THE USKOKS OF SENJ

PIRACY, BANDITRY, AND HOLY WAR IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ADRIATIC

Catherine Wendy Bracewell

Cornell University Press

ITHACA AND LONDON

Copyright © 1992 by Cornell University

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher. For information, address Cornell University Press, 124 Roberts Place, Ithaca, New York 14850.

First published 1992 by Cornell University Press.

First printing, Cornell Paperbacks, 2010

International Standard Book Number 0-8014-2674-X
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 91-55548
Printed in the United States of America
Librarians: Library of Congress cataloging information appears on the last page of the book.

♾ The paper in this book meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

The Uskoks of Senj

The dress of an uskok leader, reproduced from Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti antichi et moderni* (Venice, 1590). The accompanying text gives details of uskok life and dress as they appeared in Venetian eyes toward the end of the sixteenth century. (By permission of the British Library.)

For Ron and Helen Bracewell

Contents

Illustrations and Maps ix
Acknowledgments xi
Conventions and Abbreviations xiii

1. Introduction 1
The Uskoks of Senj between Three Empires 2
Approaches to the Uskoks 6
Sources 15

2. The Borders and Border Military Systems 19
The Impact of Ottoman Invasion 20
Conflict and Community on the Borders 25
Border Military Systems 36
Klis and Senj in the Military Frontier 45

3. Origins and Motives of the Uskoks 51
Origins and Numbers 51
Why Become an Uskok? 66

4. The Raiding Economy 89
Military Frontier Subsidies 89
The Economics of Raiding 98
Trade as a Function of Plunder 108

5. Military Authority and Raiding 118
Senj Citizens and Uskoks 119
Uskok Rank-and-File: Venturini and Stipendiati 125
Uskok Commanders 130
Captains of Senj 139
The Habsburgs and the Military Frontier Administration 150

6. Legitimating Raiding: The Uskok Code 155
The Uskok *antemurale Christianitatis* 155
Honor and Vengeance 162
Solidarity and Conflict 170

7. Allies and Victims 175
Relations with the Infidel 175
Uskoks and Ottoman Christians 187
Christian Neighbors: Venice and Dubrovnik 199
Merchants and Cities 209
The Rural Population of Dalmatia 218

8. The Final Decades 237
Deteriorating Relations with Venice 238
Rabatta's Commission in Senj 244
Dissent over the Limits of Raids 250
The Peace of Zsitvatorok and Conflict with the Hofkriegsrat 262
Popular Support for the Uskoks 273
Vlatković's Trial: The End of the Independent Vojvodas 277
Toward War with Venice 281

9. The Dispersal of the Uskoks 289

Appendix I: Chronology 305
Appendix II: Glossary 307
Bibliography 309
Index 323

Illustrations and Maps

Figures

An uskok leader (1590) — Frontispiece
1. "Abriss der Festung Zeng" (Sketch of the Senj Fortress) (1617) 105
2. Diagram of the Senj fortifications (1619) 122
3. Uskok atrocities (1694) 169
4. Klis (1573) 206
5. The mutilation of Commissioner Rabatta's corpse (1694) 248
6. Rab (1598) 274

Maps

1. Croatian Military Frontier, c. 1579 3
2. Ottoman conquests in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 21
3. Uskoks in Senj: distribution by origin, 1530–50 56
4. Uskoks in Senj: distribution by origin, 1551–70 59
5. Uskoks in Senj: distribution by origin, 1571–90 61
6. Uskoks in Senj: distribution by origin, 1591–1600 62
7. Uskoks in Senj: distribution by origin, 1601–20 65

Table

1. Stipendiati and venturini in Senj, 1571–1600 127

Acknowledgments

Anyone who spends a long time doing research in many places must expect to incur a heavy load of scholarly debts. Part of my pleasure in completing this book comes from the chance to thank those who have helped me so generously—it is a pleasure clouded only by the knowledge that I cannot mention them all personally. I am grateful for the assistance I have received from the staffs of the archives where I have worked, especially those in Venice, Dubrovnik, Zagreb, and Zadar. I particularly thank Ivan Pederin, archivist of the Venetian period at the Zadar Historical Archive, for his invaluable aid. Archival research is largely a solitary quest after the past, but many friends in Yugoslavia did their best to ensure that my pleasant hours among the papers were followed by equally pleasant (and equally enlightening) hours in the real world. I must single out the Šikić family of Dubrovnik for special thanks for the conversations in the kitchen after the archives had closed and for the long rambles through the very places I had been reading about in the documents, to which I owe much of my sense of the cultural and physical landscape of Dalmatia. In England, I have benefited from the resources and good will of the British Library and, in particular, the library of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, where the tolerant librarians satisfied my innumerable requests and allowed me to rummage happily through the rare book collection.

My arguments and conclusions have been sharpened by suggestions and criticism I received in response to papers delivered at the American Historical Association annual convention; the Institute of Historical Research, University of London; King's College, University of London; the University of Manchester; and the Zagrebački književni razgovori and the Institut za istraživanje folklora, Zagreb. The organizer of the last-named seminar, the late Lydia Sklevicky, had the gift of evoking inspira-

tion far beyond her own field—I only wish she could still receive my thanks. Many others have patiently listened to my arguments and have commented helpfully on my work, in particular my colleagues and students at S.S.E.E.S.

My work on this book began at Stanford University. The project has changed greatly since, and if it is in any measure improved, some of the credit rests with Judith Brown and Nancy Kollman, both of whom gave me invaluable advice. I owe Wayne Vucinich an even greater debt of gratitude, not only for his unflagging interest and encouragement but also for enticing me into the study of history in general, and the history of the South Slavs in particular. I am also deeply indebted to Ivo Banac of Yale University. In his efforts on my behalf he has been not only inventive in suggestion, diligent in criticism, and merciless in the exposure of error and illogic, but also steadfast in friendship.

Anything I can say here will be inadequate recompense for the support I have had from Bob Shoemaker, friend, husband, and fellow historian. He has kept me going with a judicious mixture of interest and impatience, and I have learned more from him than he realizes. This book is dedicated to my parents, Helen and Ron Bracewell, my first and best teachers. From the beginning they encouraged me to ask questions and showed me the pleasure of searching for answers. Much of what I am as a historian is due to them.

While I was reading the proofs of this book, Dubrovnik, Zadar, and other cities in Croatia were being shelled in a bitter and destructive war. Whether the archives I used will survive is still unclear. Documents—like the human lives they record—are fragile things. Many of the subjects discussed here, however, seem to be more enduring. Conflicts born out of religious, ethnic, and political divisions; an idea of honor that glorifies violence; the logic of betrayal, revenge, and reprisal: all these play as deadly a role today as they did in the sixteenth century. I hope that this book can contribute, in a small way, to a better understanding of these long-lived values and patterns of behavior. Is it too much to hope that such an understanding might some day help to end them?

C. W. B.

Sheffield, England

Conventions and Abbreviations

The confusing welter of peoples and tongues that characterizes the Balkan frontier presents the scholar with a problem in achieving the standardization of terminology and consistency of usage so highly valued by the authors of style manuals. The following notes are intended to explain the solutions I have adopted here.

According to W. H. Fowler in his *Modern English Usage,* the use of capitals, apart from certain elementary rules, is largely governed by personal taste. As one Venetian observer pointed out in the seventeenth century, "The term uskok denotes not a nation but a profession,"[1] and so I have chosen to use it here in lowercase, treating it in the same way as the term "cossack." It is perhaps worth pointing out that I invariably capitalize both "Vlach" and "Morlach"—unlike those authors who distinguish between an ethnic and a social meaning—because that distinction cannot always be sharply drawn and because I believe that these terms still had a residual ethnic meaning in this period.

In current English usage the term "Turk" has acquired an ethnic meaning, entirely inappropriate to this area, where so-called Turks were often recently converted Slavs. In the sixteenth century "Turk" was used much more broadly, to refer to the Ottoman state, to Muslims, or even to Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. I have used the term "Ottoman" when the emphasis is on state administration and "Muslim" when the emphasis is on religion, but I have also sometimes used the term "Turk" (without any ethnic connotation) more generally, following the conventions of the time.

Anyone writing on this area faces insoluble orthographic problems.

[1]Cited by Philip Longworth, "The Senj Uskoks Reconsidered," *Slavonic and East European Review* (London), 57, no. 3 (1979): 353.

Although in this period a single town might be known as Zengg, Segna, and Senj (with different possible spellings of each variant), I have usually employed the version currently in use in the country in question. (For those not familiar with Serbo-Croatian, Senj is pronounced Señ—*not* to rhyme with Stonehenge.) I have substituted the English equivalent only if it is widely known (thus Vienna, not Wien). In quotations I have given the form used in the original, followed by the modern form, if different, in square brackets.

A similar problem arises with personal names. The name of the uskok vojvoda called Ivo Senjanin in the oral epics is given in many different forms in various languages. Even his own signature exists in three forms: Iuan Vlatkho, Gioanne Novakovich alias Vlatcovich, and Givan Wlatcovich. As a rule I have used modern orthography for names in the text, so that he appears here as Ivan Vlatković. Only where it is not clear what the modern equivalent might be, and in quotations, have I preserved the original orthography.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

Abbreviations and Archival References

A.H.	Arhiv Hrvatske (Zagreb)
A.S.	Arhiv Slovenije (Ljubljana)
A.S.F.	Archivio di Stato, Florence
A.S.V.	Archivio di Stato, Venice
H.A.D.	Historijski Arhiv, Dubrovnik
H.A.R.	Historijski Arhiv, Rijeka
H.A.Z.	Historijski Arhiv, Zadar
I.Ö.H.K.R.	Innerösterreichischer Hofkriegsrat (Croatica)
S.S.E.E.S.	School of Slavonic and East European Studies

I have cited archival documents by giving the archive, the collection, the number of the file or volume, and, where the document is paginated, the page number, with verso indicated by an apostrophe (e.g., H.A.D., Lettere di Ponente 15: 122'). Where the document is not consistently paginated, has several varying page numbers, or is loosely bundled in a file, I have identified it by a date (e.g., A.S.V., Provveditori da Terra e da Mar 1318: 6 June 1596) or by a document number (e.g., H.A.Z., Fond Šime Ljubića, 2/33). The Venetian calendar began the new year on 1 March. In the text I have given dates in the modern convention, but I have followed the original form in the notes, adding m.v. (*modo veneziano*) where necessary.

C. W. B.

The Uskoks of Senj

Ove pisme svakomu drage neće biti, jer medju njima malo ima razlikosti, nahodeći se u svim iste riči, kakonoti ove: junak, vitez, delija, leventa, zmija, zmaj, vuk; lav, soko, ora, gnizdo sokolovo i mač, sablje, kopje, Kraljević, Kobilić, Zdrinović, kolajne, medalje, dukale, odsičaše, robje dovodjaše, itd. Kad bi moguće bilo, imala bi jedna od druge biti posve različita, ali budući svi vitezovi imenovani od iste kriposti, s istim ričima služiti se bî potribito za ukazati njihova junaštva. Kome su ugodne, neka ih piva: kome nisu, neka idje spavati.

(These songs will not be to everyone's taste, for there is little variation among them, all of them containing the same words, such as: hero, knight, horseman, galley slave, serpent, dragon, wolf, lion, falcon, eagle, falcon's nest and sword, sabers, lances, Kraljević, Kobilić, Zdrinović, necklets, medallions, decrees, heads chopped off, slaves carried away, etc. Were it possible, each would be completely different from the others, but as all the knights here named possess the same virtues, the same words must be used to describe their exploits. May those who find them pleasing sing them; may those who do not go off to sleep.)

—Andrija Kačić-Miošić,
Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga (Venice, 1756)

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The uskoks of Senj are the heroes of one of the cycles of South Slav folk epics, but they are not simply the stuff of legend. The archives and the histories of nearly all the cities and states that rimmed the Adriatic in the sixteenth century are filled with references to these sea and land raiders who served as irregulars in the Habsburg border garrison in Senj for almost a century. The uskoks aroused strong and contradictory emotions among their contemporaries. The Habsburg archdukes and the Emperor, with papal support, hailed the uskoks for their role as a bulwark of Christendom, crediting them with preserving Europe from the onslaught of the Turk. Fra Paolo Sarpi, the contemporary Venetian theologian and historian, denounced them as pirates and brigands, echoing the opinions of the Venetian officers responsible for the security of the Adriatic and the anxious merchants who saw their ships off with the phrase "God preserve you from the hands of the uskoks of Senj." Although the rural populations along the borders—Ottoman, Venetian, and Habsburg—left little of their own testimony, clearly the uskoks received their most consistent support from these people, in spite of all prohibitions and in spite of the fact that in the long term they probably suffered the most from the uskoks' raids. Long afterward the peasants and pastoralists of the border preserved vivid memories of the uskoks in epic songs about their bravery, their often bloody deeds, and their rigorous code of honor, glorifying them as heroes and symbols of freedom from all authority.

The uskoks have continued to draw the attention of historians, whose assessments have been no less contradictory than were those of contemporaries. But despite this constant interest, surprisingly little attention has focused on the uskoks themselves and their own perceptions of their role. Who were these men, and why did they provoke

such violently contrasting opinions? This book attempts to answer these questions.

The Uskoks of Senj between Three Empires

The uskoks developed as a military community where the borders of three empires met on the shores and hinterland of the Adriatic. In the eyes of the Republic of Venice, the Adriatic of the sixteenth century was a Venetian sea—its "gulf." The Republic's possessions edged much of the eastern shore, from Istria south to the Bay of Kotor, each city commune surrounded by its small circle of protective territory, while the Adriatic islands as far as Korčula stood like a stationary fleet off the Dalmatian coast. But by the early sixteenth century the Serenissima's Dalmatian hinterland had fallen to the Ottomans. As far north as Lika, the hinterland was held in the firm grasp of the Turk—in many places Ottoman territory was within eyeshot of city walls—and Venice's possessions were open to any Ottoman attack. The Ottoman advance had stopped short of the Kvarner Gulf (Quarnero). After 1526 the stretch of territory south of Rijeka and north of the Zrmanja, a part of the *reliquiae reliquiarum* of once-powerful Croatia, was held by the House of Austria, inheritor of the crowns of Croatia and Hungary. This Croatian Littoral and its hinterland formed the nucleus of the Habsburg Military Frontier system against the Turk, the *maritima confinia*. Here, at various fortress towns defended by military captaincies, the Habsburgs stationed troops of regular and irregular soldiers. (See Maps 1 and 2.)

One of these, on the barren karst coast at the foot of the Velebit mountains, and situated beneath a mountain pass that channels the *bora*, the furious northeast wind, was Senj. In the sixteenth century it was a small town, surrounded to the distance of a mile or two by a dense forest that, together with the high mountains at its back, cut off any attack from the land. It lacked a protected harbor, so that as a contemporary noted, the barks and small craft had to be "drawn onto land before the gate of the city, and tied and anchored as though they were at sea, otherwise the *bora* that comes up suddenly there would carry them away."[1] For almost a century this was the principal resort of the uskoks.

The Ottoman invasions of the Balkan Peninsula with their plundering raids and destructive skirmishes set large portions of the population in motion. Many crossed the frontier to take refuge in the territories of neighboring states. Some formed units for defense or retaliation against

[1] *Commissiones et relationes venetæ*, vols. 1-3, Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, 6, 8, and 11, ed. Šime Ljubić (Zagreb, 1876-80), vol. 3, p. 63.

1. Croatian Military Frontier, c. 1579.

the Ottoman enemy, often clustering around the border fortresses. These refugees were known by various names: *prebjezi*, Vlachs, uskoks. Although at first used generally as a term for refugees (the word itself derives from the Croatian verb *uskočiti:* to jump in), in time the term "uskok" came to be applied especially to those who settled in Senj as border irregulars, and was eventually extended to all citizens of Senj (although they themselves rarely used the word). The uskoks, most of whom received no pay, were largely dependent on plunder for their livelihood (and the fact that they so supported themselves without further draining the empty coffers of the Frontier authorities, and indeed paid a portion of their booty to their military commanders and to the Habsburgs themselves, made them particularly attractive as border troops).

Uskok raids across Ottoman territory took two main forms: directly south into the Lika area, which bordered on the territory of the Habsburg captaincy centered in Senj; and into the Ottoman hinterland of Dalmatia, which could be reached only by sea, and by crossing the territory of Venice or the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). In conventional military maneuvers, carried out under the leadership of border officers, the uskoks could number as many as two thousand. More often, however, they set out in smaller bands, some ten to thirty in a company, under the command of one of their own leaders. During raids lasting weeks or months, the uskoks lived off the land or what they could capture, ambushing merchant caravans or Ottoman border troops, plundering cattle and taking prisoners for ransom.

Very early, the uskoks extended their raids to the shipping of the Adriatic, plundering Ottoman merchants and their goods. These goods were increasingly carried on Christian vessels and formed an important part of the Adriatic trade. They were often carried on Venetian ships, but other merchant fleets, such as those of Dubrovnik and Ancona, also carried Ottoman goods. Claiming the right and the duty to plunder the goods of the infidel, uskok bands in their small light barks ambushed shipping in Dalmatia's ports and coastal waters and ransacked cargoes for merchandise belonging to Turks and Jews. Christian merchants, too, inevitably suffered losses in these raids. With their limited numbers and small primitive craft it is hard to believe that the uskoks could have posed the threat to shipping that they did, yet fear of them was a factor that led Venice to send its great galleys to guard the merchantmen that sailed north from Split, carrying the trade that had arrived overland from the Levant.

Uskok raids came to be a serious irritant to Venice, for they disturbed relations with its Ottoman neighbors, relations Venice was anxious to keep peaceful. While the Republic was at war with the Porte (1537–39 and 1570–73), the Signoria encouraged uskok actions against the Turk and engaged uskoks in the Venetian forces. In peacetime, however, Ottoman authorities seized on uskok actions as an opportunity to complain to Venice over the alleged complicity of Venetian citizens in these attacks and threatened to send in their own fleet if Venice could not secure the waters of the Adriatic, as guaranteed in the Ottoman-Venetian treaties of 1540 and 1573. Similar considerations troubled the uskoks' relations with Dubrovnik, which found itself, as a Christian city under Ottoman protection, in an awkward position between the Porte and the uskoks.

The Signoria's repeated response was both to oppose the uskoks directly with orders forbidding cooperation between uskoks and Venetian subjects in Dalmatia and limiting their operations in the Adriatic, and to attempt through diplomacy to force their Habsburg masters to

rein them in or remove them from Senj entirely. Attempts to halt cooperation between the uskoks and the people of Venetian Dalmatia were fruitless, although Venice renewed its decrees regularly, adding ever more horrible punishments. Venetian approaches to the Habsburgs were also ineffective. At the court of the Archduke of Styria in Graz, the spectacle of Venice embroiled with the Porte was not unwelcome. Furthermore, the Habsburgs countered any complaint about the uskoks with a demand for free navigation, fueled by their resentment of the Republic's pretensions to Adriatic supremacy. The Signoria's complaints usually had a more sympathetic hearing in the Emperor's court in Vienna, especially because the Ottomans threatened reprisals against the Habsburg borders for uskok attacks, but any serious move to replace the Senj garrison was hindered by the Archduke's plea of lack of means. The frequent Habsburg commissions to Senj did little more than return a fraction of the most recent plunder and once again prohibit unauthorized raiding across Venetian territory, to small effect.

The escalation of Venetian attacks on the uskoks and blockades of the trading ports of the Croatian Littoral from the 1590s eventually forced the Habsburgs to make some concessions to the Republic by restricting the liberties of the uskoks. With the end of the Habsburg-Ottoman Long Turkish War in 1606, the Habsburgs, the Ottoman Empire, and Venice were all formally at peace. Raiding and acts of war were forbidden to all sides. The Habsburgs now increasingly viewed uskok actions as a liability, and strictly prohibited unauthorized raiding, but they did not provide subsidies to the Senj garrison to make up for the loss of booty.

Inevitably, uskok raids continued. Still irritated by both the raids and Ottoman complaints, the Signoria took advantage of its strong alliances and the Archduke's domestic difficulties to act decisively against Senj and its protectors. The Venetian fleet blockaded the Littoral against shipping and uskok expeditions, and eventually declared war against the Habsburgs in November 1615—"the Uskok War." With the Venetian troops unable to consolidate their early victories, and with the Archduke distracted by the prospect of inheriting the responsibilities of the Empire, a peace was negotiated in Madrid in 1617, by which the Habsburgs agreed to remove the uskoks from Senj and burn their ships. The uskoks of course protested, but by the end of 1618 many of them had been moved to the interior of the Croatian Military Frontier. Small independent uskok operations continued through the 1620s, from both Senj and the surrounding areas, but with the Venetian-Ottoman wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the focus of new uskok activity shifted to the Venetian military border in Dalmatia.

The uskoks of Senj were not forgotten, however. In the vocabulary of the Venetians, 'uskok' remained so firmly linked to the corsairs of Senj

that they avoided using the term for the refugees who made up their own Dalmatian militia in the Candian and Morean wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though their Ottoman adversaries had no doubt that they were being raided by uskoks. Nor did the border population forget the uskoks, spreading their fame far beyond the Adriatic hinterland through the epic songs that preserved the memory of their exploits. The great popularity of these songs only a little more than a century after the expulsion of the uskoks from Senj can be seen from the large number included in the first substantial collection of these oral epics, the Erlangen manuscript, written down in the early eighteenth century.[2] Tales of the uskoks continued to compel the imagination into the twentieth century, not only in oral literature but also in plays, novels, and scholarly monographs.

Approaches to the Uskoks

One explanation of the contradictory assessments of the uskoks lies in the varying purposes for which they have been used. Most considerations of the uskoks, beginning with contemporary observations and continuing to the present day, have concentrated on the three great empires that met in the Adriatic and have seen the uskoks' significance in the context of the interactions between these powers. The conflicts over the uskoks provide an admirable device through which to focus on the shifting relationships of Venice, the Habsburg monarchy, and the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[3] Such studies have usually concentrated on great power relations, treating the uskoks only inasmuch as they were the occasion of conflict. Indeed, most have centered on Venice's economic and territorial interests in the Adriatic, and the threat, both direct and indirect, posed to these interests by the uskoks (and behind them the Habsburgs and the papacy). Too often interpretations of the uskoks' motives in such studies have been based on the consequences of their actions for the Republic: because their raids, though ostensibly directed against the infidel, also harmed Christian interests, the uskoks must necessarily have been hyp-

[2]G. Gesemann, ed., *Erlangenski rukopis starih srpskohrvatskih narodnih pesama*, Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost, section 1, vol. 12 (Belgrade, 1925). Many others have since been collected and published, most recently in A. Mijatović, ed., *Senjski uskoci u narodnoj pjesmi i povijesti* (Zagreb, 1983).

[3]For examples see Paolo Sarpi, *La Repubblica di Venezia, la Casa d'Austria, e gli uscocchi*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi and Luisa Cozzi (Bari, 1965); M. Kravjànszky, "Il processo degli uscocchi," *Archivio veneto* (Venice), 5 (1929): 234-66; Silvino Gigante, "Venezia e gli uscocchi, 1570-1620," *Fiume: Semestrale della Società di studi fiumani* (Rijeka), 9 (1931): 3-87; A. Grünfelder, "Studien zur Geschichte der Uskoken" (Ph.D. diss., Universität in Innsbruck, 1974).

ocrites, concealing their lust for booty behind a facade of religion. Much of the reality of uskok life has found no place in these interpretations because it casts little light on the Venetian-Habsburg rivalry.

A second approach to the uskoks treats their story as one of resistance to oppression by alien powers, a struggle against Venice and the Turk. Much of this writing is rooted in the nineteenth-century romantic rediscovery of the national past of the South Slavs.[4] Here too the conflicts between Venice, the Habsburgs, and the Ottoman Empire provide the frame of reference, and the uskoks' significance is derived from their relations with these powers. This historiography has paid more attention to the uskoks' motives (usually defined as national and religious), though the projection of contemporary political concerns onto the past sometimes mars its value. Such studies have increased our knowledge of uskok actions by sifting through the sources to build up a narrative of battles and raids, usually focusing on uskok military prowess against Venetian forces and, in less detail, against the Ottomans.[5] This concentration on the objects of uskok attack, however, has been at the expense of an understanding of the internal development of the uskok phenomenon.[6]

Neither of these approaches is completely satisfactory in helping us to understand the uskoks and their place in the sixteenth-century Adriatic borderlands. The economic, political, and religious competition between the three empires that met in the Adriatic was the fundamental condition for the existence of the uskoks: it created the niche they exploited so successfully for nearly a century. Yet the relations between these powers are not in themselves sufficient to explain all aspects of the uskoks' history. Nor is it possible to see the uskoks simply as the expression of resistance to foreign power, whether religious or national. These approaches have offered us only one-dimensional, cardboard images of the uskoks, primarily in speculating on their motives: as in the sixteenth century, on the one hand they have presented the uskoks as common criminals, driven by greed for booty, while on the other they have depicted them as fighters for national or religious liberation, justice, and

[4]Bare Poparić took this national perspective to extremes in *Povijest senjskih uskoka* (Zagreb, 1936), but it is also apparent in the work of Jovan Tomić, "Crtice iz istorije senjskih uskoka," *Letopis Matice srpske* (Novi Sad), 205–10 (1901): 18–53, and "Iz istorije senjskih uskoka, 1604–1607," *Letopis Matice srpske* (Novi Sad), nos. 237–41 (1906–7); and Gligor Stanojević, *Senjski uskoci* (Belgrade, 1973). August Šenoa's novel *Čuvaj se senjske ruke* (Zagreb, 1962, [1875]) was the first (and is still the best crafted) example of this approach.

[5]Bogumil Hrabak's studies are particularly noteworthy examples of this perspective, presenting much detailed material on uskok actions while avoiding the tendentious arguments of nationalist historiography.

[6]A more detailed analysis of uskok historiography can be found in C. W. Bracewell, "The Uskoks of Senj: Banditry and Piracy in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1985).

revenge. Both these judgments, however, have been made in the context of other arguments, without much attention to the views of the uskoks themselves. Traditional historiography has so far failed to address directly the social, economic, and cultural context of the uskok story. But without a sensitive examination of their society and the world in which they moved, we cannot evaluate the assessments of the historians or, more important, can we hope to understand the roles the uskoks played in their own time.

Let us begin with definitions. As noted above, some of their contemporaries, particularly the Venetians and Turks, labeled the uskoks pirates and brigands. To the Habsburgs they were a part of the Military Frontier, referred to as soldiers and servicemen, while those who were not officially part of the paid garrison were singled out as soldiers of fortune (*venturini*). The uskoks simply referred to themselves as heroes. Each of these terms implies a very different perspective on the uskoks.

In legal terms the uskoks were not pirates, even when they were plundering Ottoman cargoes from Christian ships. There was a clear distinction in the sixteenth century between pirates and corsairs, and between irregular soldiers and brigands. What distinguished the corsair was a commission from the ruler to make war on an enemy of the state. Thus the corsair or privateer could claim a legitimacy that the pirate, who raided without distinction, lacked; and similarly, the irregular border soldier operated within the law that the brigand flouted. The reliance on irregulars both on land and sea was a response to the financial constraints of warfare on the early modern state, obviating the necessity to maintain a full-time fleet or a standing army. The actual mechanics of raiding came to much the same thing, but in irregular warfare private gain was harnessed to the purposes of the state, for both the corsair and the border soldier were rewarded with their own plunder. Thus it was not personal profit that distinguished between the pirate and the corsair—both were motivated by the hope of booty—but the legitimacy conferred by a recognized authority.

As soldiers of the Military Frontier, the uskoks of Senj operated within a recognized framework of war between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire—or perhaps more precisely between the two warring civilizations of Christendom and Islam, for this conflict was not restricted to those periods of formally declared war but continued constantly even during the times of official truce between the two states. It was this conflict that justified and legitimated the uskoks' raids in their own eyes and the eyes of their patrons. Their victims' views, however, could be quite another matter. As Fernand Braudel pointed out, the term 'pirate' became common in Mediterranean usage only in the seventeenth century, evidence of an emotional reaction to a change in raiding that arose

from rivalry among Christian states as much as from the older, more readily accepted division between Islam and Christendom.[7] Much earlier than this, however, Venice and others had already damned the uskoks as pirates, brigands, and evildoers, resenting the effects (direct or indirect) of uskok warfare and stigmatizing it as simple robbery. How the uskoks were defined depended very much on who was speaking.

Such categories also affect the way in which the uskoks' history can be written. The disparaging labels used by those who were threatened—pirate, bandit, brigand—imply that the uskoks were nothing more than violent and irrational offenders against public order. These terms have the effect of belittling the actors' ideas and self-perceptions and denying them any coherent values. To accept the simple definition of soldiers, on the other hand, is to assimilate the uskoks to the goals and policies of the Habsburg state and Military Frontier, once again denying them, to a certain extent, autonomy. Without adopting the uskoks' own self-image as heroes, this book examines the labels pinned on the uskoks but also goes beyond them to focus on the actions and perceptions of the uskoks themselves.

This problem of definition and of labeling is one of the issues dealt with by those who have written about banditry since Eric Hobsbawm opened up the subject twenty years ago, identifying a type of outlaw regarded as a criminal by the state but as a hero by the peasantry.[8] Though the label 'brigand' or 'bandit' and, from a different perspective, 'social bandit' might not be wholly appropriate to the uskoks, many of the problems and approaches formulated in this literature are highly pertinent to a study such as this.

The debate that emerged from Hobsbawm's work focused on the political dimension of banditry. Some critics (notably Anton Blok) believe that the bandit's usual political role was not so much as a voice of peasant protest as an instrument of local elites.[9] When power was unequally distributed in a society, bandits had to look for support where they were most likely to find it. According to this view, bandits were forced to negotiate with the elites to survive, and so were inevitably placed in opposition to the peasants. Thus these critics dispute whether bandits could ever represent the interests of the poor. To a degree the uskoks followed this pattern. They found a patron in the state itself, or rather its representative, the administration of the Habsburg Military Frontier, and this patronage helped to minimize the class character of the uskok

[7]Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. by Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York, 1972–73), vol. 2, pp. 866–67.

[8]Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959), and *Bandits* (London, 1969).

[9]Anton Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Cambridge), 14 (1972): 498–500.

phenomenon. The military administration channeled the energies of its uskok recruits into raids against its Ottoman enemies. In practice, these raids affected not only purely military targets but also the peasant population of these territories. But at the same time the uskoks (like many bandits) were never sufficiently secure in their official support to ignore the reactions of the rural population, and they strove to retain the peasants' cooperation as best they could. In a sense, both Hobsbawm and Blok emphasize only one aspect of the social network the bandit must operate within at the expense of others. In asking where the uskoks' interests and their loyalties lay, we must consider their place within the power structure in its entirety, and their relations with both the weak (but not powerless) and the powerful (but not omnipotent).

The relationship between the attitudes of the rural poor and the acts of the bandits, another issue raised in the discussion of banditry, is also relevant to the uskok problem. While Hobsbawm saw peasant glorification of some bandits as evidence of bandit solidarity with the poor (and of a common expression of protest), others have denied that bandits ever spared the peasant in real life and have attributed the popular image of the noble robber to peasant idealization, a dream of "what ought to be."[10] Analyses of bandit myths, legends, and songs have stressed the psychological needs they met (affirming the peasant's hope for justice and fascination with violence) and their role as a vehicle for the discussion of social values, regardless of the realities of bandit actions.[11] Where real-life contacts between bandits and the peasants are examined, on the other hand, what these bandits actually did seems to be more important in shaping their relations. It seems likely that some bandits did indeed serve peasant interests on occasion, even if inadvertantly—at least to the extent of protecting them from other, more ruthless plunderers. Such acts could be vital in gaining peasant approval and support, even if colored by fear. Moreover, where the official authorities evoked only fear, a bandit who conformed to traditional ideals could expect both fear and admiration from the rural population.[12] Like many bandits, the uskoks had an ambiguous relationship with the rural population, for although they took from the peasant and the shepherd, they also received aid from them. Understanding to what extent the uskoks enjoyed popular

[10]Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, chap. 9, and "Social Bandits: Reply," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Cambridge), 14 (1972): 505: "It seems simplest to assume that there is some relation between a bandit's real behavior and his subsequent myth." For criticism of this stance, see especially Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand," pp. 500–501.

[11]See, for example, John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause* (Oxford, 1987), p. 279; S. Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Corsica* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 355–56.

[12]For a useful discussion of this point, see Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 179–91.

legitimacy requires close attention to the character of uskok actions and the meanings these had for various social groups.

The uskoks have often been equated with hajduks, outlaws operating within the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. Hobsbawm singled out the hajduks as a special category of bandit, distinguished by their semi-institutionalized character and by their political role as rebels against the Turk.[13] This interpretation echoed a long-established nationalist and Marxist historiography, which relied largely on popular sources to present the hajduks as heroes of national, religious, and social struggle, fighting both the Ottomans and Ottoman feudalism.[14] As in the more general debate over relations between bandits and the rural population, recent contributions to the study of the hajduks have emphasized that much of the burden of hajduk raiding fell on the shoulders of their co-nationals under Ottoman rule, citing examples that demonstrate hajduk indifference to national, religious, or social distinctions among their victims.[15] This questioning of the hajduks' religious and national consciousness raises the issue of what might be called hajduk ideology. To understand hajduk plundering (and perhaps also hajduk legitimacy), we need to understand not only their economic motives but also their values and norms, whether these affected their actions, and how far these were shared. Little so far has been achieved along these lines, though the suggestion that the hajduks originated primarily among military irregulars of pastoral origins whose privileges were being curtailed by the Ottoman state opens up an interesting avenue for further research.[16]

For the most part, hajduk attitudes and values can be inferred only from their acts. Because of the circumstances of their existence and the sorts of sources left by the Ottoman authorities who pursued them, little of their own testimony has survived, particularly for the earlier periods. Furthermore, from the evidence that does survive, it is unclear how explicitly their ideas—whether hatred of an alien Muslim conqueror or resentment of an oppressive socioeconomic system—were formulated, or indeed how general they may have been. It is here that the differences

[13]Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, pp. 73-74.

[14]See, for example, Dušan Popović, *O hajducima*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1930-31); R. Samardžić, *Hajdučke borbe protiv Turaka* (Belgrade, 1952). B. Tsvetkova, in *Khaĭdutstvoto v bŭlgarskite zemi prez 15-18 vek* (Sofia, 1971), and "The Bulgarian Haiduk Movement in the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *East Central European Society and War in the Pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century*, ed. G. Rothenberg et al. (Boulder, Colo., 1982), pp. 301-38, uses a greater variety of (primarily) Ottoman sources, but follows the same interpretation.

[15]Fikret Adanir, "Heidukentum und osmanische Herrschaft," *Südost-Forschungen* (Vienna), 41 (1982): 43-116; Slavko Gavrilović, *Hajdučija u Sremu u XVIII i početkom XIX veka* (Belgrade, 1986).

[16]Adanir, "Heidukentum und osmanische Herrschaft." Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*, also discusses links between the Greek klephts and shepherds and attempts to throw light on the actions and values of postindependence klephts by examining their social origins.

between the hajduks and the uskoks are crucial. While the hajduks operated within the confines of the Ottoman Empire, in short-lived bands with little formal organization or support (even from their own ecclesiastical hierarchy), the uskoks were caught up in a broader conflict between empires. This position had the effect not only of sustaining uskok activity well beyond the normal span of a hajduk band but of generating and preserving many sources dealing with their actions and attitudes, including some of their own testimony. In further contrast to the hajduks, the uskoks explained and justified their actions through a very explicit set of ideas, in particular adapting to their own uses an ideology of the defense of Christendom originally formulated by the Habsburgs and the Catholic Church. As a result, the historian is able to examine both uskok actions and uskok ideology in some detail, as well as the ways they influence each other in practice.

The uskoks were by no means unique in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were but one of a variety of free military frontier communities that lived from—and prolonged—the conflict on the long border between Islam and Christianity which divided the Mediterranean and ran through Danubian Europe to the Crimea and the Caucasus. Similar organizations, reacting to similar circumstances, were to be found on the Islamic side of this frontier in North Africa, among the Barbary corsairs of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli who sailed with the patronage of the Ottoman Sultan under the banner of *jihad*; or in the Ukraine and the Crimea, where cossack bands raided independently or on behalf of the Christian princes of Poland-Lithuania or Muscovy.[17] Comparisons with such groups can help to isolate the underlying structural factors that shaped the development of the uskok community. On both sides of this frontier, states relied on independent irregulars to man their borders. These communities were shaped by the divisions of the frontiers, in particular that between faiths, which provided both sides with an ideology of holy war: Muslim jihad or Christian crusade. At the same time, however, local inhabitants facing each other on either side of a border often had interests enough in common to achieve at least some mutual understanding with their putative enemies, regardless of the interests of their respective central authorities in distant capitals. The idea of perpetual holy war did not always correspond to the realities of

[17]William H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500–1800* (Chicago, 1964), analyzes one part of this frontier; Andrew Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier* (Chicago, 1978), looks at another. S. Bono, *I corsari barbareschi* (Turin, 1964), is a good introduction to the North African corsairs; Peter Earle, *The Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London, 1970), compares them with the corsairs raiding under the protection of the Order of St. John; Linda Gordon considers the cossacks as a type of social bandit in *Cossack Rebellions* (Albany, N.Y., 1983).

frontier life. As a result, the warfare that developed along these borders is sometimes described as anarchic, a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, in which frontiersmen raided indiscriminately, constrained by little but their own immediate interests.[18] Nonetheless, these frontiers did operate according to their own laws, though not necessarily those of the states that claimed to rule them. In the frontier no-man's land where the authority of the state did not reach, the inhabitants worked out their own codes of behavior. They also developed new forms of community and identity. Part of the task of this book is to understand how such principles operated on the frontier of the Adriatic hinterland and how they are reflected in uskok actions and uskok attitudes.

By the late sixteenth century the Islamic-Christian frontier was undergoing two great changes, the first affecting both sides equally, the second perhaps more important for the states of the West. The first of these was the disengagement from the religious conflicts that had created this frontier in the first place. Braudel points out the way in which, toward the end of the sixteenth century, the age of external wars between the two hostile civilizations of Islam and Christendom was succeeded by an age of internal wars, intestinal conflicts that pitted Catholic against Protestant, Sunni against Shiite.[19] After the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Christian commitment to crusade began to wane as the Catholic princes turned to face their rivals in the Protestant north. At the same time the direction of Ottoman military activity shifted east, away from Europe and the Mediterranean. There was a resurgence of crusading enthusiasm at the turn of the century, coinciding with the Long Turkish War of 1593–1606 (and extinguished well before the Protestant revolt broke out in 1618 in Bohemia), but in general considerations of holy war were giving way to political and economic rivalries within Europe.[20] Nevertheless, although the vision of crusade may have lost its power in the courts and capitals where policy was made, and may have necessitated a reassessment of the role of the military frontiers, the idea was a long time dying in the popular mind. The world of the uskoks was affected by both the official withdrawal from this conflict and the lingering popular legitimacy conferred by the ideal of holy war and the defense of Christendom.

The changing vision of the frontier was also affected by a second process in the border societies of the West—the slowly growing claims to

[18]Longworth describes uskok border warfare in these terms: "Only inertia, the balance of terror and the relative prospects of pay and plunder determined the allegiances of the unfortunate people of the region. The Uskoks' raiding activities were essentially devoid of ideological objectives" ("The Senj Uskoks Reconsidered," p. 365).

[19]Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, vol. 2, pp. 842–44.

[20]This is also the theme of Alberto Tenenti's *Piracy and the Decline of Venice, 1580–1615*, trans. Janet Pullan and Brian Pullan (Berkeley, Calif., 1967), which examines the process through the actions of corsairs in the Mediterranean.

a monopoly of military authority by the centralizing monarchies. The consolidation of state control over the means of violent coercion meant that the free military communities were gradually absorbed into the new armies and subordinated to a centralized bureaucracy. This process, punctuated by frequent rebellions, can be traced among the cossacks; at first the Poles attempted to register them and organize disciplined regiments under Polish command, and in the mid-seventeenth century the Russians integrated a cossack officer corps into their military system. (A rather different process can be observed in the Ottoman Empire, as central imperial control began to decay after the sixteenth century and the North African corsairs gradually shook off any effective control from Istanbul.) In the Habsburg case, military administration was one of the first areas of governmental centralization. Ferdinand I first appointed a colonel to command the Frontier under the authority of the Emperor and the archdukes; in 1556 the imperial Hofkriegsrat (Court War Council) was established in Vienna; and when this was reorganized in 1578, control of the Frontier passed to the newly created Hofkriegsrat in Graz. The Graz Hofkriegsrat was not a very efficient tool of monarchical absolutism, for the Archduke shared his authority over it with the Inner Austrian Estates.[21] Nevertheless, it was through the Hofkriegsrat, the General of the Frontier, and the Military Frontier commissions that central control was gradually extended over the border irregulars, particularly as the Habsburgs needed to keep peace on the Ottoman border in order to concentrate on internal conflicts. Through the uskoks it is possible to follow the effect of this centralization on the free military community as the leaders were gradually coopted and the rank-and-file tamed—though not without resistance.

This book begins by placing the uskoks in the context of the border world, examining the processes that shaped it and the military communities that grew from it. Contemporary interpretations of the uskoks turned on who they were and how they lived: here several chapters look at the origins of uskoks and the economic and military constraints within which they operated. These are followed by an analysis of their mental world, their ideas, values, and beliefs—both those they proclaimed as their own special raison d'être and those they shared with the rest of the border—and how these ideas affected uskok organization. To study how their circumstances and their beliefs interacted in practice, a chapter examines uskok relations with the world outside Senj. All these threads are then drawn together in a chapter that concentrates on the turn of the

[21]Gunther Rothenberg, *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia 1522–1747*, (Urbana, Ill., 1960), pp. 34, 48–49. See also V. Thiel, "Die innerösterreichische Zentralverwaltung, 1564–1749," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* (Vienna), 105 (1917): 1–210. In the text, "Hofkriegsrat" refers to the War Council in Graz, unless otherwise specified.

sixteenth century in order to examine the ways in which the uskok world was changing and the uskoks' reactions to these changes. Throughout, the emphasis is on the social, economic, and political realities that produced the uskoks and on the ways in which these people responded to the problems that confronted them. This approach concentrates on the uskoks themselves, asking not only what they did, but why they did it; asking not just what were their relations with their allies, their victims, and each other, but also how they perceived and justified these relations.

Sources

A problem that has left its mark on most studies of the uskoks (indeed, on most studies of corsairs, brigands, and frontiersmen) is that of evidence. In trying to understand the uskoks, the historian can examine their economic conditions, social organization, and political circumstances. But in addition to such factors, the uskoks acted in the context of a set of cultural values—ideas of what was right and wrong, honorable and dishonorable—and much of what they did can be understood only in terms of the tension between these ideals and the social, political, and economic circumstances of the border. Only occasionally can we hear these beliefs and values stated by the voices of the uskoks themselves. More often we must examine them through the eyes of outsiders, who were moved by different purposes and governed by other assumptions. Nonetheless, in the conviction that the uskoks' world cannot be comprehended completely without an attempt to recover these attitudes, we must pay careful attention not only to individual incidents and the patterns that emerge from raiding as a whole, but also to their other actions, their rituals, and above all to the language that expresses their values.

The diplomatic conflict between Venice, the Habsburgs, and the Porte over their activities generated a seemingly inexhaustible volume of material about the uskoks. But how much can these sources tell us about the uskoks themselves, and how reliable are they in this respect? In answering these questions we must differentiate among the various types of documentation. The purely diplomatic sources (letters between heads of state, reports of ambassadors) are the least useful for our purposes. They were written, for the most part, by men at a remove from the uskoks themselves and were rarely directly related to their actions, being more concerned with questions of negotiation, tactics, and diplomacy. Because of their political purposes they cannot always be considered completely reliable in what information on the uskoks they do contain.

The reports of those more closely concerned with the uskoks are of greater interest, but they pose different problems. These include the

administrative reports of Venetian civil and military representatives, reports by officials of the Military Frontier, intelligence dossiers from informers and spies, complaints from Ottoman border officials, ecclesiastical visitation records and reports, and descriptions from various independent observers—not all hostile to the uskoks. These are usually fairly reliable in detail, though what is selected for report depends very much on the interests of the observer, and allowances must be made for distortion caused by second- or thirdhand reporting or by bias. This type of document makes up the bulk of evidence on uskok actions. Three of these deserve special mention: a long essay in dialogue form by an anonymous Italian supporter of the uskoks, usually known by the name of one of the interlocutors, the merchant Giovanni of Fermo;[22] another long report on Senj by Vettor Barbaro, the Provveditore Generale's secretary in Senj during the negotiations over the uskoks in 1601;[23] and the reports of Marc'Antonio de Dominis, the Bishop of Senj at the end of the sixteenth century.[24] All these men had personal experience of the uskoks and give many details of life in Senj, while reaching very different conclusions on the uskoks' motives and their role in the warfare of the Adriatic.

Yet another type of material is provided by judicial documents: complaints or testimony before Venetian courts and officials in Dalmatia, interrogations of captured uskoks or of those suspected of aiding the uskoks, the testimony of witnesses before Miltary Frontier commissions. These too require caution and careful attention to the position and interests of the witness. When the penalty for cooperation with the uskoks of Senj was death, one must question the candor of a Dalmatian fisherman reporting an encounter with uskoks to the local Venetian authorities. On the other hand, these records often preserve the responses of uskoks themselves, or of those who had much in common with them, and can yield valuable insights into their attitudes.

[22]Discovered in the Medici Archives in Florence and published by Franjo Rački, "Prilog za poviest hrvatskih uskoka," *Starine* (Zagreb), 9 (1877): 172-256.

[23]This has not been published, though Provveditore Generale Pasqualigo incorporated parts in his report to the Senate in 1602 (*Commissiones et relationes venetæ*, vols. 4-7, Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, 47, 48, 49, and 50, ed. G. Novak [Zagreb, 1964-72], vol. 6, pp. 93-116). I have used a ms. copy in H.A.Z., Fond Šime Ljubića, 2/33.

[24]De Dominis' accounts of Senj are published in K. Horvat, ed., *Monumenta historiam uscocchorum illustrantia*, vol. 1, Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, 32 and 34 (Zagreb, 1910-13), and Šime Ljubić, "Prilozi za životopis Markantunu Dominisu," *Starine* (Zagreb), 2 (1870):1-260. These also print an anonymous account of Joseph Rabatta's commission to reform Senj in 1601, probably by de Dominis (Horvat, *Monumenta uscocchorum*, vol. 1, pp. 395-422; Ljubić, "Prilozi," pp. 45-59). These reports were apparently used by Archbishop Minuccio Minucci in writing his *Storia degli uscocchi*, in Paolo Sarpi, *Opere*, vol. 4 (Helmstadt [Verona], 1763), pp. 217-62.

A surprising number of letters or reports survive from the uskoks themselves. Not all of them were illiterate; many uskoks, both leaders and rank-and-file, signed their names to petitions and official letters. The uskoks left no autobiographies such as have been used in studies of banditry in more modern times (the nearest approximation is perhaps the petition from the uskok vojvoda Ivan Vlatković, appealing his death sentence and rehearsing his sacrifices to the House of Austria). The letters addressed to those in positions of power on the Military Frontier or in Venetian Dalmatia, however, provide valuable evidence of the uskoks' own perceptions of their role (or of how they wanted to be perceived). And, finally, insurance documents, notarial records, baptismal registers, pay documents, military censuses, and other similar administrative records preserve evidence of uskok activity which is slightly less problematical, at least as far as deliberate distortion or bias is concerned.

As I have indicated, the nature of these sources exposes the researcher to the dangers of bias and lack of balance. However, while material dealing—for example—with the bands of brigands in the early modern period is nearly always derived from those responsible for pursuing and punishing them, the material on the uskoks comes from a much wider variety of sources, with widely varying attitudes. We can thus balance one bias against another, building up a more nuanced picture of the uskoks. Venetian materials provide the best evidence of uskok actions in Dalmatia and across the Venetian border into the Ottoman hinterland, but they are selective in what they report. Military Frontier sources can provide a counterweight, but they are not so detailed or numerous, especially in regard to individual raids or bands. They are much more helpful on the internal organization and financing of the uskoks and, as one would expect, on their relationship with the representatives of the Habsburg state. Both of these sources are balanced by Ottoman material, for the most part border officials' correspondence preserved in the Venetian, Ragusan, and Habsburg archives. Papal sources give yet another perspective on the uskoks. I have tried to avoid uncritically reproducing the prejudices of my sources by collecting a variety of evidence on any particular subject whenever possible and by concentrating as much as I could on local sources, for these seem to offer the most knowledgeable information on the uskoks, if not perhaps the least biased. These materials include many that previous writers have passed over, either because of ignorance of their existence or because they did not suit an author's approach to the subject (especially where this was primarily concerned with the relations between states). Many of these have come from the archives of the Dalmatian communes, with their records of petty civil and criminal proceedings, financial transactions, and notarial docu-

ments; the archives of Rijeka, which record both mutual interests and economic rivalries with Senj; the archives of the Carniolan Estates in Ljubljana; and the archives of Dubrovnik, a republic that shared many of the pressures and prejudices in regard to the uskoks felt by its great rival Venice but responded to them slightly differently.

CHAPTER TWO

The Borders and Border Military Systems

In the sixteenth century the Croatian lands felt the full magnitude of the Ottoman invasions. The force of the onslaught was deflected only by the barriers of geography—the forbidding mountains, the sea. No wonder the Ottoman armies were seen by those in their path as some natural disaster, a conflagration blasting and destroying the land, after which only "black stones remain, and leafless pines."[1] The results of the invasions were political collapse, economic disarray, and social dislocation on the borders. As new frontiers took shape, a pattern of attack and defense, raid and counterraid developed in the borderlands between the empires, each side mirroring the other in organization and way of life.

The Ottoman invasions and conquests of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the advance of the armies of Islam, and the defenses thrown up by the West were the factors that created this borderland, and the opposition between Christianity and Islam, between the Western powers and the Ottoman Porte, was the source of much of the conflict in this area. Other tensions and conflicts also existed: political and economic rivalry between the Habsburgs and Venice; the competing economic interests of various social groups (stockherders and farmers; nobles, citizens, and peasants; frontier soldiers and magnates); ethnic and confessional antagonisms. But the context of the struggle between the warring empires of East and West influenced all these other antagonisms and polarized relations on the border, so that the conflicts that constantly troubled this region were expressed largely in terms of the opposition between Islam and Christianity. Yet though this struggle orga-

[1]"Ostane crn kami, i brez listja bori." Marko Marulić in his poem "Molitva suprotiva Turkom," in *Pjesme Marka Marulića*, Stari pisci hrvatski, 1, ed. I. Kukuljević-Sakcinski (Zagreb, 1869), p. 245.