16. - 17. Stoljeće)", 45-62/ See also Buzov, "Vlaško pitanje i osmanlijski izvori."; and idem. ———, "Vlaška sela, pašnjaci i čiftluci: krajolik osmanlijskog prigraničja u šesnaestom i sedamnaestom stoljeću."
[106] *Istorija kotorskih uskoka 1648-1684*, 14.
[107] Ibid., 24.
[108] The Ottoman response to Morlacchi's running away is in need of further study. Ibid., 15-16.

defense model.[109] The Venetians did not shy away from any method to ensure the Morlacchi effectiveness against the Ottomans, so that one of the ways to motivate the fighting was to "stir up a blood feud with the Turks" (*insanguinarli con Turchi*),[110] or as I show above, to simply destroy all their possessions. Movement was crucial not only for the Morlacchi, but also for the Venetians. As Roksandić puts it, "changes in borders are inseparable from the changes in settlements (*naseljenosti*)," so it was indeed in the Venetian interest to actually *move* the people and populate their territories in order to claim it as theirs at the end of the war.[111]

At the same time, some of the Morlacchi elites knew how to exploit competing religious discourse, imperial rivalry, and affairs in the Venetian colonial government in Dalmatia in order to bolster their causes. In fact, they were far more skillful in manipulating discourses of difference, borderland identities, and loyalties than the usual descriptions of barbarians or savage warriors that followed them into the present. It is important to stress that the Morlacchi chieftains, let alone the population, were not equal political rivals to the Ottomans or the Venetians. In fact, the Morlacchi population suffered tremendous casualties during the war,[112] and even in the eighteenth century they were, in Wolff's words – "the manifest losers" of the Republic's land reforms.[113] That, however, does not mean that Morlacchi too did not know how to take their "share of the cake," as the Croatian proverb goes.

The Morlacchi knew from very early on that in order to fare well in their new role they had to take into account the religious factor. That is why in 1651 the Morlacchi leader Ilija

[109] Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)", 215.
[110] Ibid., 228.
[111] Roksandić, *Triplex Confinium:ili o granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti 1500 - 1800.*, 130. See also Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645 - 1718*, 57.
[112] I thank Domagoj Madunić for sharing with me his vast knowledge and enthusiasm for seventeenth-century Dalmatia.
[113] Wolff, "Venice and the Slavs of Dalmatia: The Drama of the Adriatic Empire in the Venetian Enlightenment," 440.

Smiljanić, who actually died soon thereafter in 1654, wrote a letter to the *Propaganda*, recommending himself and his people, as well as the Bosnian Franciscans, as good Christians and warriors.[114] Smiljanić emphasized Morlacchi's (*naroda slovinskoga iliti ilisrskoga*) readiness to "voluntarily" (*dobrovoljno*) leave the "Turkish land" (*turske zemlje*) and "spill their blood" (*za čiju karv prolivajući*) for the *Serenissima* (*privedre republike mletačke*) and "in the service of the Christ's holy faith" (*službu svete vire isukrstove*). The Morlacchi were well aware of the nexus between Catholicism and the Venetian Republic, and they clearly appealed to both. At the same time, they knew that the Catholic clergy would likely see them as inferiors and treat them badly when assigned to administer them, so they demanded from the *Propaganda* to leave the Franciscan priests that accompanied them in charge of their souls (*najprvo da su nam ovi rečeni redovnici bosanske provincije kurati od duša našije gdi rodismo kako su i do sada bili*), to follow them on the battlefield (*kada se bijemo s Turci*), and to serve them in houses and fields as they still did not possess their own churches.

Indicative of his employment of savvy narrative strategies and knowledge of what his Venetian superiors wanted to hear, Smiljanić also emphasized that if he and his Morlacchi followers were granted these requests, together they would be able to "bring Turks and schismatics to the Catholic faith" (*na obraćanje Turaka i šizmatika*) in order to "multiply the Christian faith" (*da se umnoži vira karstianska*). They knew that they had to both appeal to the Catholic sentiments and protect their own jurisdiction at the same time. Furthermore, Smiljanić realized the importance of the anti-Muslim rhetoric, since he knew about the matters of Christian schism and how to exploit this rhetoric for his community's own benefit. The letter even mentions both the Slavic and Latin word for the schism (*razlučenja iliti šizme*), poignantly

[114] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 369-72.

recalling Rothman's observation about careful discursive choices used by cross border actors. This letter betrays the way in which the Morlacchi managed to preserve a "sense of boundaries for their own community whilst elaborating religious practices and concepts that could be claimed by both."[115]

This appeal to the Venetians can be put in a broader context of moving in and out of identificatory labels that underscores the Morlacchi case. Although the Morlacchi chieftains skillfully crafted the discourse that the Venetians wanted to hear, this does not mean that they turned their back on other borderland actors. As the report from the priest Božanović suggests, Morlacchi engaged with those from the other side. In attempting to explain Morlacchi choices, it is helpful to turn to the work on multiple and competing loyalties in South Eastern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. There, the authors challenge teleological and "linear transformation to a new 'nationalized' rationality" of the new emerging states, highlighting instead shifting loyalties and ambiguities.[116] In line with this, Morlacchi's migration and change of the imperial master did not necessarily entail unconditional change of one imperial "rationality" for another. It is important to keep in mind also the multiple loyalties, ranging from kinship and confessional to political and patronage ties that were not mutually exclusive. The Morlacchi's connections also shed light on the nature of borderland relationships and how they were forged, suggesting at the same time that a simple division into "Morlacchi," "Venetians," "Ottomans," or "Christians," and "Muslims" is problematic to say the least.

[115] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 602.
[116]Clayer Grandits, Nathalie Hannes and Robert Pichler, "Introduction: Social (Dis-)Integration and the National Turn in the Late-and Post-Ottoman Balkans: Towards an Analytical Framework," in *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans: The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and Nation-Building*, ed. Clayer Grandits, Nathalie Hannes and Robert Pichler (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 5.

This is especially reflected in a letter sent to Petar Smiljanić, father of Ilija Smiljanić who penned the letter discussed above, by the captain of the Ottoman fortress of Udbina in Lika somewhere around 1648. It shows how multiple connections maintained by Morlacchi go beyond simple identification or even loyalties. It is worth to quote the entire letter here:

> From Mustafa-aga, Captain of Udbina and Lika, to *harambaša* Petar Smiljanić, homage and warm and friendly greetings to our brother and friend. We wonder at your lordship, that no letter has come from you, you being our father's friend. Do you think us worth nothing in comparison to our father? We pray, if there is to be no settlement, as we wrote asking you to arrange with *Proveditore Generale*, if you see that there will be no peace, we beg you, send us the news secretly, for the sake of our friendship. Our mother greets you and prays you for a Turkish slave girl [*molaše za jednu tursku robinicu*], and we will send you what is owed. We pray that you will greet your son Ilija on our behalf. We have heard that he is also a hero on the Frontier [*na toj krajini*]. God knows that we are pleased by that, for he is one of ours [*jere je naš*].We are sending a hawk's feather for him to wear before the heroes. And we ask him to send us a gun, which you know we need. On my faith, we will use it honorably. And we pray that *harambaša* Ilija sends us a bottle of *rakija*, so that we might drink our fill. Keep merry! Amin.[117]

The letter is useful for this discussion because it is first and foremost a narrative reflecting a series of transactions between an Ottoman army official and the Morlacchi rising in the Venetian service. The goods that circulated around the frontier therefore included ransomed slaves, arms, secret information, tokens of friendship and honor (the hawk feather), and curiously alcohol, thus underscoring the polyvalent entrepreneurial networks that crisscrossed the borderland.

We see how Mustafa-aga refers to Smiljanić as a friend and a brother, and calls his son Ilija a "hero," despite the fact that it was precisely around Udbina in Lika, under *aga*'s jurisdiction, that the Morlacchi frequently raided. In fact, it was around Udbina that Ilija was killed in 1654. On that occasion, his brother Filip Smiljanić reported to the Venetians that they

[117] Wendy Bracewell, "Frontier Blood-Brotherhood and the Triplex Confinium," in *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, ed. Nataša Štefanec Drago Roksandić (Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 37. I provide the English translation by Wendy Bracewell of an original letter published in Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Izabrana Djela I* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1991), 120-21. I added Slavic original where I thought it might be helpful.

were raiding "Turks" and "enemies" when Ilija was ambushed and murdered. Perhaps most interesting is Mustafa-aga's note that Ilija – the frontier hero – is "one of ours," suggesting that the easy movement between alliances was really foregrounded in mutually shared ambiguity of this space.

Moreover, Morlacchi used the fact that Venetians needed their presence in order to negotiate their internal positions. As Madunić shows, the Morlacchi military elites fashioned themselves "with a mixture of Ottoman-Venetian military titles (*serdar, hramabaša, capitano, knez, governatore*)," and the Smiljanić family was the first one to introduce and hold the office of *serdar* - chief of the Morlacchi.[118] This office, in turn, reflects multiple convergences of power claims among both the Morlacchi and other Venetian actors. By following the evolution of the office of *serdar* throughout the 1650s, Madunić notes how it brought into conflict various Morlacchi factions, and how, for example, some of the Morlacchi clans promoted the office of *harambaša* at the expense of the *serdar*.

Troubles as to how to best incorporate and use the Morlacchi in Venetian Dalmatia strained relationships between the provincial administration and the *Terraferma*. In the early years of war, *provveditore* Leonardo Foscolo was juggling between Morlacchis' demands for their offices in the Venetian army and the Senate's mistrust and strained budget. The governor therefore had to please both the Morlacchi and his own superiors acting as a mediator. These struggles also exposed power competition between the Venetian administration and old Dalmatian nobility, which came to the fore with the Venetian intention to appoint the count Posedarski, who as shown in the previous chapter worked on the Morlacchi incorporation to

[118] Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)", 215.

defense system from the beginning of the war, as a "*collonelo de Morlacchi*."[119] As Madunić observes, that move was firmly resisted by the Morlacchi, and additionally strained their relations with the Venetians. Arguably, these developments are yet another example of the "symbiotic relationship"[120] between various borderland elites, suggesting how these multiple parties mutually engaged in setting up their cases, sometimes in convergence and sometimes at the expense of each other. These struggles also exposed power competition between the Venetian administration and old Dalmatian nobility, which came to the fore with the Venetian intention to appoint the count Posedarski, who, as shown in the previous chapter, worked on the Morlacchi incorporation into the defense system from the beginning of the war, as a "*collonelo de Morlacchi*."[121] As Madunić observes, that move was firmly resisted by the Morlacchi, and additionally strained their relations with the Venetians.

One of the signs of the precariousness between the Morlacchi and the Venetians figures in the threats of violence. As suggested above, both the Morlacchi and the Venetians were constantly involved in negotiating outcomes that best served their interests, and threats with violence had a special place. Madunić highlights examples when the Morlacchi threatened the Venetians with leaving in the face of the Ottoman attack. In the same way, the Venetians threatened with destroying Morlacchi property if they keep rebelling. Arguably, this casts a different light on interdependency of violence, differences, and precariousness in the sense that violence was a discursive tool in both constant negotiation of boundaries, rather than simply a way of compulsion.

[119] Ibid., 242.
[120] Tolga Esmer, "Economies of Violence, Governance, and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Banditry in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1800," 18.
[121] Madunić, "Defensiones Dalmatiae: Governance and Logistics of the Venetian Defensive System in Dalmatia During the War of Crete (1645-1669)", 242.

These cases show the almost "symbiotic relationship" between Morlacchi and the other actors on the borderland, especially the Venetian. The Morlacchi's migration, i.e. movement, whether forced and voluntary, highlights the way in which the Morlacchi managed to navigate multiple boundaries set up by the borderland's political, religious, and economic rivalries. The way that the Morlacchi were moved, as well as how the responded to it, showcases a whole host of boundary negotiation.

Moving Others across Imperial Boundaries and Identificatory Categories

Slavery, religion, conversion, and empire are all interrelated. Religious identities and antagonisms informed the slave trade, as well as many other violent activities, in the wider Mediterranean context. Molly Greene, who wrote on the seventeenth-century corsairs of Malta and their relationship with the Ottomans and Venetians, notes the centrality of religion in the context of the seventeenth-century maritime relations. She also notes the essential "ambiguity, confusion, and contradictory thinking" as to how the Mediterranean relations should be organized – based on religion or sovereignty and subjecthood.[122] This ambiguity was not only embedded in the maritime, but also in the inland relations. As this section aims to show, while confession informed and legitimized slave and other exchanges, it was itself an ambiguous, unstable category. In the words of Natalie Rothman, this borderland was "shaped by metropolitan categories, […] but also these categories were in turn shaped in the process."[123]

The convergence of slavery, religion, and inter-imperial relations also underlies the work of Will Smiley, who discusses changing legal definitions of conversion in the relationship between Ottoman and Russian Empires in the practice of ransom slavery in the late eighteenth-

[122] Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merhcants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean*, 10.
[123] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 623.

and early nineteenth centuries.[124] In Smiley's view, conversion acquired a legal, state-sanctioned meaning at the expense of its previous social meaning and communal trust, showing how people resisted new requirements for ransom. Although concerned with a later period and different inter-imperial borderland, Smiley demonstrates how religion and conversion held a central position in defining and negotiating slave status. In contrast to the modern times and legal definitions, Smiley also points out how conversion, enslavement, and slave ransom were individual and communal matters. In the borderland context of "theological ambiguity and flux," questions of identity and belonging were therefore constantly redefined by a host of other actors alongside the state, which reminds us about the need to move beyond the intentionality of the state in these spaces.[125]

One of the most entrenched practices of exchange centered around the Morlacchi was undoubtedly slavery. In that sense, slavery and ransom fit into the broader phenomenon of Mediterranean slavery that flourished during the seventeenth century and had its uninterrupted roots from the time of antiquity.[126] The seventeenth-century slavery in Dalmatia is a phenomenon that ties the Morlacchi together with imperial authorities, and the clergy in both the borderland and the wider Mediterranean region in entrepreneurial networks.

As the quote of Ivan Božanović, a missionary from the beginning of this chapter shows, the Morlacchi were actively participating in capturing the people from the Ottoman lands. This in itself was not a problem. The Venetian Republic welcomed captured Muslims slaves as

[124] Will Smiley, "The Meanings of Conversion: Treaty Law, State Knowledge, and Religious Identity among Russian Captives in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *The International History Review* 34, no. 3 (2012).
[125] Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderland," 622.
[126] For some discussions on the variety and scope of slavery and slave trade in the Italian peninsula see Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi musulmani nell'Italia moderna: galeotti, vu' cumpra', domestici* (Perugia: Universita degli Studi di Perugia, 1999).; Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery and Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008).; Rosita D'Amora, "Some Documents Concerning the Manumision of Slaves by the Pio monte della misericordia in Naples," *Eurasian Studies* 1(2002). For the discussion on medieval slavery in Dalmatia, see Neven Budak, "Servi ranog srednjeg vijeka u Hrvatskoj i Dalmaciji," *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 15 (1985).

commodities in constant demand to man their galleys, and it also capitalized on taxing the slave trade. Tea Mayhew even suggests that circulation of slaves may have been the most important economic activity in seventeenth-century Dalmatia.[127] The problem began with enslaving Christians and selling them off across the Adriatic, often disguised as Muslims.

Indeed, in one of his letters, Božanović actually signals that the Morlacchi were more prone to capturing the Christians, rather than the Muslims.[128] Additionally, he states that this was not a problem specific to his area around Split, but to the entire Dalmatia. Sources describing Morlacchi's raids regularly reveal large numbers of slaves that they brought with them, who were then either put on galleys or sold. One of the destinations was Napoli, where Stjepan Sorić, a priest and one of the earliest Morlacchi chieftains, himself sold a number of captured slaves.[129] Furthermore, according to reports from Donato Jelić, a Montenegrin priest who built his career in the *Propaganda* by helping Christian slaves in Napoli, "*haiduzi*"[130] regularly targeted Christians specifically and sold them all over Italy and even to the Ottoman functionaries on the borderland. As these cases suggest, slavery was a large business in which the Morlacchi played a crucial role of capturing people and putting them on markets across the Mediterranean littoral. However, the slave economy seems to have been particularly developed along the Ottoman-Venetian border, not unlike the ransom slavery in the Hungarian lands where the exchange of captives bound Christians and Muslims from both sides by tacit agreement.[131] In the mid-sixteenth century, a ruling from the Ottoman Registry of Important Affairs (*mühimme defterleri*) tells a case of a

[127] Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645 - 1718*, 260. See also Roksandić, *Triplex Confinium:ili o granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti 1500 - 1800.*, 156-59.
[128] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 696.; *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol 2, 76.
[129] *Istorija kotorskih uskoka 1648-1684*, 33.
[130] Another Catholic priest said that the "*haiduzi*" were "Morlacchi who live on ambush" (*Morlacchi che vivono di busca*). *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 2, 447.
[131] Géza Palffy, "Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman Hungarian Frontier in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman Borders*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

Bosnian, understandably Muslims, who was reported to the court for catching and selling slaves around Bosnia,[132] thus suggesting that the whole "controversy" was by no means unprecedented.

The Morlacchi were not just carrying out the "dirty work" of Venetian and Ottoman elites, but they actively partook in shaping the slave trade. In another report from Ivan Božanović we can see that the Morlacchi would keep the slaves, let them go, ransom them, or sold them further.[133] Some of the Morlacchi acquired considerable wealth in these enterprises. Ilija Smiljanić received a house in Zara in 1653, as well as a pay of fifty ducats a month.[134] However, next year Ilija died in an Ottoman attack somewhere in the *sanjak* of Lika in which, according to the account of his brother Filip, he went in order to acquire slaves and visit violence upon the "Turks."[135] In 1654, Ilija's widow Catterina, who was a convert from Islam (*Turca di nascita*) received a monthly pension from the Senate,[136] and already in 1655 she remarried another Morlacchi *harambaša* Milivoj Zubičević and brought a rich dowry that included "lots of gold, silver, trinkets, silk, woolen, and linen garments,"[137] provided by Ilija's borther Filip, now the head of the Morlacchi.

At the same time, slave trade was a phenomenon that implicated the entire borderland in one complex exchange network. Ivan Božanović, a Morlacchi missionary and priest stationed in Vranjic near Split started to report on the Morlacchi's slave trading activities in 1656.[138] However, in 1659, two subsequent reports against Božanović were directed to the *Propaganda*,

[132] Ešref Kovačević, ed. *Muhimme defteri: dokumenti o našim krajevima* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu,1985), 17.
[133] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 696-97.
[134] *Istorija kotorskih uskoka* 1648-1684, 66.
[135] Ibid., 75-76.
[136] Ibid., 79.
[137] "*[T]anti ori, argenti, gioie, veste de seda, lana, et lino*" in Ibid., 85.
[138] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 572.

both accusing him of nothing other than being involved in the slave trade.[139] It seems, however, that the *Propaganda* did not react to the accusations because in 1661 Božanović's mission was extended for another three years.[140] Among the people who accused Božanović was Don Andrea, military chaplain (*Capelano del Generale di Dalmatia)*, and it was in 1663 that Božanović for the first time mentioned, confidentially (*u pečat od ispovid*), that the Venetian *proveditore* (*prinčip*) allowed for the trade in Christian slaves and took one tenth from all the sales.[141]

Božanović died in 1664 (supposedly right after his appointment was about to expire), but a new voice of conscience appeared in the person of Marijan Lisnić, bishop of Makarska, who in 1665 wrote to the *Propaganda* accusing the *proveditore* Girloamo Contarini and the Archbishops of Zara[142] and Split of tacitly approving the trade the Christian slaves.[143] In another series of letters that Lisnić sent to the *Propaganda* at the beginning of 1665, he accused the Venetian governors (*rettori*), soldiers, *proveditori*, and the clergy (*Prelati*) for profiting from the sales of Christian slaves.[144] Similar to earlier Božanović's letter, Lisnić also indicated that he provided valuable and secret information, which if released, could cost him his life.

According to these two priests, it was precisely those who were in charge of policing these irregularities that profited from this the most. Whether or not these people were actually guilty of turning a blind eye to capturing Christians, it is more interesting to observe how they actually benefited from this entire situation.

[139] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia,*Vol. 2, 90-92.
[140] Ibid., 178.
[141] Ibid., 346.
[142] Interestingly, precisely at that time, the Archbishop of Zara, Teodoro Balbi, was involved in a different kind of struggle – the one with an Orthodox priest Misael who in Balbi's diocese proclaimed himself a bishop of the Orthodox Morlacchi. During the 1660s, Balbi directed numerous letters to the Senate, describing how he apprehended Misael and kept him locked up in the Zara dungeon.
[143]*Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia,* Vol. 2, 495-96.
[144] Ibid., 497-98.

Indeed, it is uncertain to which extent men like Božanović were implicated in the whole matter. While it seems possible that slanders against him came from those whom he tired to expose, Božanović was probably not entirely innocent himself. In one of the letters, while reporting on the Morlacchi capturing Christians in the Ottoman lands, he mentioned that he kept one Orthodox boy for himself and converted him, adding that the missionary enterprise could benefit a lot from such converts with local knowledge.[145] In yet another letter, Božanović states that his churches were provisioned by selling the booty acquired in the Morlacchi raids, not excluding the possibility of profiting on the sold Christians.[146] It seems entirely possible that Božanović not only fought the illegitimate practices, but found ways to participate and benefit from them, exposing at the same time the "symbiotic relationship" between the elites and the "crime" in the context of wider entrepreneurial networks.

Therefore, slanders pertaining to the illegitimate slave trade functioned as a commodity in bolstering special or local knowledge and the quest for promotion and offices, as discussed in the previous chapter. Besides Božanović, one of the most interesting cases of career-building based on the Christian slave trade comes from the Franciscan Donato Jelić, from the town of Antivari (modern-day Bar in Montenegro). His name was mentioned for the first time in a letter to *Propaganda* in 1646, introducing Jelić and his missionary activities.[147] In another letter, Jelić himself says that he has been serving as a missionary in Albania since 1640.[148] The first time Jelić became involved with the question of the Christian slaves was in 1657, when three of his nieces were kidnapped by the "*haiduzi*" and sold to an Ottoman pasha of Castelnuovo (modern-

[145] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 577.
[146] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 2, 176.
[147] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 1, 53.
[148] Ibid., 589.

day Herceg Novi in Montenegro) in 1657.[149] In 1658 Jelić came to Lecce, a place on the Italian side of the Adriatic where many slaves, Christians and Muslims from the Ottoman-Venetian borderland, were sold, including Jelić's relatives.[150] In the beginning of 1659 he sent his first report from Napoli, which, according to his numerous accounts throughout the following years, was a center for slave trade for the entire Italy.[151]

Jelić was officially appointed by the *Propaganda* as a missionary for the Slavic-speaking slaves in Napoli in 1660, on the recommendation of the Archbishop of Sofia.[152] Although to a great extent his appointment included baptizing the Slavic-speaking Muslim slaves, it seems that he spent majority of his time locating and liberating numerous Christian slaves sold under the Muslim guise. At some point in 1662, Jelić reported that there were more than twenty thousand slaves from various places in Dalmatia, Albania, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, many of which were undoubtedly Christians.[153]

Jelić's reports underline an extensive network of people involved in the Balkan and Adriatic slave trade. His writing suggests that it was the Morlacchi who supplied Muslim slaves from Ottoman Bosnia, but as other reports showed, they did not limit themselves only to Muslims. In Jelić's view, the main suppliers were the "*haiduzi*" from the Montenegrin coast, and especially from Perast, who sold Christians both to the Ottoman pashas in the hinterland, as well as to Italian markets.[154] It seems, furthermore, that the Ottomans were also partaking in this

[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid., 714.
[151] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia,* Vol. 2, 33.
[152] Ibid., 123.
[153] Ibid., 320.
[154] Donato Jelić particularly mentions three notorious Rucović brothers, two of whom were imprisoned at some point, who were particularly active in the slave enterprise. Ibid., 88-89.

enterprise, as Jelić, in tracing his relatives sold to the Ottoman pasha of Castelnuovo, followed their trace up to Lecce.

It certainly was not just the wild Morlacchi, *haiduzi*, and corrupt overseas Venetian administration who took part in the illegitimate trade. According to Jelić, those who had a stake in these transactions were "princes, dukes, marquises, barons, lawyers, physicians, governors, judges, captains, and an occasional priest."[155] The list includes some of the most prominent positions and offices in the public life, and on several occasions Jelić reported that although he was well respected in the streets of Napoli, many of the magnates were looking for the ways to get rid of him. In 1666, he complained to the *Propaganda* that the guardian of his monastery was mistreating him for exposing the illegitimate slave trade.[156] This culminated in 1670 when he was even locked and sent for a trial to Rome, under the accusation that he baptized and set free the Turkish slaves, who then returned to their native lands and became spies.[157]

Aside from trying to eliminate Jelić, slave owners of Napoli tried a number of other ways to retain, and legitimize, their slaves. This included changing their appearance to look more Muslim, or changing their names. All of these grotesquely emphasize just how unstable these identities and religious labels were. At the hands of the slave traders, one could easily transform

[155] "*Principi, Duchi, Marchesi, Barroni, Consiglieri, Avvocati, Dottori, Governatori, Giudici, Capitani, e qualche Prelato*." Ibid., 432.
[156] Ibid., 609.
[157] The whole accusation reads as follows: "*Da che rappresentai all'Em[inenz]e V[ostre] li disordini che seguivano per conto di fra Donato Jelich minore osservante intorno alla liberatione de Schiavi ch'egli procurava con modi poco giusti e doppo l'ordine che ricevetti di dar' all'Em[inenz]e V[ostre] un cenno del med[esi]mo P[ad]re in occas[ion]e de nuovi richiami non solo del continuo ha egli comessi li med[esi]mi mancam[en]ti, ma di piu si e avanzato ad instruire tutti li Schiavi, che desiderano di mettersi in liberta di doversi procaciare, e provecciare, secondo l'uso di simil gente, de denari per ricomprarsi la liberta, onde si sentono infiniti furti in questa Citta, e Regno ripieni per altro de Schiavi, e di piu non contento di questo eccesso si e indotto a sollecitargli che si facino christiani accio con tal merito possino havere mag[gior] pieta, e comppassione et a forza, e contro il volere de P[ad]roni sieno liberati, onde simulandosi quelli Christiani sino che sono fatti liberi doppo se ne ritorno alle loro Patrie di Turchia, senza sapersi cosa alcuna della religione che professano, e con grandissima gelosia di questo Regno per le notitie che possono portare in quelle parti*," in *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani tra le due grandi guerre: Candia (1645 - 1669) Vienna e Morea (1683 - 1699)*, 1.

from a Christian into a Muslim, be it by having a hair cut "*alla turchesca*" or suddenly becoming *Hassan* or *Achmet*. The only voice by one of the unfortunate women sold into slavery claims that she was forcefully taken into slavery as a "Turk," and pleas with the religious authorities to "examine her" and confirm that she is a Christian.[158] It is uncertain just what exactly this exam, especially in the case of a woman, entailed. What is certain, however, is that differences were not obvious. More importantly, even when the differences were obvious, numerous complaints directed to the *Propaganda* about the continuation of the illegitimate enslavement suggest that these boundaries mattered only when certain people and interests wanted them to be important. In other words, being a Christian and being a Muslim – rather than being stone-clad identities – were tokens of exchange in larger entrepreneurial networks. They marked the legitimate from the illegitimate – as the circulation of slaves was informed and legitimized by the religious confrontation in the wider Mediterranean context.

[158] *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia*, Vol. 2, 581.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore the meaning of difference on the Ottoman-Venetian border in Dalmatia during as well as in the aftermath of the War of Crete (1645-1669). By tracing complex entrepreneurial networks centering around Morlacchi, I argue that the boundaries among borderland groups—Venetian governing elites, ecclesiastical representatives, and Morlacchi themselves—were continuously negotiated and renegotiated. One of the implications of this thesis is that these spaces were not merely products of political decision-making from above. The complex exchanges suggest blurry boundaries and intense interaction between imperial and ecclesiastical elites on the one hand, and other, less powerful actors on the other. Their implication in shared networks of exchange betrays constant boundary-crossing and shaping, suggesting that in the early modern inter-imperial space matters were not determined according to the clear categories of belonging and power, but by often ambiguous and shifting alliances.

Shifting alliances show that many actors partook in negotiating communal, imperial, and confessional relations – affairs at times inseparable from one another and imbedded in complex power dynamics. I argue that this kind of framework is much more fruitful for approaching populations like Morlacchi. As both historically and historiographically the name Morlacchi (or Vlachs) was shifting, and used as an "othering" or derogatory term by the elites, it seems pointless to persist in determining their origin. Doing so only reiterates notions of the Morlacchi as marginal, mysterious, and shapeless masses. Focus on the Morlacchi therefore offers a different insight into the borderland as a contested space. Approaching the seventeenth-century sources on Morlacchi, church, and state, it is challenging to tell these voices apart which signals

high level of their interrelatedness. This interrelatedness defies established hierarchies of power and belonging, suggesting in turn that new frameworks of early-modern relationships should be sought.

This is especially pertinent to imperial framework as the area in question is a place of inter-imperial competition between the Ottomans and Venetians. However, the classic image of the centralized power soon crumbles under the variety of individual and group voices, constantly appearing, disappearing, and re-grouping in attempts to carve their niches of power. While the imperial centers provide circumstances and ideological capital, the actors often subvert and adapt these for their local affairs, sometimes very different from imperial designs. The question arises as to what extent it is useful to see these areas and events in terms of their pertaining empires, or whether a different approach is needed that would treat the empire as ongoing interplay between imperial ideas and local manifestations.

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