

MILITARIZATION OF OTTOMAN RUMELIA:
THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS (1785-1808)

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ABSTRACT

MILITARIZATION OF OTTOMAN RUMELIA: THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS (1785-1808)

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This thesis analyzes the process of the widespread and ever-lasting banditry in Rumelia between 1785 and 1808 and the state's response against it within a context in which the Ottoman government attempted to reassert central authority over the provinces. The historical conditions of the period, structure of the mountain bandits, emergence and development of the banditry will be discussed alongside the reasons of the end of the banditry and the effects of the state measures. The research aims to shed light on the historical conditions of Rumelian province under the rule of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 18th century which corresponds to a period when the legitimacy of the central authority was declining in the eyes of the local population before and during the national awakenings in the Balkans.

Keywords: Mountain Bandits, *Ayan*, Rumelia, Ottoman Empire, 18th Century.

ÖZ

OSMANLI RUMELİ'SİNİN ASKERİLEŞMESİ: DAĞLI İSYANLARI (1785-1808)

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Bu tez, 1785 ve 1808 arası Rumeli'de ortaya çıkan ve geniş bir alana yayılarak uzun bir süre devam eden eşkıyalığı ve devletin buna karşı müdahalesini, Osmanlı hükümetinin taşrada yeniden merkezi otoriteyi sağlamaya çalıştığı bir dönemin bağlamında incelemektedir. Bu dönemin tarihi koşulları, dağlı eşkıyasının yapısı, eşkıyalığın ortaya çıkışı ve gelişimi, eşkıyalığın sona ermesi ve devletin almış olduğu önlemlerle beraber tartışılacaktır. Bu araştırma, taşra toplumunun gözünde merkezi otoritenin meşruiyetini kaybetmeye başladığı ve Balkanlarda milli uyanış dönemi öncesi veya sırasına denk gelen 18. yüzyıl sonundaki Osmanlı İmparatorluğu egemenliğindeki Rumeli eyaletinin tarihi koşullarına ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dağlı Eşkıyası, Ayan, Rumeli, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, 18. Yüzyıl.

To My Family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.E.SABH.I.	Ali Emirî Tasnifi Sultan Abdülhamid I
BOA.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
C.AL.	Cevdet Adliye
C.AS.	Cevdet Askeriye
C.DH.	Cevdet Dâhiliye
C.ML.	Cevdet Maliye
HAT	Hatt-ı Hümayun

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis corresponds to one of the most problematic periods of the Ottoman history that it was immediately before or during the national awakenings occurred in the Balkans throughout the 19th century, when the people of Rumelia still lingered strongly in their memories the disorders which had ravaged most of the region. That is why the period remained a crucial part of the discourse of the Balkan nationalisms over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. On the other hand, it is a part of the history of the Ottoman centralization and modernization. Through the establishment of a new type of soldiery division trained and equipped with the European style and the establishment of a new treasury (the *İrad-ı Cedid* Treasury) to finance it as part of a wider and escalating modernization program called the *Nizam-ı Cedid* (the New Order), the beginning and the end of the military modernization attempts run into the same phase of decentralization process and provincial havoc in Rumelia. Hence, as a historical force, the subject of the mountain banditry merits studying to understand a short but in itself a very long period, affecting both the social and political fate of many actors like the local population and notables of Rumelia as well as the state itself.

As it will be seen throughout the first and second chapters, the period was a product of two centuries-long transformations of financial, administrative and military institutions, through which the Ottoman Empire adjusted itself into the changing and compelling necessities of the time. Nevertheless, the resultant conditions also brought with them some endemic difficulties into the Ottoman socio-economic and political life. One of the important aspects of these developments was widespread banditry, infesting on a large scale first Anatolia, mainly between the last decades of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries. A century later, Rumelia witnessed similar disorders, specifically between 1785 and 1807.

The subject of the mountain banditry interests, in the first place, history studies of the Ottoman Empire and the Bulgarian community under the rule of the same empire. Nevertheless, it has been studied as a whole only in two monographs, as one in Turkish and the other in Bulgarian.¹ There is no satisfactory information about the mountain banditry in the historiography in English, in which it is referred most of the time as “*kircalis*” or “*kirdjalis*”. On the other hand, one can be informed of the mountain bandits through the studies falling into the reign of Selim III or in general through those of centralization and modernization of the Ottoman Empire. However, they only mention about the mountain bandits as partially and briefly as it is related to their topics.²

In the Bulgarian historiography as briefly provided by Gergena Georgieva³, the mountain banditry remained long as part of the national discourse, being limited only to a couple of passages. Moreover, it is included within a wider analysis of the “anarchy” years under the name of “*Kurdjali (Kircali) time*”. This term encompasses various participants such as mostly the mountain bandits, the *ayans*, the pashas and, in general, the Ottoman Muslims of Rumelia, who, accordingly, all oppressed the Bulgarian nation. Here, the importance of the subject is that the problem of suffering of the Bulgarians under the Ottoman rule, as underlined by Georgieva, was squeezed in a short time which lasted diversely twenty or thirty years-long.⁴

This study depends on one of the most significant and extensive studies about the *ayans* and mountain bandits in the Bulgarian historiography, such as, the study of Vera P. Mutaftchieva, *Кърджалийско Време [The Kircali Time]*. Whereby and

¹ Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Dağlı İsyanları, 1791-1983*, (Ankara: Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Basımevi, 1983); Вера Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, (София: Издателство На Българската Академия На Науките, 1993) [Vera Mutaftchieva, *Kurdjali Time*, (Sofia: Publishing of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1993)].

² Among the most important works of this kind is Stanford J. Shaw's *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

³ Gergena Georgieva, “The *Kircali* Time as Metonymy: History as Emotion” in *Ottoman Legacies in the Contemporary Mediterranean: The Balkans and the Middle East Compared*, ed. Eyal Ginio and Karl Kaser, Conference and Lecture Series, 8, (Jerusalem: The European Forum at the Hebrew University, 2013), pp. 311-334.

⁴ Ibid, p. 316.

owing to the much recent essay of Gergena Georgieva, the approaches of the Bulgarian historiography are informed briefly. According to Vera P. Mutaftchieva, many historians in Bulgaria were affected by the negative assessment of Konstantin Josef Jireček.⁵ Basing on the *kadı sicils* of Bulgaria (sharia court registers), Mutaftchieva analyzes the development of the mountain banditry and puts a special section related to its effects on the Bulgarian community.

As to the Turkish historiography, the monograph of Yücel Özkaya provides compact information on the subject while it seems that he was considerably affected by the work of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*.⁶ Most of the time, he follows the same structure and arguments of Ahmed Cevdet's voluminous study of the history of the Ottoman Empire. However, he provides and analyzes numerous Ottoman dispatches sent from or to İstanbul.

Moreover, Uzunçarşılı provides with his three monographs dealing with some of the prominent *ayans* and pashas who were closely associated with the subject matter, focusing especially on the last phases of the mountain banditry.⁷ On the other hand, apart from a series of other secondary sources, Tolga Uğur Esmer's dissertation, which focused on the "economy of banditry" through the close study of an important bandit leader and his "network of violence" within the mountain banditry, contributed a valuable point of view outside the centralism and decentralism paradigm together with abundant information over the activities mountain bandits.⁸

As for the primary sources, the related documents in the Prime Ministry Archive in İstanbul were attempted to be used as much possible as. In order to fill the void in the literature over the mountain bandits, the focus is given on researching the state

⁵ Вера Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 5, 10.

⁶ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1984); Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1984).

⁷ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından Tirsinikli İsmail, Yılıkoğlu Süleyman Ağalar ve Alemдар Mustafa Paşa*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Series VII, No. 6, (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1942); "Nizam-i Cedid Ricalinden Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa", *Belleten*, XXXV, No. 138 (1791, April); "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa, 1747-1811" *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, Vol. 6, (1939).

⁸ Tolga Uğur Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion: Networks of Violence and Competing Discourses of Justice in the Ottoman Empire, 1790-1808", (Doctoral Dissertation), (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2009).

correspondences with the members of the provincial administration in Rumelia as well as the special agents who were sent to Rumelia during the period. The classification of Cevdet through collections of Adliye, Askeriye, Dâhiliye, Maliye and Zabtiye and the classification of Hatt-ı Hümayun are researched and most of the study is compiled through the work on the second sources.

The aim of the study is to identify the problems of the widespread unrest of the mountain bandits in a specific region of the Ottoman realm (mostly in the present-day Bulgaria in the province of Rumelia) and the state responses and limitations in dealing with it. Through a close review of the historical process of the mountain bandits and the state measures against it, in the light of other important developments, it was undertaken to discern a period in which the process of decentralization peaked through the system of *ayanlık* (local administration by the local notables) while at the same time, the state attempted to reassert its power over the provinces and modernize its institutions before the well-known “*Tanzimat* Period”.

The banditry phenomenon was approached according to the specifications of the work of Eric J. Hobsbawn.⁹ The important aspects of banditry are taken into consideration but there is no specific classification in which one could gather all the elements of the mountain bandits. Nevertheless, accordingly, while these bandits included peasants which had complex relations with other elements of various kinds, their actions could not be regarded as “social banditry”.¹⁰ However, as already mentioned, the subject was exposed to such category in some historiographies of the Balkans that some of the elements of the unrest in Rumelia during the period were regarded as heroes who, accordingly, contributed to the establishment of national liberations in the Balkans. Rather, the crucial aspect seems to be inefficient and complicated administration of the time, corresponding to a period immediately after the war of 1787-1792 with Austria and Russia. Therefore, banditry could be regarded as “not a program for peasant society but self-help to escape it in particular

⁹ E. J. Hobsbawn, *Bandits*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

¹⁰ Ibid, *Bandits*, p. 17.

circumstances”.¹¹ Moreover, rather than the non-self-sufficient peasants, the most important role in the mountain bandits seems to be played by the ex-soldiers who were either deserters or disbanded ones that they were tolerated and even protected where it seems “law and government leave [left] only the faintest trace in the Balkans”.¹²

The main body of the study is held in four chapters that the first two of them are about the transformation of the classical Ottoman institutions and the 18th century socio-economic and political context. In the third chapter, the emergence and the development of the mountain banditry as well as the state response and measures are studied. In the last chapter, together with the last phase of the banditry, the end of the mountain bandits is investigated.

¹¹ Hobsbawn, *Bandits*, p. 21, 22, 24.

¹² Ibid, p. 48.

CHAPTER II

MILITARY AND FISCAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE EARLY-MODERN OTTOMAN EMPIRE

2.1.The Crises of the Late 16th and the Early 17th Centuries

From the second half of the 16th century onwards, especially after the 1580s, the Ottoman Empire began to undergo important economic, financial, military and demographic changes which were to bring about the transformation of the Ottoman military, fiscal and provincial administrative structures.¹³

The first signs of the crises were argued to have been the devaluation of the mid-1580s and the following inflation due mainly to the arrival of vast amounts of silver which occurred as a result of the increasing trade with Western countries, the growing financial burden of the long wars with Iran and Austria and the resultant state deficits, together with the aspects of changing trading patterns and expansion of a monetary economy.¹⁴ Because of the devaluation, the main Ottoman currency the *akçe*'s value decreased nearly to half by losing forty four percent of its silver content, bringing about substantial increases in the prices of commodities.¹⁵

¹³ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Krizler ve Değişim, 1590-1699" in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi, 1600-1914* ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 2004), pp. 543-757, p. 562

¹⁴ Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Monetary Crisis of 1585 Revisited", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2009), pp. 460-504, p. 460; Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1 (Jan. 1975), pp. 3-28, p. 13-14.

¹⁵ Tezcan, "Monetary Crisis of 1585", pp. 460-461, pp. 484-485; Şevket Pamuk, "The Price Revolution in the Ottoman Empire Reconsidered", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 33, No.1 (Feb., 2001), pp. 69-89, pp. 78-80. As a result of the arrival of huge amounts of cheap American silver, the mines in Rumelia were closed in the first half of the 17th century. Ahmet Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken Osmanlı Maliyesi*, (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1985), p. 239.

Apart from the influx of silver, the increasing financial burdens of the wars at the end of the 16th century had negative effects on the Ottoman finances by creating budgetary deficits. It was because of the fact that while the wars no longer provided with gains in terms of booty and taxable lands and people, the new war technologies and battle tactics resulted in the need for maintaining larger armies of food-soldiers with firearms and increasing frequency and duration of wars in both Eastern and Western fronts. These necessitated a great deal of money supply for the central government.¹⁶

As a result of the devaluation and the price increases, if the provincial administration is considered, the incomes of the *timarlı sipahis* (provincial cavalries) based on fiefs, the incomes of the members of high-ranking military and administrative class based on salaries or on the allocation of *hasses* (larger fief units) and the incomes of the *kapıkulu* members (mainly the members of the Janissary corps and imperial cavalry units) fell proportionately.¹⁷ Thus, many *sipahis* refused to join costly wars and began to leave their *timars* since their livelihoods were depended on established revenues from their fiefs. On the other hand, to compensate this, many provincial officials attempted to raise their revenues through imposing exactions on the peasants, which resulted in the breakdown of the discipline in the military-administrative class, furthering the disruption of order.¹⁸

In addition to the economic and financial crises, there is also an argument over a population pressure from the second half of the 16th century onwards until the beginning of the 17th century that it had a crucial role in the breakdown of the social order and in further economic deterioration in both Anatolia and Rumelia, where the fundamental system of *timar* was applied. One side of the argument is on the population increase which is argued to have occurred as part of a general population

¹⁶ Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 50-51; Faroqhi, "Krizler ve Değişim", p. 564; Pamuk, "The Price Revolution", p. 83-84.

¹⁷ Tezcan, "The Ottoman Monetary Crisis of 1585", p. 497.

¹⁸ Halil İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700", *Archivum Ottomanicum*, Vol. 1, (1980), pp. 283-337, pp. 312-313; Halil İnalçık, "16. Asrın İkinci Yarısında Türkiye'de Fiyat Hareketleri", *Belleten*, XXXIV, No. 136 (1970), pp. 557-607, p. 605.

increase from the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century and doubled in Europe and Asia. Accordingly, at least, in Northcentral and Western Anatolia in the second half of the 16th century, there was a rapid demographic growth and insufficient agricultural lands.¹⁹ Because of the ongoing economic deterioration and concurrent population increase and lack of arable lands, the population of villages is indicated to have started to abandon their lands. Furthermore, the increasing burden of taxation and demand for the recruitment of soldiers from the peasantry are argued to have played important roles in the movement of peasants from their villages. Nevertheless, it is pointed out that these were individual young peasants who already had an inclination towards entering into the military class or *medreses* (theology schools) as students as well as having a desire to participate in the urban economy which offered job opportunities.²⁰

One of the important results of the migrations of villagers or their becoming nomads was the loss of taxation by the central government that when the rebellions relieved, it tried to recover these losses by bringing the migrators through granting of tax exemptions and by emplacing of the nomads. Moreover, these movements were important factors in the subsequent spread of *Celâli* rebellions and the banditry on the part of *levend* soldiers.²¹ The same economic and social disorders were to play crucial roles in the emergence and expansion of the mountain bandits during the period between approximately 1785 and 1808.

¹⁹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. 1, (London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), p. 402; M. A., Cook, *Population Pressure in Rural Anatolia, 1450-1600*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 10; Oktay Özel, "Population Changes in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th and 17th Centuries: The 'Demographic Crisis' Reconsidered", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (May, 2004), pp. 183-205, p. 185, 188, 199.

²⁰ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 287, pp. 293-293; Özel, "Population Changes", p. 188; Mustafa Akdağ, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluş ve İnkişafı Devrinde Türkiye'nin İktisadi Vaziyeti", *Belleten*, XIV, No. 55 (Temmuz 1950), pp. 319-411, p. 346, 376-383; Mustafa Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası: Celâli İsyanları*, (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, Eylül 1995), pp. 61-64; Huricihan İslamoğlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Köylü*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), pp. 234-235.

²¹ Kayhan Orbay, "Ottoman Central Administration and War Finance, Late Seventeenth Century", *XIV. Economic History Congress, Session 106: State and Finance in the Early Modern Times in the Eurasian Continuum* (Helsinki, 2006), p. 10; Özel, "Population Changes", p. 188.

2.2.The Military Transformation

The transformation of the Ottoman military organization played an important role in the deterioration of the imperial finances and had negative effects on the economy and society as well. It is argued that this was because of the fact that, at the end of the 16th century, the Western countries' military power became stronger due to the new developments in the military arena.²²

According to the historiography of the "Military Revolution" thesis which often consists of the period between the mid-16th and mid-17th centuries, there was a chain of developments in the military field at the end of the 16th century. Accordingly, then, larger armies began to be formed together with the developments in the military tactics and in the military technology. In the enlargement of armies, population growth played an important role and much wider use of firearms, a new style of artillery fortifications determined the style of waging war in terms of being defensive. No less important was the newly emergent issues of logistics, recruitment strategies and the resultant military organization, all leading to growing military expenditures and to the need for the marshalling of resources. This on its part is argued to have led to social and political reverberations that states were now able to impose much more authority on the people by demanding from them more taxes, compulsory works, impositions, contributions as well as accommodation obligations. In addition, it is argued that states as a result of the increasing financial needs were forced to make more political concessions to the periphery in return for its support.²³ In this respect, the frequency and duration of wars waged by the Ottoman Empire take attention in the rise of power of *ayans* in the provinces during especially the most critical war periods of 1593-1606, 1683-1699 and 1768-1774 that forced the central government to seek the support of the local notables.

²² Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 24.

²³ Clifford J. Rogers, "The Military Revolution in History and Historiography" in *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* ed. Clifford J. Rogers, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 1-10, pp. 2-7.

As a response to the military developments of the West, at the end of the 16th century, the Ottoman government tried to increase its soldiers with firearms since, then, the main composition of the Ottoman army was the *sipahis* equipped with conventional weapons like sword, shield, bow and arrow. They showed their incapacity against the soldiers equipped with firearms during the war of 1593 and 1606 against Austria. It is indicated that compelled by the urgent need for infantry with firearms, hence, the Ottoman government attempted to increase first the members of the standing army of the Janissaries. More importantly, through the recruitment of paid soldiers for a limited time period (the *levends* or the *sekbansaricas*) from the peasants, due to their inexpensive costs, the government could balance both the ineffectiveness of the *sipahis* and the fiscal problems originated by the heavy war expenses.²⁴

However, besides their financial burden, the increase in the numbers of the Janissary corps had important political consequences for the central authority of the Ottoman state. Firstly, it is maintained that the Janissaries started to dominate the capital through the high offices of their organizations and from now on, they participated in a coalition which was consisted of the mothers of sultans, the Palace officials and the *ulema* (high members of the judiciary) that this was to have a crucial effect in the state affairs between 1617 and 1656, especially after a coup in 1622 in İstanbul. Apart from this, during the rebellions of the *Celâlis* in 17th century, the struggle between the Janissaries in the capital and the *levend* rebels who desired to share the same privileges with them is asserted to have brought about the weakening of central authority in the provinces.²⁵ Secondly, they were started to dominate the provincial centers of the Empire. From 1559 onwards, the Janissaries began to spread Anatolian provinces under the formation of garrisons. Before they were in a dominant situation in İstanbul, especially during the most critical period of the *Celâli* rebellions, they had been stationed in most of the towns and cities of Anatolia in order to fight against the rebellious *levend-sekban* bandits. Nevertheless, they often continued to remain longer in the cities and towns, resulting in their participation into urban and

²⁴ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", pp. 285-286, p. 288.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 289.

rural socio-economic life.²⁶ In addition, whether as part of the Janissaries or the *kapıkulu sipahis*, these *kapıkulu* segments started to obtain some urban and provincial posts and acquired some agricultural lands and formed farms (*çiftlik*s) in the countryside. Thus, they were able to gather considerable wealth in their hands through the exemption from taxation as being the members of the military-administrative class. This furthered the burden of the peasants as well as that of the urban population since the share of the *kapıkulus* in the payment of emergency taxes like the *avarız* was left on the rest of the population. Moreover, by obtaining agricultural lands and a place in trade, they acquired leading urban social and economic positions in the 17th century. Subsequently, they played an important role in the rise of prominence of local notables in the administration of provinces when the central authority could no longer reach to the provinces.²⁷

In addition to the Janissaries, the *levends* played an important role in the social and political life of the Ottoman Empire. These type of soldiers were an effective means for the government to recruit soldiers with firearms in a short duration since their formations did not necessitate long training like that of the Janissaries and also since they were inexpensive.²⁸ However, after their disbandment, as they were no longer paid, by maintaining their *bölük* organizations, the *levends* resorted to exactions, plunder and brigandage in the countryside as well as attempting homicide and theft in big cities in Anatolia. Moreover, when united, they could even attack and capture big cities like Bursa and Urfa.²⁹ In addition to Anatolia, the Balkans also witnessed, to certain extent, the spread of banditry in relation to hiring *levends* during the 17th and 18th centuries.³⁰ Nevertheless, it is argued that although Anatolia was a region

²⁶ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 290; Akdağ, "Türkiyenin İktisadi Vaziyeti", p. 332, pp. 343-344.

²⁷ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 291; Akdağ, "Türkiyenin İktisadi Vaziyeti", pp. 345-346.

²⁸ Mustafa Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, (İstanbul: Çelikkilt Matbaası, 1965), p. 30.

²⁹ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 286, 292, pp. 297-299; Akdağ, "Türkiyenin İktisadi Vaziyeti", p. 381-382.

³⁰ Halil İnalçık indicates that the Ottoman government from 1600 onwards recruited its best mercenary troops from Bosnia and Albania. It was because of the fact that the people of the Balkans had easy access to cheap firearms. "Military and Fiscal", p. 289, 294. Later, at the end of the 18th century, the Albanian *levend* soldiers were to have a prominent role in the disorders of the mountain bandits and their recruitment and passage into Rumelia were to be forbidden.

for unprecedented social up-and-downs in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Balkans did not undergo the same disorders to such extent.³¹

Moreover, from the mid-16th century onward, assertedly, the *levends* had started to show growing inclination towards entering into the military class in order to share the same privileges with the Janissaries. Their leaders, on the other hand, were pursuing administrative positions in the Ottoman system in the 17th century and some of them acquired posts like that of a *bey*, a *pasha* and even a grand vizier. It was because of the fact that as being in a great need for these paid soldiers in times of wars, the government encouraged the governors to maintain increasing numbers of *levend* soldiers.³²

As for the precautions taken against the disorders of the *levends*, Mustafa Cezar indicates that the reasons of the emergence of the *levend* soldiers were initially not well-understood by the government officials till the “Great *Celâli*” depredations. Instead, the precautions remained to exterminate these vagrant peasant-soldiers rather than providing the necessary solution to prevent the formation of big *çiftlik*s which contributed to the spread of *levend* phenomenon.³³ On the other hand, the Ottoman government from time to time resorted to call to arms (*nefir-i amm*). That is why as the provincial army of the *sipahis* being responsible for the security and order in the provinces was no longer successful against the *levends*, the population of

³¹ Kemal H. Karpat, “Ottoman Relations with the Balkan Nations after 1683,” in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* ed. Kemal H. Karpat, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 385-433, p. 390; Fikret Adanır, “Tradition and Rural Change in Southeastern Europe During Ottoman Rule,” in *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century* ed. Daniel Chirot, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 131-176, p. 142; Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, p. 225, 229.

³² İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal”, pp. 298-299, 303; Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 18; Faroqhi, “Krizler ve Değişim”, pp. 548-549. Akdağ indicates that the *levend* crowd did not have leaders from among them. Rather, these leaders were often from the military-administrative class who rebelled against the central government in seeking post or just because of the economic breakdown. “Türkiyenin İktisadi Vaziyeti”, p. 140.

³³ Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, p. 64.

Anatolia was let to be organized as militia forces under the command of local notables. In addition, towns and cities were surrounded with stockades.³⁴

One of the most important social results of these disorders was the great movement of the population from their villages as well as towns and cities. In return, this furthered the burden of taxation like the *avarız* on the people left behind. Also, famine emerged since the agricultural production decreased due to the *Celâli* depredations, especially during the early years of the first decade of the 17th century.³⁵ As for the political consequences of the *Celâli-levend* movements, it is pointed out that they contributed to the decentralization in the Ottoman Empire because of the fact that the *Celâli-levend* rebels, together with the *nefir-i amm* soldiers who accustomed to training as fighting men, provided to rebellious pashas and *ayan* with the principal military source of manpower on which they based their military strength in the 17th and 18th centuries. In addition, it is asserted that the population of Anatolia by seeking and obtaining weapons to defend itself against the *levends* sought the assistance of local rulers rather than that of the ineffective state, allowing them to raise their prestige in the eyes of local population.³⁶

The *levend-Celâli* “rebellions” of the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Anatolia highly resembles to the disorders of the mountain bandits in the late 18th century. In this case, the *levends* also played a crucial role in the formation of bandit groups and in the retinues of the *ayans* who, to a certain extent, were among the causes of expansion of banditry and the obstacle against the suppression of it.

2.3.The Fiscal Transformation

As a result of the crises beginning with the second half of the 16th century and of the urgent financial needs caused by the military changes, the government had to

³⁴ İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal”, p. 304, 295; Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası*, pp. 450-452.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 446, 447, 452-453.

³⁶ İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal”, pp. 295, p. 297, 304, pp. 310-11.

increase its cash revenues. Therefore, as an attempt to reorganize the finances throughout the 17th century, alternative ways to increase revenue sources were developed.³⁷

Firstly, it is asserted that at the beginning, the established tax system based on *timar* system was maintained in fear of further socio-political unrest. Instead, the emergency taxes like *avarız*³⁸ collected in principle directly by the central treasury were resorted to balance the budgetary deficits since they were easier to assess and collect in cash than the taxes related to cultivation. Consequently, together with the *cizye* (poll tax)³⁹, these emergency taxes such as *avarız-i divaniye* (taxes collected by the state) and *tekalif-i örfiye* (customary levies collected by the state agents) turned from temporary to regular basis during the war period between 1593-1606 and they became principal taxes in cash during the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴⁰ However, collected by the local government officials like pashas and *beys*, their deputies, the agents of the central government or governors, the *kadis* as well as the vagrant *levends*, the *tekalif-i örfiye* is argued to have become one of the most oppressive actions against the local population by the beginning of the late 16th century. Thus, from now on, they started to be called *tekalif-i şakka*, *salgun* or *salma*.⁴¹ It was mainly because of the serious financial problems of the pashas and *beys* in the provinces as a result of the inflation and the devaluation of the *akçe* at the end of the 16th century. In addition, these state officials had to maintain large numbers of *levend*

³⁷ Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 81; Eftal Şükrü Batmaz, "İltizam Sisteminin XVIII. Yüzyıldaki Boyutları" *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 18, No. 29 (1996), pp. 39-50, p. 39; İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 312.

³⁸ It was an old practice in the both Eastern and Western states that from the Middle Ages, the urgent financial needs of the governments were met through the application of emergency taxes. In the Ottoman case, the tax was collected on the basis of dues such as services of different kinds and payments in kind or cash from an established section of the society. At first, the number of each unit (*avarız-hane*) and the amount to be paid had to be established according to the ability of the unit. There were exemptions from this kind of tax as grants or in return for certain services. Darling, *Revenue Raising*, p. 83, pp.87-89; İnalçık, "Military, and Fiscal", pp. 313-315.

³⁹ Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken*, p. 172. The Rumelia region was important in the collection of the *cizye* tax that revenues were more in Rumelia than Anatolia since Rumelia had more densely populated by the non-Muslims.

⁴⁰ Darling, *Revenue Raising*, p. 82; İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 82, pp. 313-317.

⁴¹ Halil İnalçık, "Adaletnameler", *Belgeler*, Vol. 2, No. 3-4 (1993), pp. 49-145, p. 75.

troops in case of need on the part of the government during wartimes. Hence, in order not to jeopardize their positions, they put the cost of their retinues on the population.⁴²

One of the crucial results of the *avarız* taxes' turning into regular basis and of the collection of such extra-taxes is argued to have been the abandonment of the population of their places, putting additional financial burdens on those who remained there. Likewise, in order to pay their share in the taxes, people sometimes resorted to usurers and when they did not have the necessary means to repay their debt, they left their lands to the usurers, allowing the formation of big farms (*çiftlik*s). Furthermore, sometimes, the *kadıs* (judges) misused their authority and demanded bribes in order not to exaggerate the number of *avarız-hanes*. Consequently, all of these could result in serious social disorders in the provinces.⁴³ On the other hand, the abandonment of people often ended with a great deal of revenue losses on the part of central treasury since the land remained uncultivated. Therefore, the central government had to consider the ability of the population to pay their taxes. In this matter, in order to relieve the population from the burden of *avarız* taxes, the local notables were also made responsible in the intermediacy and testimony to the local population's claims over the ratios beyond their means.⁴⁴ Moreover, the local notables in order to help the poor sections of the population founded cash *vakıfs* (endowments) and *avarız* chests and in some cases, they sent the amount in advance, on the condition that the amount was to be paid back later by the population. All these are argued to have furthered positively the image of the *ayans* before the

⁴² İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", pp. 305-306, 317-318. This tax was subject to the permission of the sultan but because of the conditions of the period, especially during wars, the established customs were open to abuses since the government was in need of large numbers of *levend* soldiers, allowing such actions be ignored. Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası*, pp. 58-60.

⁴³ Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, pp. 62-64; Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası*, pp. 61-64. It has been asserted that the extraordinary taxes became a great burden for the Balkan peasantry after the war in Crete. Fikret Adanır, "Tradition and Rural Change", p. 143.

⁴⁴ Halil İnalçık, "Adaletnameler", p. 72.

government and among the local population, contributing to the *ayans*' rise to unprecedented prominence in the provincial affairs.⁴⁵

Another method of revenue raising by the central government was the extension of *iltizam* while the *timar* system continued to exist. In the classical period of the Ottoman Empire, the *timar* system had been a practical solution to the problems of limited availability of transportation, of financial and bureaucratic organization and of methods and means in a pre-industrial society. In such an economic structure, the majority of taxes were collected in kind and distributed to the government or military officials as payments due to the difficulties of turning the taxes collected in kind to cash by the central treasury. In addition, the protection of the *reaya* and the revenue resources was more possible since the *timar* owners resided with the peasants in the countryside.⁴⁶ However, it was during the period that the central government was no longer able to control effectively its revenue resources due to some technical, economic and bureaucratic difficulties. As a result of the breakdown in the *timar* system, especially when the taxes were paid in kind, the tasks of collection and storage of these taxes in distant provinces were formidable for the central government.⁴⁷ Moreover, because of the increasing military costs, the government was in an urgent need of funds. Thus, the more practical way to overcome the situation was enlarging the application of the *iltizam* system.⁴⁸

In the *iltizam* system, the revenue sources⁴⁹ which were under the direct control of the central treasury were auctioned to individuals for a specific time period, usually for three years. The highest bidder firstly had to pay an advance payment, which could be many months ago before a *mültezim* extracted revenue from his *iltizam*

⁴⁵ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 316.

⁴⁶ Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2014), pp. 95-96.

⁴⁷ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 330, 331; Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 96.

⁴⁸ Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 147. During the classical period, the *iltizam* was an important part of the administrative-financial structure of the Ottoman Empire as well as of all Near-Eastern empires. From the 1580s onward, the number of tax-farming increased rapidly and became widespread in the 18th century while the fact that the turn from the *timar* to *iltizam* firstly began from the small units (*dirliks*). İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 327, 328-329.

⁴⁹ The farmed out revenue units were as such; custom duties, mines, state monopolies, other revenue sources not related to land and urban dues. Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, pp. 113-114.

source. After that, he would give annual installments.⁵⁰ Moreover, the *mültezim* had to show assurances to obtain the right of taxation of a revenue resource. In addition to his all properties in his holdings as sureties, regardless of the size of his wealth, he had to present another reliable assurance.⁵¹

However, in the administration of the system, a *mültezim* could divide his *iltizam* unit into smaller ones and he could sell them to secondary *mültezims*, especially in the case of large units. Thus, there could be interdependent *mültezims*. The state on its part, as the principal owner of these revenue resources and as the protector of the population, had the right to interfere in any *iltizam* owner's affairs over the specific *iltizam* unit. For this purpose, the government appointed an agent to each *mültezim* to check their accounts. On the other hand, in the collection of revenues of an *iltizam* unit, the governors were made responsible by providing them with troops if necessary.⁵² In addition, there were also types of allocations in the form of *iltizam*, which started to be applied by a decree in 1697. *Hasses*, *zeamets* or large *timar* units which were assigned to pashas, *beys* and other officials; to the women of the *Harem*, Palace officials, scribes, *çavuşes* as *arpalıks* were often given to *mültezims* since these above mentioned individuals were not in a situation to control their revenue units.⁵³ As a practical way to extract revenue from their resources, these "absentee" *mültezims* appointed agents such as *mütesellim*, *voyvoda* or *subaşı*. In this case, some of their administrative authority was transferred to these agents. In addition to appointing agents, they also resorted to farm their revenue units to sub-*mültezims* who had *mütesellim*, *voyvoda* or *subaşı* origins. By this way, from the beginning of the 1600s, the local notables started to constitute this type of *mültezims* that many

⁵⁰ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 237; Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 98.

⁵¹ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", pp. 237-238. İnalçık indicates that by living in big cities, these were often money changers (*sarrafs*), big merchants engaged in international trade or credit relations. Later, from the end of the 16th century onwards, the members of the military class also acquired some *iltizam* rights though they were small provincial units. Ibid, pp. 331-332.

⁵² Ibid, p. 328.

⁵³ Batmaz, "İltizam Sisteminin", pp. 43-44.

wealthy local notables of the 17th and 18th centuries originated through maintaining lucrative revenue sources in a long time.⁵⁴

While initially the period of *iltizam* contracts were for three years, in time, it was extended into lifetime tenures (*malikâne*) in increasing numbers. It is pointed out that the extension was because of the fact that the *mültezims* in order to maximize their profit in a limited time period did not care the maintenance of the revenue resources, becoming more ruinous for the economy. On the other hand, assertedly, *malikâne* practice was regarded to benefit the *reaya* since under the life-time terms, the revenue units could be taken care.⁵⁵ That is why in the beginning, some revenue units (*mukataas*) were given to the military-administrative class for life-time terms as their salaries.⁵⁶ Moreover, especially during the second half of the 17th century, the number of *mukataas* given for life-time terms considerably increased due to the budgetary deficits originated from the long war between 1683 and 1699. Consequently, the wide range of application of the system was announced by a *ferman* in 1695.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the planned protection of the *reaya* from the deficiencies of *iltizam* system was not fulfilled due to the sub-*mültezim* practices in the *malikâne* system, too.⁵⁸

The *malikâne* was used especially in the revenue units based on lands, and except for the *kadıs*, intervention of government officials into the affairs of *malikâne* owners was not allowed. On the other hand, some responsibilities and authorities related to the protection of the population were authorized to them, in which, the lump-sum given in advance was deemed as surety. In addition, it is argued that the heirs of the *malikâne* holders were given preferential rights in the auctions contributed to the fact that a new type of people emerged, who were based on large territories as free

⁵⁴ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", pp. 331-332.

⁵⁵ Yaşar Yücel, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Desantralizasyona (Adem-i Merkeziyet) Dair Genel Gözlemler", *Belleten*, XXXVIII, No. 42, pp. 657-708, p. 683.

⁵⁶ İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal", p. 229; Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken*, p. 129-130; Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 99. By 1714, the *mukaata* auctions were also open to the *reaya* but then they were prohibited from assuming *malikâne* units. Ibid, p. 103.

⁵⁷ Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 100, 101.

⁵⁸ Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken*, p. 135.

holders.⁵⁹ In time, these *malikâne* holders were consisted mainly of high-ranking members of the military-administrative class and of the *ulema* who had close relations with the central authority. By living in İstanbul, they gave their *iltizams* to sub-*mültezims*. In this respect, it is indicated that the *malikâne* application did not take over the *iltizam* system altogether and it was placed within the established *iltizam* system in terms of actual administration of the revenue resources.⁶⁰

Consequently, the agents of *malikâne* holders or sub-*mültezims* with authorities began to be selected from the local notables who had wealth, influence and much closer knowledge of the region.⁶¹ One of the important results of this system is that the tax-farming with large *mukataa* or *hass* revenues resulted in the rise of many *ayan* and local dynasties in the 18th century, which, as argued, led to the decentralization of the Ottoman administration.⁶²

On the other hand, as Dina Rızk Khoury indicates, on the example of Mosul, the tax farming system in the 18th century was a process in which a large part of the society in the provinces thus became “Ottomanized”.⁶³ In addition to Khoury, Ariel Salzmänn also maintains that as a result of this practice, there emerged “diffused but interrelated loci of state power” and under changing political and socio-economic conditions, new alliances with different social groups emerged out of this system.⁶⁴

To sum up, the crises of the late 16th and early 17th centuries were responsible for the immediate changes in the Ottoman military and fiscal organization though furthering the socio-economic disorders in the Empire. An important element of the

⁵⁹ İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal”, p. 229; Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, pp. 103-104, p. 105; Batmaz, “İltizam Sisteminin”, p. 46, 48.

⁶⁰ Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 107, 157; Yücel, “Desantralizasyona Dair Genel Gözlemler”, pp. 683-684.

⁶¹ Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, p. 108.

⁶² İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal”, p. 229, 331.

⁶³ Dina Rızk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire, Mosul, 1540-1834*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 107.

⁶⁴ Ariel Salzmänn, “An Ancien Régime Revisited: ‘Privatization’ and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire”, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 21, No. 4, (December 1993), pp. 393-423, p. 395, 397.

transformation was that the authority of the state decreased while the local notables rose to prominence in the provincial administration. Furthermore, the emergence and the increase in the number of *levend* soldiers from the end of the 16th century onwards were important factors in the outbreak and expansion of the mountain banditry in Rumelia at the end of the 18th century.

CHAPTER III

THE 18TH CENTURY CONTEXT LEADING TO THE EMERGENCE OF THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS

3.1.The Collapse of the Ottoman Central Authority in the Provinces

3.1.1 The Decline in the Power of Governors and *Kadıs*

Because of the *malikâne* system which now came to encompass some of the *sancaks* and even some *eyalets*, the classical administration of the provinces underwent important changes during the 18th century.⁶⁵ One of the most important changes in the provincial administration is asserted to have been the decline of governors' power due to the reduction in *hass* allocation which occurred as a result of the cash need of the central treasury. The main composition of economic power of the governors before then was large *hasses* which now started to be incorporated into the *malikâne* system. Instead, they were now given shrinking *mirî mukataas* which they in turn converted into *iltizams*. This reduced the financial and, thus, the military capacity of the governors while extending the available means for the formation of powerful local figures who undertook through the *iltizam* system the financial and administrative authority in the provinces.⁶⁶

The other important change for the decline of governors' authority was because of the extension of the system of *arpalık* which had been used so far, in practice, when the governors did not reside in their region. Through which, the viziers and *mirmirans*, appointed *voyvodas* or *mütesellims* as deputies to administer the allocated

⁶⁵ Orhan Kılıç, "18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Eyalet ve Sancak Tevcihatının Sistematiği", XV. Türk Tarih Kongresi, (Ankara: 11-15 Sep., 2006), *Ayrıbasım, Osmanlı Tarihi-A*, Vol. 4, No.1, (Ankara: 2010), pp. 1025-1044, p. 1025.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1038.

regions as well as the post of a *sancakbeyi* or a *vali*, especially in times of wars on behalf of the absentee official. The practice was firstly applied to some of the *sancaks* given to the *mirmirans* but, in time, as the number of viziers increased, it started to be expanded also to the viziers in the 18th century.⁶⁷ While the *arpalık* system was applied in Rumelia, Anatolia and Karaman *eyalets* in the first half of the 18th century, from then on, it was extended to the other *eyalets* as well. Moreover, although a vizier or a *mirmiran* could be given more than one *sancak* as *arpalık*, some of the pashas were given *mahassıllıks* and *mütesellimlik*s. It is argued that this change resulted in the weakening of the administration of some of the *sancaks* which now started to be managed by *mütesellims* and *voyvodas* who are deemed to have been not powerful enough and not responsible for the wellbeing of the *sancaks* as the governors had done once.⁶⁸

Furthermore, the reduction of the governors' tenures is asserted to be important in the collapse of central authority in the provinces. The term of office of the governors had been reduced from the second half of the 17th century and they turned to be appointed for one year to be replaced to another eyelet if his tenure was not extended for another one year, most often the maximum term of office was three years in theory.⁶⁹

Therefore, at the end of the 18th century, the governors could not force their authority in the provincial affairs as their incomes did not meet the expenses of the security of the provinces through maintaining large retinues.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Kılıç, "18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Eyalet ve Sancak Tevcihatı", p. 1033, 1043. *Mir-i miran* or *mirmirans* (*beylerbeyis* who had not the title of vizier) had two tails while viziers (*valis*) had three. Orhan Kılıç, "Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Taşra Teşkilatı: Beylerbeyilikler-Eyaletler, Kaptanlıklar, Voyvodalıklar, Meliklikler (1362-1799)", *Osmanlı*, Vol.9, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), pp. 887-898, p. 888-889.

⁶⁸ Kılıç, "18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Eyalet ve Sancak Tevcihatı", p. 1033-1036, 1034, 1044.

⁶⁹ Kılıç, "Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Taşra Teşkilatı", p. 890.

⁷⁰ Gergana Georgieva, "Administrative Structure and Government of Rumelia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: The Functions and Activities of the *Vali* of Rumeli", in *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760-1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation*, ed. Antonis Anastapoulos and Elias Kolovos, Proceedings of an International Conference Held in Rethymno, Greece, 13-14 December, 2003, (Rethymno, Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Crete, 2007), pp. 3-19, p. 10.

On the other hand, it is argued that due to lack of adequate incomes, the governors resorted to abuses such as collecting excessive taxes like *tekalif-i şakka*, which turned into big a problem in the provincial administration from the 17th to the 19th century. That is why the governors became more dependent on the support of the local notables and especially of the *ayans* as their influence in the provinces was undermined.⁷¹

In addition to the governors, the *kadıs* also lost their prestige and influence like the *valis* did and they were also forced to accept the local *ayans*' power. Moreover, as being also shifted frequently, they became obliged to cooperate with and to seek the assistance of the local notables in the provincial administration throughout the 18th century. Thus, they were, only by this way, able to compel the enforcement of the laws and the maintenance of the legitimacy of the state mechanism.⁷²

These developments towards the collapse of central authority in the provinces culminated in the disruption of order and widespread banditry during the last decades of the 18th century. After the war of 1787-92, during the period of anarchy, while engaging in the suppression of banditry and reforming its army, the state had to cope with the rebellion of Pazvantoğlu Osman, the war of 1798 with Napoleonic France and the Serbian Uprising of 1804.⁷³

3.1.2 The Rise of the *Ayans*

So far, certain factors which led to the emergence and strengthening of the local notables has been referred to signify the importance of the military and financial transformation of the Ottoman Empire between the last decades of the 16th and the

⁷¹ Georgieva, "Administrative Structure", p. 6, 8.

⁷² Ibid, p. 10; Bruce McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı, 1699-1812", in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi, 1600-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, Vol. 2, (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 2004), pp. 761-884, p. 783.

⁷³ Vera P. Mutafochieva, "XVIII. Yüzyılın Son on Yılında Ayanlık Müessesesi", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, No.31, (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1978), pp. 163-182, p. 182; McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı", p. 786.

beginning of the 18th centuries. Throughout the 18th century, the institution of the *ayanlık* played an important role in the history of the Ottoman Empire. To have a clear idea about the *ayans* and their role in the 18th century, it is important to know the origins and the functions of the local notables during the classical period which corresponds approximately between 13th to 16th centuries.

It is indicated that in the classical period, the *ayans* were a group of people who organized the relations between the state and the local population, represented the interests of the local people and assisted with the officials in the fulfilment of the state orders on the city base. Regarded as the prominent city members, they came from the wealthy and influential sections of the society like big merchants, artisans, tradesmen, the *ulema* and the other respected religious figures like *imams*, *hatips*, *tarikât şeyhs* and *seyyids*. From the late 16th century onwards, with the new conditions in the Empire, these “*eşraf* and *ayans*” are said to have been inclined towards being incorporated into the Ottoman military class (*askerî*) through undertaking more responsibilities in the provincial affairs as the state resorted more and more to their help.⁷⁴

However, the change in the nature of the “*eşraf* and *ayans*” is argued by Halil İnalcık as it is related to the establishment and involvement of the increasing numbers of the Janissaries into the provincial life during the *Celâli* depredations. Accordingly, besides the local *ulema*, guild masters and big merchants, the Janissaries became one of the leading members of the local society through assuming *iltizam* rights and engaging in commerce and manufacturing.⁷⁵ Thus, rather than the *ulema*, those coming from the *kapıkulu* origins like *yeniçeri serdarı* and *kethüdayeri* started to dominate local notables since they had the advantage of possessing military backgrounds.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Özer Ergenç, “Osmanlı Klasik Dönemindeki Eşraf ve Ayan Üzerine Bazı Bilgiler,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, III, (İstanbul: 1982), pp. 105-118, p. 106, 117.

⁷⁵ Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), p. 56.

⁷⁶ Yuzo Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa ve Ayanlık Müessesesi*, (Tokyo: Toyo Shuppan Co. Ltd., 1976), pp. 6-7.

Moreover, from the 18th century onwards, the local notables were differentiated among themselves under two main categories, firstly, as individuals called “*ayans*” as the semi-official heads of the *kazas*, towns and villages and then as the respected members of local society as termed with “*ayan-ı vilayet*”, “*ayan and eşraf*”, “*ayan-ı memleket*” or, as Vera Mutaſchieva asserts, “*mahalli ayan*” who assisted to the chief *ayan* (the *baş-ayan* or the *reis-i ayan*) in the administration of the district. Moreover, there was a hierarchical order in the formation of the chief *ayans* as well, in which a small group composed of the most powerful *ayans* (*hanedan*) dominated a much larger group of lesser *ayans*.⁷⁷

The functions of the *ayans* were crucial for the state and they were authorized with various tasks which had been previously belonged to the *kadı*s such as administration of local affairs and security of the provinces, collection of taxes, recruitment of soldiers for the army and supplying provisions and materials both for the capital and the army when needed.⁷⁸ It was because of the decay of the *timar* system that provincial administration lost its functionaries and authority.⁷⁹ Outside wartimes, the most important duty of the *ayans* is asserted to have been composing of local expenditure account books (the *tevzi defteris*) in which the *ayans* played an important role in the assessment and collection of various taxes which were to be spent in return for various services in the provincial administration.⁸⁰

As for the extent of the authority of an *ayan*, it is indicated that it was not fixed with a limited territory although it was essentially organized around the center of a *kaza* unit consisted of its villages. Still, some of the *ayans* were able to extend their authorities over much larger areas encompassing a couple of *kazas*.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Mutaſchieva, “Ayanlık Müessesesi”, pp. 163-182, p. 165; Deena R. Sadat, “Rumeli Ayanları: The Eighteenth Century”, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Sep., 1972), pp. 346-363, p.350; Özcan Mert, “Merkezi Devlet Yapısının Zayıflaması Sonuçları: Ayanlık Sistemi ve Büyük Hanedanlıklar”, *Osmanlı*, Vol. 6, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), pp. 174-180, p. 165.

⁷⁸ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ Mutaſchieva, “Ayanlık Müessesesi”, p. 178.

⁸⁰ İnalçık, “Military and Fiscal”, p. 317; Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 9.

⁸¹ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 10.

Similarly, when and why exactly the system of *ayanlık* was established is not clear. Some of the historians put more emphasis on the wars and they maintain that from the late 17th to the 18th century, the increasing frequency and duration of the wars played an important role in the undermining of central authority in the provinces and in its becoming more and more depended on the financial and military assistance of the local notables. Accordingly, as Yücel Özkaya brings forward, the *ayans* had already become de facto rulers of the districts, towns and villages in their regions before the decree of 1726, which announced that the local notables from the time onwards would be allowed to undertake the posts of *sancakbeyis*, leaving aside the practice of selecting this provincial administrative cadre from the members of the *Enderun*. Hence, the decree is regarded by him as the most important factor for the recognition of the *ayanlık* by the central government.⁸²

Consequently, the *ayans* became established towards the middle of the 18th century in some of the important *sancaks* and *kazas* in Anatolia. However, the development of the *ayanlık* is argued to correspond to the period from the 1740s onwards since during which time the *ayanlık* as an institution became widespread over cities, towns and villages.⁸³ Mutařchieva asserts that the *ayanlık* in Rumelia was on its way to be established from the late 1740s onwards by giving the example of the rivalry for the *ayanlık* in Razgrad (Hezargrad) district in 1747. However, she does not regard it widespread in whole Rumelia during the time.⁸⁴

As it started to be established throughout the Empire though differing from region to region, the basic principle determining the selection of an *ayan*, according to İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, became the consent of the local population, in which process governors had no right to interfere. Yet, the candidate *ayan* had to be from among the local notables of whom, in theory, the government had to have a close knowledge. They also had to possess influence and capacity to carry out the orders of the central

⁸² Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1977), pp. 28-29, 124.

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 28-29, 128.

⁸⁴ Mutařchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 166-167.

government.⁸⁵ Then, a proof of the consent (*mahzar*) of the local population and the rest of the local notables towards his *ayanlık* had to be shown and a testimonial document (*ilam*) of the *kadı* and the confirmation (*buyuruldu*) of the governor of the region were required.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Mutaftchieva indicates that the selection of an *ayan* was not always the result of the votes by the local population.⁸⁷ First of all, from the middle of the 18th century, instead of the consent of the population or of the other notables, bribery was involved in the selection that those who offered the most amounts to *kadıs* and *valis* in return for their confirmation began to be elected as *ayan*. This created a severe rivalry among the local notables and put an extra tax burden on the local population as the selected *ayan* usually imposed much of the costs of bribing into the expense registers of the district (*kaza*).⁸⁸

Apart from bribery, armed struggle also played a crucial role in the obtainment of *ayanlık*. As claimed by Yücel Özkaya, the fact that the first thing in being an *ayan* was regarded by the state as the high level of wealth and power so that they could assist the government when needed encouraged the local notables to resort to violence against their rivals and against the population.⁸⁹ Mutaftchieva denotes that the struggle for *ayanlık* most often took place with bloody rivalry and resulted in the selection of whom with highest military power. In this respect, the local population was involved in the selection through being seemed on the side of the most powerful one for the *ayanlık*.⁹⁰

Consequently, in each *kaza*, a couple of factions took part in the rivalry and they resorted to using large groups of vagrant *levends* in Anatolia and especially in

⁸⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, pp. 2, 5; Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 251; Robert Zens, "Provincial Powers: The Rise of Ottoman Local Notables (Ayan)", *History Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (2011), pp. 433-447, p. 445.

⁸⁶ Özcan Mert, "Ayanlık Sistemi ve Büyük Hanedanlar", p. 175.

⁸⁷ Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 173.

⁸⁸ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, pp. 276-278.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 137-138, 160, 250.

⁹⁰ Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 168, 172.

Rumelia, where the Albanian *sekbans* were recruited with large numbers in the struggle of *ayanlık*. According to an example provided by Antonis Anastapoulos, between 1758 and 1759, during the rivalry of two *ayans* in Karaferye (a *kaza* of the *sancak* of Thessaloniki), one of them had nearly four hundred Albanian forces in his retinue and he could not be arrested just by sending orders by the central government as the incident had been petitioned by the local people to İstanbul. Instead, the government had to send troops to the *kaza* although they failed to arrest him.⁹¹

In addition, it is claimed that many local notables protected and also cooperated with the bandits. This gave them a crucial leverage in the pursuit of *ayanlık* that attacks against rival *ayans* and repeated invasions of their regions brought about a shift in the allegiance of the local population for the mightier party in order secure greater protection against raids.⁹² On the other hand, the suppression of banditry was regarded also as an opportunity to prove the limits of the *ayans*' military and fiscal abilities against the other *ayans*.⁹³ Nevertheless, in some cases, military struggle was to result in some Albanians and bandits' coming to *ayanlık*.⁹⁴

Because of the struggles through military action, the duration of *ayanlık* was not based on a limited time period and most of the time, the *ayans* could not remain in the post for a long time although some of them sustained their position nearly for twenty to thirty years and they were able to pass their *ayanlık* to their sons.⁹⁵

Yet, the most important element providing wealth, influence and legitimacy to local notables in the eyes of the local population and the government is said to have been acquisition of the posts of *mütesellim*, *muhassıl* and *voyvoda* in the provincial administration.⁹⁶ As the practice of *arpalık* became widespread during the 18th

⁹¹ Antonis Anastasopoulos, "Crisis and State Intervention in Late Eighteenth-Century Karaferye (mod. Veroia)", in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), pp. 11-34, pp. 23-24.

⁹² Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 84, p. 130-131; Zens, "Provincial Powers", p. 445.

⁹³ McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı", p. 795.

⁹⁴ Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 170-171.

⁹⁵ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, pp. 5-6; Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 171.

⁹⁶ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 126.

century, most of the *mütesellims* were selected from among the influential local notables like the members of the Karaosmanoğlu family who obtained the *ayanlık* of the *mukataas* of Saruhan in the middle of the 18th century. In addition to *mütesellimlik*, the family had a number of *çiftliks*, *hans* and shops in İzmir.⁹⁷

In this respect, being a *mütesellim* together with the post of *ayanlık* played a crucial role in the maintenance of wealth and influence in a given region. Therefore, most often, the selection of the *ayans* was not held on the basis of popular support. Rather, it came through the enforcement of the winner of the rivalry between the local notables. Hence, those who had more military and financial power and more influence on the population as well as having close relationship with the governors, the *kadis*, the other local notables and high officials in the capital were in better positions towards being *ayan*.⁹⁸

3.2.The Collapse of the Ottoman Military System

It is important to acknowledge the role of the long wars in terms of the collapse of the central authority and the *ayans*' coming into seen and taking responsibilities more than ever. During the war between 1683 and 1699 and the wars of the early 18th century, the resources of the central government were exhausted while the provincial officials like *sancakbeyis* as being on the front left the country with a power vacuum. Also, the remaining *sancakbeyis* are argued to have been unable to fulfil the increasing scale of requested orders for the supply of soldiers and provisions, giving the opportunity to influential local notables be incorporated into the provincial system.⁹⁹

While the *ayanlık* was established and in time strengthened its position in some of the Anatolian and Rumelian *kazas* and *sancaks* from 1726 onwards, the crucial factor which gave a real impetus for the spread and development of the *ayanlık* is asserted

⁹⁷ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, pp. 16-17

⁹⁸ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 121, 125-126.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 124-125.

by some historians to be the war of 1768-74 with Russia and that of 1787-1792 with Russia and Austria.¹⁰⁰ During these wars and especially in the more critical phases, in administrative and military matters like recruitment of soldiers and provisioning the army and securing the provinces against bandits, the assistance of the official *ayans* as well as the dynasties of the local notables (*hanedans*) and the *ayan-ı vilayet* (*ayan* and *eşraf*) started to be appealed more frequently than ever.¹⁰¹ During the first years of the war of 1768-1774, as the all administrators were called to the front, especially the *ayans* of border regions like Rusçuk (Ruse) and Silistre were made responsible for procurement of wood, wagons, provisions, and military supplies.¹⁰²

In addition to these services, they were occasionally called to direct the soldiers they recruited to sent to the battlefields. It was because of the fact that then, the main Ottoman military power, the *timarlı sipahis* had long been decreased in number and military quality. Also, the numbers of actual participants to the wars and the discipline of the Janissaries on the battlefield diminished to a great extent.¹⁰³ That the *ayans* of Rumelia and Anatolia were continuously called to the army during the campaigns gave the *ayans* characteristics of commanders. As seen in the rebellion in the Morea during the Russian war, it was only possible with the military support of the nearby *ayans* to suppress the rebellion.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the right to recruit and lead their local soldiers in the battles is argued to have ensured the legitimacy of the *ayans* before the government and gave them more prestige and power in the provinces.¹⁰⁵

It is claimed that the state's being in a more destitute position vis a vis the local notables during the war of 1768-74 and the its weakness aftermath led the *ayans* to become more confident about themselves. Thus, they continued despotic ways of

¹⁰⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 161-162.

¹⁰² Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, pp. 74-76.

¹⁰³ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 1; Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 4, 77.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 39, 86.

¹⁰⁵ Zens, "Provincial Powers", p. 443.

administration in their districts.¹⁰⁶ As Mutařchieva also underlines, one of the most important factors in the central government's acceptance of the *ayans*' prominence was due to the weakness of the imperial military as the *timarlı sipahis* and the Janissaries lost their importance.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, during the second half of the 18th century, some of the local notables reached such a prominence that they started to correspond directly with the *Sadrāzam* bypassing the governors in the provinces, constituting a major danger against the authority of the state in the provinces.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, that the order of the Ottoman military organization was broke down led to one of the most important factors in the anarchy in Rumelia. The mass defection and disbandment of the forces of the *ayans* and of the Ottoman army during and after the defeats of the two wars of 1768-1774 and 1787-1792 played an important role in the tumult.¹⁰⁹

3.3.The Socio-Economic Conditions in the Provinces

Especially during the second half of the 18th century when the *ayans* increased their wealth and power while the central authority and power diminished due to the wars, as Mutařchieva maintains, the *ayans* created the preconditions for the anarchy in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁰ Firstly, the illegal extractions under the pretext of *ayaniye* (the payment for the service of an *ayan*) became burdensome for the local population. Adding more expenses into the *tevzi defteris* in their name after they obtained the post of the *ayanlık* led to many complaint-petitions which were sent to İstanbul.¹¹¹ Moreover, they also tried to return their costs of bribes paid to the *kadis* and *valis* in the selection of *ayan* by putting heavy taxes on the population. On the other hand, it

¹⁰⁶ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 1, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Mutařchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 182.

¹⁰⁸ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 7; Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 33, 35.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 22.

¹¹¹ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 29.

is asserted that besides the economic oppression, the *ayans* also resorted to various illegal actions such as homicide, kidnapping, abduction of girls, raids and plunders of the dominions of their rivals and acquiring lands by force, which would lead to further complaints to İstanbul. However, sometimes, these legitimate appeals could backfire and often the *ayans* and the population tried to be reconciled by the government, allowing the *ayans* to continue their actions against the population.¹¹²

Secondly, the rivalry between the contenders for the *ayanlık* resulted in disorders in the provinces due to large numbers of irregular soldiers and bandits they brought together. Their forces allowed them to oppress the local population as well as to subdue the officials of the central government.¹¹³ As Deena Sadat maintains, “state of controlled and modulated anarchy” was, to a certain extent, preferable for the *ayans* since it provided them the intimidation of the peasantry and a ground for free action against the central government’s surveillance.¹¹⁴ Due to the patronage of bandits by the *ayans*, banditry became widespread since the governors and *kadis* were now not able to prevent their actions, bringing about many peasants’ abandonment of their villages.¹¹⁵

On the other hand, because of the expansion of *çiftliks*, through the intensifying and extending world commerce by often illegal exports of agricultural products and raw materials during especially after the middle of the 18th century¹¹⁶, many peasants

¹¹² Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 177; Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 7.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 6; Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 32, 174, 193.

¹¹⁴ Sadat, “Rumeli Ayanları”, p. 354.

¹¹⁵ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 180, 266.

¹¹⁶ Traian Stoianovich, “Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant”, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Jun., 1960), pp. 234-313, p. 255. The *çiftlik* villages are said to have spread by the end of the 18th century in Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, The Maritsa valley, northern Bulgaria bordering the Danube, Kosovo, the plains of the coastal Albania and some parts of Bosnia. Traian Stoianovich, “Land Tenure and Related Sectors of the Balkan Economy, 1600-1800”, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (Autumn, 1953), pp. 398-411, pp. 402-403. Yet, Halil İnalcık, focusing on the origins of the *çiftliks*, indicates that the *çiftliks* resembling plantations were those that were opened of the abandoned or waste land to agriculture rather than using the *miri* or *mukataa* leasing. “The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftlik: State, Landlords and Tenants”, in *Contributions à l’Histoire Économique et Sociale de l’Empire Ottoman*, Collection Turcica, III, (Louvain, Peteers, 1983), pp. 105-126, p. 114.

who became landless, then, came to refuge and cooperate with the wealthy local notables. They could afford the means and jobs for vagrant peasants, allowing the *ayans* further their influence among the local population.¹¹⁷

On the other hand, the increasing number of landless peasants who became a permanent human reserve in booty seeking actions was to be among the factors which started *kırcalı* banditry.¹¹⁸ Then, in the 18th century, the problem of vagrant *levends*, though to a lesser extent than in the 17th century, was also a constant problem of banditry. Besides them, there were also *kapılı-levends* who were among the retainers of the local *ayans* as well as the governors, which resorted to banditry when they were not paid by their employers.¹¹⁹

In consequence of the abuses against the population and the widespread anarchy, it is estimated that during the mid-18th century, the population of the Balkans dropped to three million while it had been eight million at the end of the 16th century. Moreover, between 1768 and 1812, approximately 200.000 Bulgarians moved to Romania, Macedonia and İstanbul.¹²⁰ As Bruce McGowan argues, the movement of the peasant population shows the extreme point of the burdensome conditions of the period, in which people risked pursuing a cloudy future by leaving behind their homes, walls of their homes, orchards and the things which were hard labored to build.¹²¹ Despite the attempts of the government to prevent the movement of them, numerous peasants fled to mountains and there they started a semi-pastoral life while some of them just joined the banditry which was prevalent both in Anatolia and especially Rumelia.¹²²

In order to relieve the burden of the local population, especially during the second half of the 18th century, the state issued many decrees of justice (*adalet fermanı*) against the illegal activities of the *ayans*, the provincial officials and the bandits.

¹¹⁷ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 8; Mert, "Ayanlık Sistemi ve Büyük Hanedanlar", p. 168.

¹¹⁸ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 35.

¹¹⁹ Cezar, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Levendler*, pp. 243-251.

¹²⁰ McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı", pp. 773-777.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 803.

¹²² Sadat, "Rumeli Ayanları", pp. 353-354.

Between 1766 and 1768, the decrees were issued to prevent their abuses, and with another decree in 1779, the practice of obtaining an *ilam* from a *kadı* and a *buyuruldu* from a *vali* was abandoned. Instead, the *ayans* had to acquire a consent letter (*kaime*) from the *Sadrâzam*. According to Yuzo Nagata, it was also a part of the plan to curb the power of some of the influential *ayans* like Çapanoğulları and Karaosmanoğulları in Anatolia, through which the government tried to impose some degree of central authority in the provinces.¹²³

Nevertheless, the terms of these decrees were not complied by many *ayans* of both Anatolia and Rumelia. Therefore, in fear of the *ayans*' strengthening and of their oppression, in 1786, it was announced that the institution of the *ayanlık* was abolished and in all *kazas* and *kasabas*, the selection of *şehir kethüdas* from among the elders of the districts was established so that the abuses of authority against the population ended. Nevertheless, in many places, the *ayanlık* continued to exist together with the *şehir kethüdalığı* since many *ayans* did not comply with the new order and did not allow the *şehir kethüdas* to function properly. On the other hand, the *şehir kethüdas* themselves are argued to have been incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities given by the government due to the lack of power and influence among the population. Thus, with the renewal of war in 1787 with Russia and Austria, as the main military support came from them, the system of *ayanlık* was reestablished in 1790 on the basis of the consent of the population in the selection of *ayan*.¹²⁴

However, the same problems continued to exist and as Sadat argues, the government efforts to reform the *ayanlık* contributed to the fact that the *ayans* became more conscious of their power and independence vis a vis the government. Thus, they were able to exert more absolute authority than ever.¹²⁵

On the other hand, when the government was able to force his authority, some methods to punish the rebellious *ayans* were applied such as returning the illegally

¹²³ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 32.

¹²⁴ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 74, p. 282-283, Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Sadat, "Rumeli Ayanları", p. 359.

collected amount to the population, abolishing their rights of *mütesellim* and *ayanlık*, banishing or just restraining them to certain places (*kalebend*), sometimes executing or more simply just advising them against such activities with warnings.¹²⁶ However, during the second half of the 18th century, the central government often pardoned the *ayans* since their repression could lead to further challenges for the state. Also, in order to benefit from their financial and military power both in wars and in the provincial security, the government was obliged to be prudent against the rebellious *ayans*.¹²⁷ Another way to cope with them was rewarding them with some important posts such as *sancakbeyliği*. By this way, the government tried to incorporate them into the Ottoman system and to avoid their rebellion. In addition, it is claimed that the government often attempted to play the *ayans* off against each other by supporting the most powerful of them.¹²⁸

These developments towards the collapse of central authority and disruption of order in the provinces culminated in the widespread banditry during the last decades of the 18th century. After the war of 1787-1792, during the period of tumult, the state faced the most critical face of the century that while engaging in the suppression of banditry and reforming its army, it had to cope with the rebellion of Pazvantoğlu Osman, the war of 1798 with Napoleonic France and the Serbian Uprising of 1804.¹²⁹

3.4.The *Ayans* of Rumelia at the End of the 18th and Beginning of the 19th Centuries

Before introducing Rumelian *ayans*, it is important to present some of the influential *ayans* and *ayan* dynasties of Anatolia. The two of the most influential of them were Çapanoğulları, who controlled the central parts of Anatolia, like Çorum, Yozgat and

¹²⁶ Nagata, *Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa*, p. 32.

¹²⁷ Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, p. 175.

¹²⁸ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ Mutaftchieva, “Ayanlık Müessesesi”, p. 182; McGowan, “Ayanlar Çağı”, p. 786.

its surroundings and Karaosmanoğulları who controlled Manisa and its surroundings. There were also influential *ayans* in the provinces of Trabzon, Canik, in Eastern Anatolia and in far-off Bagdad, Damascus and Sidon that they had also lesser *ayans* who attached to them in a hierarchical order.¹³⁰

As for Rumelia, in the northern part, there was Yılıkoğlu Süleyman around Silistre (Silistra) and Deliorman region; Tirsiniklizade around Rusçuk (Ruse), Tırnova (Tarnovo) region and most importantly Pazvantoğlu Osman in Vidin. In the southern part, there was Tokatçıklı Süleyman around Gümülcine (Komotini) region, İsmail Bey around Serez (Serres) and later Dağdevirenöğlu Mehmed Ağa around Edirne. In Southwestern Rumelia, where the local dynasties had the title of vizierate and hereditary posts of governors, there was Kara Mahmud and İbrahim pashas around İşkodra (Shkoder) and Tepedelenli Ali Pasha in Yanya (Ioannina) and his son Veli Pasha in Morea. As indicated by İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, among the most powerful *ayans* in terms of military power were Tirsiniklizade İsmail in the northern part of Rumelia and Tokatçıklı Süleyman in the southern part.¹³¹

In the northern part of Rumelia, Tirsinikli İsmail and Pazvantoğlu Osman were the two most powerful *ayans* and they had lesser *ayans* under their authority.¹³² Tirsinikli is regarded by Uzunçarşılı as the most cunning and bravest of all the *ayans* of Rumelia that while he remained loyal to the state, he acted otherwise when it suits. Behind his power laid the *ayanlık* of Rusçuk, which he obtained in 1796 and the *mukataa* rights given to him around Tırnova in 1800. In addition, for his successes in the Deliorman region against Pazvantoğlu Osman when he took Tırnova and tried also to capture Rusçuk, Tirsinikli was granted the title of *kapıcıbaşılık* in 1797. By these ways, he furthered his legitimacy and influence in the region.¹³³ He is indicated

¹³⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 3.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 7.

¹³² Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 175.

¹³³ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, pp. 7-11.

to have been able to form an army composed of 20.000 soldiers conscripted from his local population.¹³⁴

Despite the government support and trust for Tirsinikli İsmail, after having become powerful enough, he expanded over the *kazas* of Yeni Pazar (Novi Pazar), Eski Cuma (Targovishte), Osman Pazarı (Omurtag), Şumnu (Shumen), Hezargrad (Razgrad) and attempted to expand further over the region of Deliorman and Silistre, where another rival of him, Yılıkoğlu Süleyman was situated along with some parts of the Deliorman region. Tirsinikli İsmail tried to expel Yılıkoğlu out of Silistre. These two *ayans* of the Danubian region, Tirsinikli and Yılıkoğlu are asserted to have been such powerful that they could even resist the entrence of the governors of Silistre province into their seat in Silistre.¹³⁵ After Tirsinikli, Alemdar Mustafa came to the *ayanlık* of Rusçuk. It is argued that after having become the *Sadrizam*, as being one of the influential *ayans* and having a close knowledge of the Rumelia, he contributed to the reestablishing of authority in the region.¹³⁶

As to Pazvantoğlu Osman, he had been a wealthy and an influential member of the local community as being a part of the local *kapıkulus* before he became the *ayan* of Vidin. After becoming the *ayan*, he attempted to expand over the Danubian region which is situated north of the Balkan Mountains and he was able to appoint some of his followers as *voyvodas*, *subaşı*s, and *bölükbaşı*s in the adjacent *kazas*.¹³⁷ He protected many rebellious elements within his domains and after 1792, the Janissaries banished from Belgrade took refuge in Vidin. Moreover, numerous *kırcalı* bands and bandit leaders like Kara Mustafa, Gavur İmam and Macar Ali took refuge in Vidin and secured his patronage by making raids outside Vidin region on behalf of him.¹³⁸ One of the most important events of the period is argued to have been the suppression of Pazvantoğlu Osman. For that purpose, a couple of *valis* were

¹³⁴ Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 181.

¹³⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 11, pp. 14-15; Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 174.

¹³⁶ Yücel Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 6.

¹³⁷ Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 175.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 176.

appointed against him but he was able to get rid of the three sieges of Vidin and sustained his misdoings until he was given the title of vizier with three tail.¹³⁹ Pazvantoğlu Osman is said to have had wide support from different Christian groups and from the first national figures of the Balkans during the period of national awakenings.¹⁴⁰

The last influential *ayan* of the northern part of Rumelia was Yılıkoğlu Süleyman. As asserted by Mutaftchieva, he was the first big *kırcalı* leader who destroyed the region of Deliorman during the war of 1787-1792 and struggled for the domination of the Silistre and the Deliorman region in the northern part of Rumelia.¹⁴¹ Around 1794-1795, he occupied and started to control the two regions as being the *ayan* of Silistre. It is indicated that Yılıkoğlu was one of the allies of Pazvantoğlu Osman until the latter's death.¹⁴²

In Southern Rumelia, there was also a rivalry between the great *ayans* for the domination over the Albanian lands.¹⁴³ The Bushatlıs are indicated to have been able to form big *çiftlik*s in Albania and they obtained their influence during the war of 1768-1774. Apart from its *mukataas*, the family established commercial cultivation in the Albanian lowlands on the coastline.¹⁴⁴ During the period of the most renowned member of the Bushatlı family, Kara Mahmud Pasha (1775-1796), the central government attempted to suppress the family a couple of times. However, when failed to do so, the government came to confirm him as the governor of the region and gave him the title of vizier. It is asserted that in order to counterbalance his

¹³⁹ Georgieva, "Administrative Structure and Government of Rumelia", p. 11; Rossitsa Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin: Between Old and New", in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), pp. 115-161, p. 122-123.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 116-117.

¹⁴¹ Mutaftchieva, "Ayanlık Müessesesi", p. 170.

¹⁴² Rossitsa Gradeva, "Secession and Revolution in the Ottoman Empire at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Osman Pazvantoğlu and Rhigas Velestinlis", in *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760-1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation*, ed. Antonis Anastapoulos and Elias Kolovos, Proceedings of an International Conference Held in Rethymno, Greece, 13-14 December, 2003, (Rethymno, Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Crete, 2007), pp. 73-94, p. 75.

¹⁴³ Georgieva, "Administrative Structure and Government of Rumelia", p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı", p. 786, 790.

position against the central government, Kara Mahmud followed on its own a separate foreign policy but remained seemingly loyal to the Sultan. Still, his main goal was to establish an autonomous principality under the Ottoman suzerainty.¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha is indicated to have got his power from the *derbentçi* (guarding passes) organization against the banditry which gained momentum from the 1760s onwards. He obtained the title of pasha between 1783 and 1784 and sustained his position until 1822. He was appointed twice as the *başbuğ* (commander) of the *derbentçi* organization between 1793 and 1794 and 1803 and 1804. It is put forward that while he did not make a significant contribution during wartimes, he inclined to show obedience once the war was about to come to an end.¹⁴⁶ He was able to expand his dominion from Southern Albania, parts of Macedonia to the present-day Greece, all of which encompassed nearly one and half million people and his great wealth based on the formation of *çiftliks*, custom duties and extortion. He suppressed the lesser *ayans* around him or tied them to himself.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, similar to Kara Mahmud Pasha and Pazvantoglu Osman, he is asserted to have brought security, facilitating the growth of trade and allowed some sort of religious liberty by giving permission to the restoration of the churches and promoting Greek education in his domains. He also pursued separate foreign relations and tried to found a sort of independent state.¹⁴⁸

In Northeastern Greece, İsmail of Serres was the most powerful *ayan* of the region between Northern and Southwestern Rumelia. He is informed to have had many retinues numbered approximately five thousands and *çiftliks* on which cotton production was made densely.¹⁴⁹ As it will be seen in the next chapters, he was the most conspicuous figure in Rumelia. While he is seen to have remained loyal to the state by taking the responsibility of dealing with the banditry, he is accused of having supported clandestinely the idea of decentralization throughout Rumelia.

¹⁴⁵ Gradeva, "Secession and Revolution", p. 79.

¹⁴⁶ McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı", p. 791; Gradeva, "Secession and Revolution", p. 80.

¹⁴⁷ McGowan, "Ayanlar Çağı", p. 791.

¹⁴⁸ Gradeva, "Secession and Revolution", p. 80.

¹⁴⁹ Stoianovich, "Land Tenure", p. 403.

The last *ayan* who seem to have appeared in the last phase of the rise of the *ayans* and the disorders of the late-18th and beginning of the 19th century was Dağdevirenöğlu Mehmed Ağa. He was situated around Edirne and although he came from a humble origin, he was a part of the *kapıkulus* and had the title of *kapıcıbaşı* when he became the *ayan* of Edirne in 1802. Like the other *ayans*, initially, he performed the duties like suppression and settlement of the pardoned bandits and seemed loyal to the state. Then, Edirne was the closest place to İstanbul among the other important centers of the *ayanlık*. Thus, it was under more central surveillance and it was also the headquarter of the Balkans.¹⁵⁰ It is indicated that because of the heavy taxes (the *salmas*) he collected from the local population, he was complained to İstanbul many times and also made bandit-like raids into the adjacent regions like Çorlu and Tekirdağ.¹⁵¹ Due to his *kapıkulu* background, when he became powerful, he is argued to have shown inclination against the military and administrative reforms of the *Nizam-ı Cedid*¹⁵² (New Order) and incited the local people against the arrival of Kadı Abdurrahman with the soldiers of the New Order, by not carrying out the orders of supply of provisions for the forthcoming army. Moreover, in 1806, during the event known as the “Second Edirne Incident” (İkinci Edirne Vakası), he acted as the most important factor in the rebellion against the *Nizam-ı Cedid*, when the other great *ayans* like Tirsinikli İsmail and Yılıkoğlu Süleyman and those of the adjacent areas of Edirne took part in the resistance to the New Order.¹⁵³

As it is understood, before and during the emergence of the mountain banditry, there was a decentralized administrative structure in Rumelia, in which the conditions of

¹⁵⁰ Cemal Gökçe, “Edirne Ayanı Dağdeviren-oğlu Mehmed Ağa” *Tarih Dergisi*, Vol. 17, No. 22 (1967), pp. 97-110, pp. 97-99.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 105, 105-106.

¹⁵² The *Nizam-ı Cedid* units were established first in 1792 and integrated into the *Bostancı Ocağı* in the Janissary organization. Initially, the soldiers of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* were selected from the Janissaries but upon their reluctance against European type of training they were not included into the new system. As their numbers increased, a new barrack was founded in Üsküdar and this new style of soldiers was also extended into some parts of Anatolia, too. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 2064-65. It is indicated that the last partition of Poland in 1795 led to a crucial concern for the Ottoman government since Russia now was able to confront the Ottoman Empire more than before. Moreover, the treaty of Campo Formio in 1797 made France a neighbor of the Ottoman Empire. Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, pp. 259-260.

¹⁵³ Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 100-102.

local population deteriorated as a result of the oppression of the officials, *ayans* and bandits. On the other hand, the region became a war-zone as a result of the two unsuccessful wars with Russia and Austria.

The trend which were to appear in the period of tumult was that while there was a tendency towards establishing kind of autonomous regions either through rebelling against the state or through inter-*ayan* rivalries, the state was attempting to prevent at least one of the *ayans*' rise to preeminence by endeavoring to favor one to another. As it will be seen, throughout the period of unrest, the government would attempt to tolerate the existence of some of troublemakers and seek to collaborate with and coopt them into the Ottoman system while the others were in rebellion against the state.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOUNTAIN BANDITRY

4.1.The Emergence and Features of the Mountain Bandits

4.1.1 The Emergence of the Mountain Bandits

The public order before and during the emergence years of the *kırcalı* or the mountain bandits, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, was chaotic since the central authority was unable to protect and even reach at the provinces any longer. Under these circumstances, many people formed bands or attended the already emergent bandit groups which some of the local notables manipulated for their interests.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the war with Russia and Austria on two fronts between 1787 and 1792 brought about further power vacuum in the province of Rumelia as the state paid more attention to the frontlines rather than the central and remote parts of the province.¹⁵⁵

As Tolga Uğur Esmer cites, Mutaftchieva provides valuable information about the conditions of social life in Rumelia. Accordingly, as the Tatar Khans, like Devlet Giray, had fled from Crimea even before the war of 1768-1774 and had come with their retinues around Eastern Thrace. By joining other militarized groups, there they began plunder and led to the flight of the local population to take refuge in towns and cities along the Maritsa River and the surrounding Balkan and Rhodope mountains, especially around Kırcaali (Kardzali). Accordingly, this brought about a sense which

¹⁵⁴ Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Humayunları*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1942), p. 115.

¹⁵⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 16.

was “to normalize of banditry as a legitimate means of subsistence as well as protest”.¹⁵⁶

However, the exact date of the emergence of the mountain bandits or the *kırcalis* is a bit controversial in the literature. Most of the historical writings associate it to the end of the war with Austria in 1791 and with Russia in 1792. Moreover, as Vera Mutaſchieva notes, if the folklore works in the Bulgarian history are involved, the beginning of the mountain banditry dates even back to the 1770s or 1780s.¹⁵⁷

On the other hand, Stanford J. Shaw mentions about the extension of the activities of the “mountain rebels” between 1787 and 1795.¹⁵⁸ Yet, as many other historians point out, İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı talks about the emergence of the mountain bandits in 1792 and he correlates it to the releasement of the forces of *ayans* after the war of 1787-1792. As the Ottoman army had returned from the battle front, Tahir Pasha was charged against the bandits who had been established around Kırcaali and Hasköy (Haskovo).¹⁵⁹ Similar argument, focusing on a mass defection during the war which led to the emergence of the mountain banditry, was maintained by Colonel Lamouche and A. F. Miller, who were as asserted by Mutaſchieva, affected by the work of Jireček, by giving the same date and arguments.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, A. F. Miller links the start of the banditry to the establishment of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* in 1792. He evaluates it as the most serious threat to the reformation and to the Sultan himself while, on the other hand, accepting the role of the decades-long ruin of agriculture and dispossession of the peasantry from the land.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion”, p. 60.

¹⁵⁷ Мутафчиева, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 49.

¹⁵⁸ Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New*, p. 227.

¹⁵⁹ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Vezir Mehmed Hakkı Paşa*, p. 179.

¹⁶⁰ Kolonel Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi: Başlangıçtan Bugüne Kadar*, trans. Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu, (İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1942), p. 260; A. F. Miller, *Mustapha Pacha Baïraktar*, (Bucarest: Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud-est Européen, 1975), p. 113; Mutaſchieva, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 49. She concludes that this date noted in Jireček's work titled “History of Bolgar”, published in 1871, was actually affected by Leopold v. Ranke's work “the Serbian Revolution”, published in 1829.

¹⁶¹ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, p. 112. Fatih Yeşil indicates that *Nizam-ı Cedid* was related not only to founding a modern army but also to creating new treasures which would bring all the sources the

Besides, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha indicates that the emergence of the mountain bandits was related to the *ayan* rivalry in Rumelia. Accordingly, as they could not afford to meet the expenses of their soldiers, in time, they started to recruit from the bandit groups of the mountains of Kırcaali, from the population of Deliorman and Albania, allowing them to plunder adjacent areas instead of a regular salary.¹⁶²

Yet, in his another work, Uzunçarşılı highlights that the sharp activities of the mountain bandits corresponded to the ends of the Austrian and Russian wars in 1791.¹⁶³ Similarly, Yücel Özkaya assumes that the phenomenon started during the war, even before the peace talks as far as the then available documents are taken into consideration. Because a document from June 1791 speaks of some actions taken against the mountain bandits, he admits that the banditry must have existed before 1791 though not elaborating on how far it could date back.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, he argues that the date given by Uzunçarşılı may refer to the point from which onwards the mountain bandits expanded their numbers and their activities after the eight-month armistice between the Russians and the Ottomans, during which the Ottoman troops were not demobilized that it could incite desertion.¹⁶⁵

As far as the available contemporary Ottoman documents are addressed, it is seen that the mountain bandits emerged before 1791. While a document dating back to December 1785 was the only one between 1785 and 1787, the disposition of the term “*dağlı eşkıyası*” (mountain bandits) within it proves the already existence of the

state had lost long ago into the control of the Palace. Therefore, it was related to the redistribution of wealth and power and the reaction of the local notables to the *Nizam-ı Cedid* differed among them. Unlike Anatolian *ayans* like Karaosmanoğulları and Çapanoğulları who remained loyal to the state in its efforts of founding and strengthening the new army, the Rumelian *ayans* opposed it. *İhtilaller Çağında Osmanlı Ordusu: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyoekonomik ve Sosyopolitik Değişim Üzerine Bir İnceleme (1793-1826)*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2016), p. 6, 207.

¹⁶² Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1821.

¹⁶³ Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa”, (April, 1971), p. 262.

¹⁶⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 1, 5, 21. For the document see BOA. HAT, 211, 11438, 29 Zilhicce 1205 [29 August 1791].

¹⁶⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 22.

mountain bandits during the mid-1780s in Rumelia.¹⁶⁶ By referring Atanasov, Mutaфchieva indicates that in the events in Hasköy in September 1785, in which 700-800 bandits operated under the leadership of Hacı İbrahimoglu, Ak Osman and Kivircikli Halil, according to folk memory, there was the nickname “*kırcalı*”. She also adduces that at the end of October 1785, the banditry became infested around Filibe (Plovdiv), Çırpan (Chirpan), Eski Zağra (Stara Zagora) and Yeni Zağra (Nova Zagora).¹⁶⁷

It is seen that the orders related to the mountain bandits increased throughout 1787, encompassing a large area from Shkoder in Albania to Keşan in Southern Thrace.¹⁶⁸ After a relaxation of disorders of the bandits during 1788, it is understood that around July 1789, the orders against the mountain bandits again intensified, specifying that the bandits emerged once again.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the actual increase in the number of disorders and decrees about the mountain bandits starts from August 1791, when Tahir Pasha was sent against the mountain bandits, and increased through 1792.¹⁷⁰

4.1.2 The Features and of the Mountain Bandits

As already mentioned, from the beginning of the 17th century and especially from the mid-18th century onwards, banditry was not a strange characteristic of the social life in Anatolia and the Balkans.

¹⁶⁶ BOA. C.DH., 309, 15409, 29 Muharrem 1200 [2 December 1785]. The document indicates that before this time, the *kadı* of the district (*kaza*) of Servi had already informed İstanbul of that there had been no mountain bandits in their *kaza* and also indicates that there was still none in their district.

¹⁶⁷ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 62-63. Actually, the abovementioned document speaks of the same bandit leaders. BOA. C.DH., 309, 15409, 29 Muharrem 1200 [2 December 1785].

¹⁶⁸ BOA. C.AS., 334, 13860, 06 Şevval 1201 [22 July 1787]; BOA. AE. SABH.I., 256, 17218, 10 Rebiülevvel 1202 [20 December 1787].

¹⁶⁹ BOA. HAT, 183, 8466, 29 Zilhicce 1203 [20 September 1789].

¹⁷⁰ BOA. HAT, 211, 11438, 29 Zilhicce 1205 [29 August 1791].

Mutafchieva, in order to make a distinction between the previous form of banditry and the emergent mountain banditry, attempts to identify the characteristics of the mountain bandits. According to her, to name an act of banditry as the work of the mountain bandits, the most important elements were “quantitative and qualitative”. Then, the banditry should include an increased human source and an extended area of influence. Accordingly, she informs of the growing number or massiveness of the bandits already in 1780s.¹⁷¹ The events in Northeastern Bulgaria show the typology of the mountain bandits that there was a sort of prevalence of multiple and outright banditry together with the professionalization of the bandits, such as the formation of separate battalions. The new groups were able to capture, rob and burn villages together with destroying several hundred people of the population, which was different than the previous banditries in which a few groups of “*haramis*” and rebels had taken part. However, as she indicates, such methods of mass killings and mass robbery were not inherent in the mountain banditry as a whole.¹⁷²

In addition, for her, the other typical features of the mountain bandits are also seen in the events of the early 1780s. These were the interaction of the bandits with *ayans* and the composition of their battalions mixed socially and ethnically, deemed as a new trait of the bandits.¹⁷³ Apart from Northeastern Bulgaria, established characteristics of the mountain bandits are also seen in the events occurred south of the Balkan Mountains, around Hasköy and Eastern Rhodopes. Here, unlike previous periods, the bandits started to operate through flat areas as well as the mountains with frequent and severe attacks.¹⁷⁴

One of the most important elements in the development of the mountain bandits was the deserters or ex-soldiers of *sekban*-kind. On the example of Kara Feyzi, who was among the upmost troublemakers of the time, the irregular soldiers’ banditry is argued to have been related to their (during and after the war) “being mistreated, abused, denied pay or basic rights to which the subjects of the Ottoman Empire were

¹⁷¹ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 51, 57.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 59.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 60.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 61, 62.

entitled”.¹⁷⁵ To understand the formation of the mountain bandits, it could be beneficial to take into attention Fatih Yeşil’s regard about the mountain bandits. He rather sees them as bands of ex-mercenaries (*sekbans*) who turned into banditry as they became unemployed.¹⁷⁶

After their emergence, these bandits quickly are indicated to have expanded their numbers because the urban and rural populations continuously participated into them as the situation of the Ottoman Empire was open to such formations. Their numbers are said to have reached immediately twenty-five thousand and even exceeded.¹⁷⁷ It is argued that since various *ayans* recruited numerous members of bandits as their retinues, many people tended to participate into banditry for a livelihood. Yücel Özkaya asserts that from a certain point, the bandits under the service of *ayans* in Rumelia became uncontrolled and led to the emergence of the phenomenon.¹⁷⁸ The participation of increasing numbers of large groups of landless people, who are asserted to have never participated in *ayan* battalions, into the banditry was always permanent through which they came back with their shares to their villages after raids.¹⁷⁹

As an example to the bandit patrons, Pazvantoğlu Osman had a great number of them in his service and he also openly patronized and encouraged bandits into pillaging around the adjacent regions of other *ayans* or simply around resourceful territories outside his territory. On the other hand, some of the population became obliged to assist them in fear of plunder and murder.¹⁸⁰ It is maintained that the mountain bandits did not make a distinction between Muslims and Christians and between the rich and poor in their atrocities.¹⁸¹ Mutaфchieva argues that the banditry,

¹⁷⁵ Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion”, p. 51, 55.

¹⁷⁶ Yeşil, *İhtilaller Çağında Osmanlı Ordusu*, p. 36, 37.

¹⁷⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 5; Uzunçarşılı, “Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa”, p. 179; Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi* p. 260; Мутафчиева, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁸ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 18.

¹⁷⁹ Мутафчиева, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 16, 20.

¹⁸¹ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, p. 112.

encompassing thousands of people, emerged and continued to remain as a social phenomenon because it did not have an ideology, an ensuing program and even a focus. It was just for a livelihood and did not intend to bring any change in the existing social order.¹⁸²

In the official documents, the mountain bandits are addressed as “*kırcalı*” or “*kırcalı eşkıyası*” and “*dağlı*” (mountaineers) and, most of the time, as “*dağlı eşkıyası*” (mountain bandits). Ahmed Cevdet Pasha indicates that as the first famous bandits were those who had been recruited from the mountains of Kırcaali, the whole bandits were called “*dağlı eşkıyası*” although they were composed of various nationalities and communities.¹⁸³ In addition, Lamouche mentions that the *kırcalis* emerged firstly from Hasköy and they were composed mostly of Turks, then, Tatars, Albanians, the Bosnians and also Bulgarians.¹⁸⁴ Along with the presence of many Bulgarians within the mountain bandits, it is asserted that among the army-like forces of Pazvantoglu Osman were there Bulgarian cavalry divisions.¹⁸⁵

Moreover, Albanian *sekbans* were among the most important elements of the mountain bandits or, in general, of banditry and unrest in the Balkans. Since the “*ayans* and *derebeys*” (great families of local notables) made use of the bandits and the Albanian *sekbans*, the *dağlı* movement is argued to have rapidly spread all around the Rumelian province.¹⁸⁶ According to Frederick F. Anscombe, most of the mountain bandits were Albanians. Their banditry had already spread in the 1770s and 1780s but peaked between the 1790s and 1800s. Because of the poverty of Albanian-inhabited territories, it is suggested that the wars of the late-18th century aggravated the burdensome nature of life in Albania and forced many of them who were armed to seek whatever means were possible for a living. Around the beginning of the 1790s, the Albanian bandits composed nearly of 1500-2000 men were wandering

¹⁸² Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 41.

¹⁸³ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1821. It is argued that as they generally hid in the mountains and attack the surrounding regions and came back again their places there, they were called “*dağlı eşkıyası*”. Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion”, p. 61.

¹⁸⁴ Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 260.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 262; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 20.

around the present-day Macedonia, leading to disorders and thus to the migration of the population.¹⁸⁷ Then, it was a widespread practice to use Albanians as private retainers by the *ayans*, state officials as well as by the state in times of wars or against the campaigns on the bandits. Here, the problem is that the Albanians, especially those who were sent against the mountain bandits, could change side and participate into them.¹⁸⁸ In addition, among the mountain bandits, there were numerous deserter soldiers of Anatolian origin who could not reach Anatolia. These Anatolian recruits are asserted to have been strangers to the lands of Rumelia and did not know the farming or other jobs there. Therefore, being out of livelihood, in time, they mixed with the mountain bandits.¹⁸⁹

As for the equipment and organization of the mountain bandits, they are indicated to have been armed with sword, handgun and rifles and composed of both infantry and cavalries under the formation of *bölüks* (companies) commanded by *bölükbaşı*s (officers), similar to the formation of the *Celali-levends*. These companies or battalions could merge and make combined action, reaching thousands of soldiers.¹⁹⁰ The other important thing in the banditry is that they remained active mainly in the summer season. If Kara Feyzi and Deli Kadri are taken examples, they usually attempted to obtain an official pardon before winters.¹⁹¹ As spring started, the bandits raided and plundered villages and even cities. In some examples, they are asserted to have destroyed some settlements completely and kidnapped some women while killing men.¹⁹² It was a common practice of the mountain bandits to request funds from a village or a region through sending a *tezkere*, threatening to attack the settlement if they were not satisfied with the requested sum.¹⁹³ According to the

¹⁸⁷ Frederick F. Anscombe, "Albanians and 'Mountain Bandits'", in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), pp. 87-113, pp. 87-90.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 91. Actually, the bandits, who came under the services of a prominent man, themselves were not bound to any binding loyalty. Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 86.

¹⁸⁹ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁹⁰ Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 260, Мутафчиева, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 64.

¹⁹¹ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 111.

¹⁹² Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 261.

¹⁹³ Мутафчиева, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 104.

Marxist history writing in Bulgaria, as Mutafchieva informs, it is asserted that many flourishing industrially and commercially rich cities were destroyed and ruined. Therefore, industry and commerce stopped because of the mountain bandits.¹⁹⁴

Geographically, the disorders caused by the activities of the mountain bandits occurred mainly on three areas in Rumelia, within much of the present-day Bulgaria. One was around the Rhodopes that the banditry intensified on the Maritsa River line, mainly from Samokov down through Filibe, Hasköy, Edirne to Gelibolu area and in the last phase of the banditry to the capital. The other one was around the western line of the Black Sea, encompassing mainly, Dobriç (Dobrich), Varna, Şumnu (Shumen), Burgaz or Bergos (Burgas) and their hinterlands. The last one was around the northern line of the Balkan Mountains, encompassing mainly Plevne (Pleven), Lofça (Lovech), Zıştovi (Svishtov), Selvi (Sevlievo), Tırnova (Tarnovo) and Rusçuk (Ruse), where, together with the hinterland regions of Eastern Rumelia, the frequent reports about the activities of the mountain bandits seem to have concentrated. They also spread into Wallachia and exceptionally, extended into the present-day Macedonia and even into Albania.¹⁹⁵

4.2.The Development of the Mountain Banditry

4.2.1 Between 1785 and 1791

At the end of October 1785, the bandits had already infested in Central Bulgaria, attacking the villages around Filibe, Çırpan, Eski Zağra and Yeni Zağra. As being pursued by *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne, they settled to fight in Kızanlık (Kazanluk) and took shelter in another troublemaker called Kuru Hasan. Here, numerous bands

¹⁹⁴ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁵ Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi, 1774-1912*, trans. Nilüfer Epçeli, Vol. 5, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005), p. 104. The Mountain banditry in the region of Albania is seen especially during the first years of the unrest. For example, for the disorders in Albania around the end of 1787 and beginning of 1788 see BOA. AE. SABH.I., 256, 17218, 10 Rebiülevvel 1202 [20 December 1787]; BOA. C.ZB., 57, 2812, 30 Rebiülevvel 1202 [9 January 1788].

entered into open conflict with local militia of Eski Zağra on 25 October 1785 and receded where they were surrounded and much of them were destroyed by the local militia. However, the remaining bandits from the battle were able to escape and spread throughout northern Thrace.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, before the end of 1785, due to the rivalry for the legal *ayanlık* of Rusçuk and Eski Cuma (Targovishte) in Northeastern Bulgaria, there appeared the disorders of the *ayans* who are asserted to have already had close relationship with *kırcalı* battalions.¹⁹⁷

By 1786, except for Northwestern Bulgaria, the anarchy had spread over Central and Northeastern Bulgaria, Northern and Eastern Thrace and even over Western Macedonia. In June 1786, the *kırcalı* chiefs around the regions of Şumnu and Deliorman together with those of the city of Yeni Pazar (Novi Pazar, east of Şumnu) are indicated to have planned to attack the city of Şumnu. Therefore, the government entrusted a *haseki* who resided in Osman Pazarı (Omurtag, south of Şumnu) with the defense of the city. Accordingly, by the help of the *kadı* of the city, he was to organize the local people in fortifying the city and preparing defensive measures against the bandits. However, the bandits were able to take the city and thus the *kadı* and the *haseki*.¹⁹⁸

It is assumed that during the eve of the war with Russia and Austria between 1787 and 1792, the government gave its priority over the frontier region of the Danube line. Therefore, the order around Vidin and Rusçuk is suggested to have been more important so that the fighting capacity was not undermined. Thus, the disorders throughout the rest of Rumelia were not possible to be resisted equally everywhere by the government. Consequently, the wartime is indicated to have escalated the unrest in Rumelia.¹⁹⁹

Moreover, the reason of the increasing activities of banditry in Rumelia is asserted to have been also due to the mass desertion of “*delis*” or “*delils*” (paid soldiers) from

¹⁹⁶ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 63.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 65.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 70-71, p. 66.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 71.

the Ottoman army. It is maintained that they had already formed separate components in the disorders, nevertheless, there is no evidence of the “delis” after 1790.²⁰⁰ Accordingly, it is suggested that they either participated into the retinues of the local notables or to the mountain bandits. During the time, Northeastern Bulgaria became a region of waypoint for deserters’ spread into surrounding areas and there emerged new individual bandits who were not from the region of northern Bulgaria.²⁰¹

It is pointed out that the region of Yambol and Edirne had been completely ruined by numerous attacks of the mountain bandits and till the mid-1790s, as one of the characteristics of the mountain bandits, the main activities became around raiding and pillaging villages and merchants of the fairs that they chose the most vulnerable targets which could provide them booty. For example, in June 1791, while the war of 1787 and 1792 still ongoing, the mountain bandits attacked the merchants and the passengers who were on the way to or from the fair of İslimye (Sliven).²⁰²

Moreover, around the end of the year, the bandits under one of the renowned bandit leaders called Deli (literally, madman) Kadri and his companies raided and plundered the villages around the region of Edirne. During the counteroffensive against them, it is pointed out that rather than escaping the combat, the bandits resorted to counter offensive by setting fire the surrounding of the villages.²⁰³

Alper Başer, by referring to Asım Efendi and, through citing from Kemal Beydilli, to Hafız Mehmet Efendi, argues that the emergence and development of the banditry was related to the insufficiency of the Edirne *bostancı ocağı* which, as provided by Murat Yıldız, controlled forty eight districts around Edirne.²⁰⁴

Between 1785 and 1792, as banditry came to spread over much of the present-day Bulgaria and other parts of Rumelia, some of the features of the mountain banditry

²⁰⁰ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 72-74.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 86.

²⁰² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 21.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Alper Başer, *Eşkîyalıktan Ayanlığa Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi Yayınları, 2014), p. 14.

became established such as escaping the battles when they were about to be terminated and their interaction with the *ayans* and other troublesome figures like Kuru Hasan. Moreover, they showed a tendency to raid vulnerable but profitable targets like villages and fairs. Lastly, the ex-soldiers (deserters) became a crucial part of the mountain banditry, constituting the actual martial section.

4.2.2 Between 1792 and 1795

As already mentioned, some historians correlate the mountain banditry to the strong reaction against the reforms of the *Nizam-ı Cedid*. After the peace, therefore, it is asserted that the unrest in Rumelia took a new stage.²⁰⁵ For example, as mentioned before, three major outbreaks of secession occurred in the northern and Western Balkans, respectively in Belgrade, Vidin and Shkoder in the early 1790s.²⁰⁶

By the beginning of 1793, it became established that separate *kırcalı* battalions united and began to tribute the productive population, thus, leading Rumelia to fall into anarchy.²⁰⁷ It is stated that during the period throughout 1792 and 1793, the banditry in Rumelia peaked and gained regional characteristics. For example, in Northern Bulgaria large scale disorders occurred through unified large military compounds. In Northeastern Bulgaria, the interaction between local *ayans* and the bandits became obvious while in Northwestern Bulgaria, the anarchy included different troubled forces like the *kırcalis*, the Janissaries or local rural population. However, unlike Northern Bulgaria, throughout Southern Bulgaria the bandits acted separately and temporarily. Here, the unions were more perishable than that of Northern Bulgaria and their actions were inconsistent with each other. Some of the

²⁰⁵ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 92.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 102, 104.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 104, 107.

elements were the locals who are said to have went back to their original places after the lootings.²⁰⁸

Similarly, the mid-1790s is identified with the consolidation of the mountain bandits through growing number of battalions as a result of unification. Then, a bandit group composed of four hundred men is deemed as a helpless band. Such a band could be defenseless against both other compounds and government troops that in Rumelia there was no room for them.²⁰⁹ During 1794, it seems that the activities of the bandits increased and even reached to Gelibolu. In May, after having ruined some of the villages on the way to the center of the district, if their requests were not made, they even threatened to attack the town of Gelibolu, where a *baruthane* (gunpowder mill) and a *peksimathane* (hardtack house) were located. In the case of Gelibolu, it is seen that the bandits sent some *tezkires* (request letters) to the settlements before assaulting.²¹⁰

Because of the increasing banditry during 1794, people started to move safer places, aggravating both the destruction of production around Rumelia and the loss of income on the part of the state. It is argued that in order to prevent this, the state made some unsuccessful efforts by issuing orders to resettle the population as the banditry was not over yet.²¹¹ According to a document sent to the governor of Silistre in September 1794, some of the villages in Filibe became empty and their population fled to Wallachia. In this case, the government appealed to the migrators by repairing their houses which had been burned down during the bandit raids. Moreover, it was underlined that the people were not to be charged with the payment of the repair and they were also to be spared from the taxes like *tekalif-i şakka*.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 116, 117.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 129-130.

²¹⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 26.

²¹¹ Ibid, p. 27, 71.

²¹² Ibid, p. 28.

To prevent the migration of people, the state from time to time appealed to people by sparing them from taxes like *tekalif-i şakka* and *örfiye* or demanding lesser amounts and by repairing their buildings.²¹³

As it is argued, the banditry became a part of a scheme against the *Nizam-i Cedid* and by spreading even to Gelibolu, they led to the migration of some of the population. To prevent this, the government sought to bring the people back. On the other hand, as a distinct feature, the bandits started to send some lists to settlements, indicating of their requests.

4.2.3 Between 1795 and 1803

With the year of 1795, it is seen that the mountain banditry became, to greater extent, associated with the *ayanlık* and the bandits started to raid even the cities and towns like Plevne and Lofça. The rebellion of Pazvantoğlu Osman in Vidin had an important role in the extension of the banditry through his protection and patronizing of the bandits around north of the Balkan Mountains. Some of his famous associates were the two leaders of the mountain bandits Macar Ali and Gavur İmam. Moreover, there were lesser influential bandit leaders like Rami Bayraktar, Poriçeli, Çanak Veli Muslu, Kara Mustafa²¹⁴, who made raids and plunders on behalf of Pazvantoğlu Osman.²¹⁵ Moreover, Pazvantoğlu was regarded as the center of opposition to the reforms of Selim III that he brought in Vidin various groups of dissidents, such as the *yamaks* (the Janissaries stationed in border fortresses) who had been banned from

²¹³ For example, in addition to 1794, in April 1797, the village of Akçakenisa or Akçakilise in Filibe was spared from the taxes of *tekâlif-i örfiye* and *şakka*. BOA. C.ML., 96, 4305, 18 Ramazan 1211 [17 April 1797]. Moreover, in some cases, the taxes were collected less. See BOA. C.ML., 711, 29049, 02 Cemaziyelahir 1215 [21 October 1800]. On the other hand, the state was attentive to the repair or reconstruction of the churches ravaged by the bandits. See BOA. HAT, 1462, 81, 29 Zilhicce 1210 [5 July 1796]; BOA. C.ADL., 88, 5300, 17 Zilkade 1213 [22 April 1799]; BOA. HAT, 1480, 30, 29 Zilhicce 1215 [13 May 1801]; BOA. C. ADL., 9, 589, 29 Safer 1219 [9 June 1804].

²¹⁴ “Kara” was a widespread sobriquet of the time used by the mountain bandits. As cited in Esmer, according to J.H. Kramer’s definition, “kara” could be related to the affiliation with dark hair and skin or with strength and power as Kara Mustafa Pasha who besieged Vienna in 1683. Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion”, p. 15.

²¹⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 32.

Belgrade.²¹⁶ By this way, he was able to form army-like bandit groups organized under battalions which were composed of Albanian, Bulgarian and Bosnian bandits. They raided and plundered the adjacent regions in order to extend the sphere of influence and territory of Pazvantoğlu.²¹⁷

It is asserted that beginning with 1796, the mountain banditry reached at its highest peak which was to last four years, in which new bandit leaders appeared.²¹⁸ On the other hand, as Başer argues, from 1796 onwards, the mountain bandits were separated into two groups. Thus, one part of the bandits was composed of those who cooperated with Pazvantoğlu Osman and the other part was consisted of those who had conflicts with and were defeated by Tokatçıklı Süleyman. Apart from them, there were some unconfined ones who, from time to time, either worked with Pazvantoğlu Osman and Tokatçıklı Süleyman or conflicted with him.²¹⁹

In September 1796, thus, the districts along the Danube line (*Tuna Boyu* or *Tuna Yalısı*) such as Plevne, Lofça, Selvi, Niğbolu (Nikopol) and Tırnova and the region of Wallachia came under constant bandit activities while some of them like Lofça were able to resist. Again, in August, the bandits of Pazvantoğlu made raids in the Danube line and because they were not resisted through a determined response by the government, the scale of banditry increased around this part of Rumelia and reached at various directions till Rusçuk, Şumnu, Varna, to the east towards the Black Sea; to Wallachia on the north, to Belgrade on the west; and to Sofia on the south stretching behind the Balkan Mountains.²²⁰ It is asserted that because of the fact that it turned out to be a struggle for the redistribution of land and expanding influence and suzerainty for mastery of Northern Bulgaria, the mountain banditry reached at a point that attracted even the attention of the European powers.²²¹

²¹⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, pp. 32-33.

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 33-34.

²¹⁸ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 159; Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 28.

²¹⁹ Alper Başer, *Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, p.23.

²²⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, pp. 43-45, 47.

²²¹ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 159-160.

Therefore, once the bandits were defeated throughout Rumelia, they tend to return and take shelter in Vidin. During 1797, Tirsinikli İsmail appeared as a barrier against the expansion of Pazvantoğlu Osman's the activities along the Danube River. For example, as the men of Pazvantoğlu raided a village close to Rusçuk and requested the surrender of the city, while it was heard that some three thousand men were to participate to these bandits from Vidin, Tirsinikli refused the surrender and by the support of the local people, he was able to repel Pazvantoğlu's men. Then, some of the cities like Tırnova, Zıştovi and Selvi, which had been occupied by the bandits, were rescued through a counter-offensive by Tirsinikli although this would not last long.²²²

As a result of the consequent siege of Pazvantoğlu Osman in Vidin in 1798, the banditry is asserted to have been once again able to reinforce itself since the war efforts which had necessitated money and soldiers from the local population contributed to the participation of local people into banditry. In addition, the deserter forces who were from among those brought from Anatolia for the siege could not able to return. Anatolia. Thus, they increased the human reserve of the mountain bandits in Rumelia.²²³

During 1799, the activities of the bandits increasingly spread down to the region around Edirne. On 23 June, after having plundered the merchants of the fair of İslimye, they continued to expand into Burgaz by Filibeli Mustafa, Hızır and Manav İbrahim on the one hand, and into Kırkkilise on the other by Kara Feyzi, Cenkçioğlu and İsaoglu, who were among the most famous and elusive bandit leaders.²²⁴ It is argued that Kara Feyzi may have pursued a policy of making himself a local *ayan* in Hasköy or in another city around the Maritsa River valley.²²⁵

Around the same region, another figure comes into the issue of banditry. As being among the Crimean princes, Mehmed Giray encouraged the mountain bandits and

²²² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 43, 47.

²²³ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 211.

²²⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 59-60.

²²⁵ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 17.

made banditry on himself. He is said to have raided and plundered the district Eski Cuma with a five to six thousand bandits and stayed there for forty to fifty days-long and burned numerous villages.²²⁶ Moreover, around 1800, Mehmed Giray led to disorders around Şumnu and Hezargrad (Razgrad) with his numerous Albanian troops and with the support of the mountain bandits. While he was defeated at the end of the battles, he remained a potential threat that he could rally around him a large number of bandits.²²⁷

Meanwhile, Kara Feyzi's attacks in the richest regions of Thrace with four to five thousands brigands under a single command are argued to be the new feature of the mountain banditry. Mutaftchieva categorizes Kara Feyzi's act as not a *kırcalı* attack but a real march of an army of the mountain bandits. Consequently, during 1801 and 1802, by settling between Edirne and İstanbul, they had severed any relationship with Edirne and the capital.²²⁸

As it is seen, between 1795 and 1803, the activities of the bandits focused mainly on the regions where *ayan* rivalry and expansion occurred in Northern Bulgaria. Therefore, Pazvantoğlu Osman became a patron for the banditry. On the other hand, some individual bandit groups even threatened the capital through infesting the region around Edirne. Moreover, a new component was included into the banditry as Mehmed Giray created uproar through coordination with the mountain bandits and Pazvantoğlu Osman.

4.2.4 Between 1803 and 1808

While the main areas of banditry had so far concentrated around the Maritsa River, Western Thrace and the north of the Balkan Mountains, after 1803, the activities of

²²⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 59-60, p. 64.

²²⁷ Ibid, pp. 62-65.

²²⁸ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 230-231, 233; Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", pp. 248-251.

the bandits even spread to the outskirts of İstanbul.²²⁹ Actually, as asserted by Mutaftchieva, by the end of 1805, in Northern Bulgaria, the power structure no longer allowed the disorders in its purest form and only in exceptional cases, the banditry occurred in this region.²³⁰ As it will be seen in the state responses against the banditry in the next chapter, the banditry around 1803 and 1804 came more or less to a halt after being defeated by the *Nizam-ı Cedid* forces. Thus, the banditry entered into a phase in which some individual bandit leaders continued to ravage around Edirne, in pursuit of appointments to the *ayanlıks* of some districts.

However, during 1805, it is seen that the scale of banditry again increased due to the rebellious activities of Tirsinikli İsmail. Like Pazvantoglu Osman, he too rebelled, made raids and attempted to extend his area of influence along the eastern coast of Rumelia. Hence, the banditry spread again into the region of Edirne.²³¹ On the other hand, while making disorders in Eastern Rumelia along the Black Sea region, by inciting the *ayans*, the population, the Janissaries and the mountain bandits around Edirne, he is asserted to have led to the outbreak of the “Second Edirne Event”. Nevertheless, meanwhile, he was killed and his death is asserted to have created fear among the bandits and the opponents of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers, which were sent to suppress the mountain bandits and to curb the power of the *ayans* in Rumelia.²³²

It is put forward that the Edirne Event was the last act of anarchy in Rumelia, which followed the consolidation of centrifugal forces in the empire and preceded the war with Russia in 1806, in which many of the *ayans* participated. Moreover, by referring to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, Mutaftchieva claims that these *ayans* actually wanted the anarchy to end in Rumelia. Accordingly, as they had strengthened their economic position and recruited enough troops, now, they needed some sort of peace through the approval of their existence by the central government. This would be established

²²⁹ Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa”, (April, 1971), pp. 61-62.

²³⁰ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 327.

²³¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 97.

²³² Ibid, p. 99; Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 267.

through the *Sened-i İttifak* (the Deed of Alliance), which was signed between the sultan and the prominent *ayans* of Rumelia and Anatolia. However, it lasted short.²³³

4.3.The State Measures Against the Emergence and Development of the Mountain Banditry

4.3.1 Between 1785 and 1791

Mutafchieva indicates that through the evolution of the banditry towards the *kırcalis* or the mountain banditry between especially 1780 and 1785, the traditional countermeasures had totally failed against the new phenomenon. Accordingly, these traditional measures were mutual guarantee or surety of the population and granting amnesty. Therefore, new countermeasures were added such as sending special punitive troops and calling for resistance of the local population against abusers (*nefir-i amm*).²³⁴

On the other hand, as it is mentioned in the part related to the development of the mountain banditry, the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne was on the pursuit of the bandits around 1785 and a *haseki* was charged with organizing the resistance by the local population of Şumnu against the attack of the bandits on the city.

Similarly, according to a document dating back 8 July 1787, to wipe out the bandits in Dimetoka, Gümülcine, Sultanyeri, Hasköy and Çirmen districts, it is again seen that the state charged the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne and a special *haseki* (*mahsus haseki*). However, the *haseki* is seen to have requested from the aforementioned districts' *ağas* about seventy to eighty purses of *akçes* for himself and a hundred

²³³ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 359-362, 365-370.

²³⁴ Ibid, pp. 57-58, 64.

akçes for the *bostancıbaşı* to be collected from the local population for the service of the two officials.²³⁵

Nevertheless, the state is argued to have been unable to effectively handle the problem of banditry during the war of 1787-1792 since available means and the attention of the government were concentrated on the war.

4.3.2 Between 1791 and 1795

After the peace treaties of Svishtov with Austria in 1791 and Iasi with Russia in 1792, the government was able to deal definitely with the banditry since it could divert its resources and military personnel now available to send on the bandits.²³⁶ Moreover, from now on, apart from the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne, some special agents were entrusted against the mountain bandits. The most important figure seems to have been the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen, (Ormenio, near Edirne in present-day Greece) who was often charged with the fulfillment of special orders sent by the central government. Besides the exceptions, the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen is seen in official documents most often as “*dağlı üzerine memur*” (entrusted against the mountain bandits). Subordinate to him seems to have been the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne, who also engaged constantly in the fulfillment of the orders. From time to time, the governors of Silistre were also made responsible against the bandits.

Furthermore, aside from the high-ranking members of the military-administrative class, the other figures were the *kadıs* and *naibs* who organized the state needs and inform the population about the precautions against the mountain bandits. Moreover, there were *voyvodas* who could also be regarded as part of the state apparatus although most of them were selected from the local notables. Yet, the most important element against the bandits seems to have been the role of the *ayans* along with the other local notables and influential members of the provincial population. The *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen and the other pashas were constantly ordered to organize and

²³⁵ BOA. C.DH., 313, 15601, 22 Ramazan 1201 [8 July 1787].

²³⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 21; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 94.

collaborate with the *ayans* who, according to the requested precautions, had to assist them in the fight and pursuit of bandits.

It can be identified that rather than sending a standing army who could pursuit and fight against the bandits, from the beginning onwards, the *bostancıbaşı*s of Edirne, the *mutasarrıf*s of Çirmen and later the governors of Rumelia recruited soldiers from the local population or from the Albanians. In addition, the *ayans* seem to have been incorporated into the fight against the banditry by providing soldiers and sometimes leading them into the fight and pursuit of bandits.

It can be noticed that the methods which would be used during the 1790s were well under practice even in 1791. Then, Tahir Pasha as the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen was entrusted against the mountain bandits. In order to confront the *dağlı* leaders of Hacı İbrahimoğlu Bilal, Kör Yusuf and others, he was ordered to organize a *nefir-i amm* in the districts of Filibe, Eski Zağra and Çırpan. Moreover, the *voyvodas* of the districts of Dimetoka (Didimoticho), Sultanyeri (Krumovgrad), Gümülcine (Komotini) and Ahiçelebi (Smolyan) were to protect the borders of the districts. In addition, the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne and the *ayans* of Dimetoka, Sultanyeri, Ahiçelebi, Filibe, Çırpan, Eski Zağra, Yeni Zağra, Çirmen, Akçakızanlık (in Çirmen), Hasköy, Uzuncaabad (in Hasköy) were to provide soldiers to confront the bandits.²³⁷ Also, Tahir Pasha was to recruit 1500 *sekbans* and to pursuit the bandits and also the deserter soldiers who had escaped during the war to the Balkan Mountains.²³⁸

However, since Tahir Pasha is asserted to have had disagreements with the *ayans*, they wanted him to be replaced by Alaaddin Pasha. Here, it is important that the pashas directly entrusted by the state against the banditry would show characteristics of frequent dismissals and replacements as it is seen with Alaaddin Pasha, too. He was dismissed in a short time due to the charges and complaints by the *ayans*.²³⁹ It was because of the fact that while he was ordered to cooperate with the *ayans* and

²³⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 21.

²³⁸ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

²³⁹ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 181. He suggests that as the *ayans* aware of the fact that after the bandits, the state could also do away with the *ayans*, they did now want suppression of the mountain banditry.

given large number of soldiers under his command, he was accused of being greedy and of illegal extraction and oppression.²⁴⁰

According to a document, it was suggested that the selection of the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen was better to be from among the mighty viziers who were fair, moderate and not covetous. Moreover, rather than *nefir-i amm* soldiers, *sekbans* with salaries were advised, whose payments were to be collected from the population according to their means.²⁴¹

After Alaaddin Pasha, in 1792, Hamamizade Ahmed Pasha was appointed as the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen against the bandits and elevated to vizierate. Nonetheless, he was immediately sent against the *yamaks* in Belgrade as the warden. After him, the governor of Silistre, Zihneli Hasan Pasha was entrusted against the bandits through the addition of the office of Çirmen *mutasarrıflık* into his post.²⁴²

During 1793, the government requested a coordinated counteroffensive against the bandits and the governor of Silistre and *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen, Zihneli Hasan Pasha and the governor of Rumelia were ordered to collaborate together with other officials and to confront and pursuit the bandits. Besides, the bandits escaping to Albania were ordered to be prevented from their direction by the closing the *derbends* of Lofça, Cuma and Samokov; the roads around Sofia by the *mütesellim* of Sofia and the roads around Manastır (Bitola). In addition, some of the *ayans* were requested to enter into the service of these governors. Here, the *ayans* were informed that they were to meet the expenses of their own troops.²⁴³ This could limit their effectiveness or lead them not to participate in the fights.

²⁴⁰ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 181.

²⁴¹ ".....vüzera-yı azamdan munsif ve mutedil ve tama'-i hamdan arî bir vezir Çirmen sancağı tevcih ve maiyetine derme çatma nefir-i amm askeri uğratmayub Sarigül ve havalisinden mahiye ile sekban tahrir ve mahiyeleri masarif-i kesireye muhtaç olduğu halde etraf ve havalî kazalardan hal ve töhmetlerine göre tasrih olunarak ba-emr-i 'âlî mahiyeleri tahsil ..." BOA. C.DH., 93, 4662, 03 Rebiülahir 1207 [18 November 1792].

²⁴² Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1490.

²⁴³ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 23.

Yet, the *ayans* were also ordered to get ready through procuring proportionate soldiers.²⁴⁴ Moreover, a *nefir-i amm* was asked to be organized, in which local soldiers were ordered to move against the bandits rather than remaining on the defensive. However, it is stated that as such calls failed since the population lacked the weapons which the brigands and the troubled Janissaries had, the government provided firearms for the *reaya*, regardless of their nationality and religion.²⁴⁵

As another method to curb the banditry, by the end of 1793, first amnesty for the mountain bandits was resorted due to the realization of the state's inability to control Rumelia.²⁴⁶ The *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne was charged with negotiating secretly with some of the bandit leaders. In return for amnesty, the bandits had to be settled around the districts or in the villages. However, they did not obey their promises and began their plunders around Hasköy and Filibe.²⁴⁷ Therefore, the amnesty remained dull for nearly three years since during which time the conditions did not change. The act of the state is interpreted by Mutaftchieva as a "tactical response" to the rise of Pazvantoglu Osman, who is deemed to have become more dangerous than the banditry for the state.²⁴⁸

Due to Zihneli Hasan Pasha's failure against the mountain bandits and the continuation of the banditry, the suppression of it was given to Ali Pasha through the office of the *mutasarrıflık* of Çirmen. It is asserted that as the government concern turned to appoint an influential vizier, the previous Warden of Vidin, Vizier Ali Pasha was preferred. Moreover, the government took care of enhancing his power through appointing the soldiers close to his region under his service and through an increase in his wealth and military supplies. Later, the province of Karaman was also given to him in order to increase his wealth.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 23.

²⁴⁵ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 114.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 117.

²⁴⁷ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, pp. 1490-1491.

²⁴⁸ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 122.

²⁴⁹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, pp. 1490-1491, 1494.

Nevertheless, during 1794, it can be regarded that the state measures revolved mainly around the assistance of the *ayans*. Some of the *kazas*, such as Dobruca, Pazarcık (Pazardzhik), Filibe, Çırpan, Akçekızanlık, Eski Zağra, Yeni Zağra, Selvi, Nevahi-i Yanık and Çirmen, which were adjacent to where the bandits situated and made plunders, were ordered to provide with soldiers and to sent them into the service of Ali Pasha. In the case of Ali Pasha, it can be inferred that he was determined to confront the bandits. For example, after the combats with the bandits around Pazarcık and killing of a great deal of them, he pursued them relentlessly till some of the villages in Gümölcine. Afterwards, in another case, he soon responded to the mountain bandits situated back in Hasköy. Similarly, as the bandits escaped to one of the villages of Nevrekop (Gotse Delchev), he pursued and forced them into another retreat.²⁵⁰ The escape of the bandits after the officials defeated them was a problematic trait of the bandits. Therefore, although the officials or the *ayans* pursued them, they were not always successful at destroying them completely.

As Özkaya argues, from a document dating back August 1794, it is understood that the government was determined to wipe out the banditry in Rumelia. Here, from the passage addressing to Ali Pasha, “*dağlı namı işidilmeyecek vechile cümlesinin idam ve izaleye ve şu günlerde külliye gaileyi bitirüb*”, it can be assumed that the state was in a hurry to finish it.²⁵¹ Consequently, during 1794, the bandits were encircled from all sides and, in return, the bandits around the south of the Rhodopes again requested amnesty. This request of the bandits made Ali Pasha to believe that the problem of mountain banditry was resolved. However, the pardons granted by the state to the bandits was becoming a temporary solution, through which the bandits remained silent for a while although they continued the same disorders afterwards. Thus, Ali Pasha’s mercy for the bandits is argued to have led him to be replaced by Hacı Abdi Pasha as the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen.²⁵²

During the time of Hacı Abdi Pasha, it is indicated that the relationship between the *ayans* and the mountain bandits was found out by him. Thus, he attempted to break

²⁵⁰ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, pp. 1494-1495.

²⁵¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 27.

²⁵² Ibid, p. 28-29. Also, see BOA. HAT, 74, 3079, 15 Rebiülahir 1209 [9 November 1794].

this union.²⁵³ After all, by assuming he would not overcome the bandit leaders, such as Hacı Manav, under such a condition, he attempted to recruit into his retinue and brought them to Silistre. However, the interesting thing here is that, as he did not trust the bandits of Hacı Manav, Hacı Abdi Pasha later organized an attack on them in Yeni Pazar with the help of the *ayans* of Şumnu and Hezargrad. Nevertheless, Hacı Manav was able to escape with a few bandits from the combat and passed to Gümülcine.²⁵⁴ It can be concluded that this kind of acts against the bandits could incite them to interpret amnesties as null. Therefore, to expect the mountain bandits easily and full-heartedly to remain peaceful where they were resettled was hardly possible.

As Hacı Abdi Pasha remained in Silistre after the escape of the bandits southwards, the bandits now turned their attention around Edirne.²⁵⁵ As in this case, the movement of the mountain bandits from one region to another was a crucial problem to overcome. Therefore, the role of the *ayans* in restricting their movement through the control of the roads and passes was significant.

Another important element in the continuation of the mountain banditry in Rumelia was the distractions while the state was engaging in the banditry. Now, it had to cope also with the disorders in Vidin and Belgrade, in which Pazvantoğlu Osman played crucial roles.²⁵⁶ His forces gathered in Vidin acted across the *paşalık* of Belgrade and became threatening. As a result of his activities, the government is asserted to have been forced to tolerate the arbitrariness of some of the bandit leaders wandering around Southern Bulgaria.²⁵⁷

To sum up, between 1791 and 1795, the state appointed the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen against the mountain bandits and attempted to raise his financial and military power. Nevertheless, the officials who were given the special duty of repressing the bandits

²⁵³ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 136.

²⁵⁴ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 182.

²⁵⁵ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1585.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 1585.

²⁵⁷ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 124, 125.

were frequently replaced by another. This shows that the government did not have a definite and effective program against the banditry. Thus, frequent replacements would eventually undermine the power of the offices of these men who were charged against the mountain bandits. Also, they would encourage the *ayans* to demand the dismissal of a governor or *mutasarrıf*. On the other hand, the amnesty of 1793 did not prevent the banditry and the state, most of the time, attempted to seek the help of the *ayans* in the confrontation and pursuit of the bandits. Moreover, the distractions like the rebellion of Pazvantoğlu Osman and that of Kara Mahmud inhibited the effectiveness of the government against the banditry.

4.3.3 Between 1795 and 1800

As it is mentioned before, Pazvantoğlu Osman was using the mountain bandits and the *yamaks* of Belgrade against other *ayans* and against the warden of Belgrade. Thus, during 1795, his presence became an obstacle for the resolution of the banditry. Therefore, two years after the general amnesty, the government took an initiative to smash Pazvantoğlu. For that, Gürcü Osman Pasha was appointed as the warden of Vidin and ordered to form an army from the local population around Niğbolu. This army was to subdue Vidin.²⁵⁸ Moreover, the governor of Rumelia, Hacı Mustafa Pasha and the nephew of Tepedelenli Ali, Mehmed Pasha were ordered to assist Gürcü Osman Pasha. Nevertheless, it is argued that the two pashas did not get along with and due to the forthcoming winter, the siege of Vidin became unsuccessful.²⁵⁹

Thus, as an already established practice of the time, the amnesty for Pazvantoğlu was requested formulaically by the population and the former warden of Vidin, Pekmezcizade Mehmed Pasha. In response, the sultan approved the pardon as Pazvantoğlu had not been crushed while the problem of banditry was still ongoing. Accordingly, Pazvantoğlu Osman would not support the *yamaks* of Belgrade and

²⁵⁸ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1586.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 1587.

would not attack the districts around his territories. Moreover, he would have to obey the orders of the warden of Vidin.²⁶⁰ The pardon of him was related not only to the military failure of the aforementioned pashas but also to the external developments in Europe and Iran. That is why the government is argued to have planned to pacify at least the trouble of Pazvantoğlu. Meanwhile, as the state was engaging in the issue of Vidin, the rear regions had come to be insecure and around Eastern Balkans, the events of the bandits increased.²⁶¹

It is implied that the state had been so far determined to concentrate his efforts on one side of the troublemakers, either the rebellious *ayans* like Pazvantoğlu Osman and Kara Mahmud Pasha or the mountain bandits. Thus, after the pardon of Pazvantoğlu in February 1796, the state cancelled the general amnesty decreed in 1793 and started new offensive against the bandits.²⁶² Another factor argued for the revocation of the amnesty was that after 1796, the battalions of the bandits attacked even major cities such as Gümülcine, Filibe, Pazarcık, Dimetoka and settled in Hasköy, Sultanyeri, Gümülcine and Ahıçelebi, approaching towards Edirne.²⁶³ Although the inability of the state against Pazvantoğlu and the pardon of him are asserted to have encouraged some of the bandit leaders like Kara Feyzi and, in general, brought about an increase in the banditry, the state was able to pacify some of the influential bandit leaders like Hacı Manav and the *ayan* of Hasköy.²⁶⁴

It is pointed out that between 1789 and 1796, the *ayans* through their political allies in İstanbul were “usually able to secure the appointment of less active and able men” against the bandits.²⁶⁵ As it is seen, thus far, the government had entrusted some influential officials such the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen, the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne and in some cases the governors of Silistre with the suppression of mountain banditry. Most

²⁶⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 35.

²⁶¹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1587; Мутафчиева, *Кърджапийско Време*, p. 133.

²⁶² *Ibid*, p. 147.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 156, 159.

²⁶⁴ Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion”, p. 108; Özkaya, *Dağlı*, p. 35; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, pp. 1587. For the death of Hacı Manav see BOA. HAT, 1404, 568, 29 Zilhicce 1210 [5 Temmuz 1796].

²⁶⁵ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, p. 235.

of the time, the task was expected to be fulfilled by the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen and his properties and financial power were attempted to be enhanced so that he could manage his affairs properly. Yet, from 1796 onwards, the governor of Rumelia became more important and the state planned to entrust more powerful and able viziers as the *beylerbeyi* (governor-general) of Rumelia against the bandits.

In January 1796, Hakkı Bey was elevated to vizierate and appointed as the governor of Rumelia with the duty of subduing the bandits. He is argued to have been a renowned state official known for his righteousness and severity²⁶⁶ and it is claimed that the sultan appointed him deliberately or he might have been detracted from İstanbul through being appointed to a mission in Rumelia. Uzunçarşılı, informs about a state tradition in which some influential viziers who had characteristics of criticism and opposition were expelled from İstanbul.²⁶⁷

Unlike previous pashas who were depended much on the forces of the *ayans* and, from time to time, recruited from among the local population, Hakkı Pasha was provided with also some of the trained soldiers from the divisions of the Janissaries, such as *topçus* (bombardiers), *arabacıs* (waggoneers) and *humbaracıs* (grenadiers).²⁶⁸ Moreover, the support of Anatolia was resorted on a higher scale and the *mutasarrıf* of Kocaeli with his one thousand soldiers was brought under the service of Hakkı Pasha. Likewise, the prominent *ayans* of Anatolia like Çaparzade and Karaosmanoğlu were ordered to provide soldiers.²⁶⁹

Besides Hakkı Pasha, the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen, now, Palaslı Mehmed Pasha also continued to function against the mountain bandits.²⁷⁰ Moreover, along with the high officers and the *ayans*, in the meantime, the state appealed more and more to some of the influential men of the Rumelian districts. Accordingly, a *delilbaşı* called Karlağa in Filibe was to recruit five hundred soldiers and each *delilbaşı* of Gümülcine and

²⁶⁶ Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Humayunları*, p. 118.

²⁶⁷ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 183.

²⁶⁸ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1588.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 1588.

²⁷⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 35- 36.

Dimetoka was to prepare a hundred soldiers.²⁷¹ On the other hand, in order to investigate the conditions of the *ayans* and to protect the districts, some *hasekis* were sent from İstanbul. For example, Haseki Mustafa was to confront the bandit leader Hacı Manav, who escaped from *Tuna Yalısı* and came to Gümölcine, where he was to be killed.²⁷²

It can be assumed that the counteroffensive against the mountain bandits increased after the governorship of Hakkı Pasha. Unlike predecessors of him, Hakkı Pasha attempted to investigate and analyze the problem in order to eliminate the reasons and to find effective solutions to the elements leading to banditry. Furthermore, he made it obligatory to carry *mürur tezkeres* (certificates for passengers) between districts and severely punished those caught without it. Also, he tied the population of Rumelia to each other with sureties in order to identify the strangers who could be bandits.²⁷³

By sending agents, he made investigations about the conditions of the *ayans* and the administrators of Rumelia. Thus, the very places from where the bandits emerged were searched and the *ayans* who supported the mountain bandits were determined and tried to be eliminated. Consequently, according to a document provided by Enver Ziya Karal, in 1796, a long list of important *ayans* and officials who supported the bandit leaders were specified.²⁷⁴

As a result, Veysioğlu Halil, the *ayan* of Dimetoka; the other Halil, the *ayan* of Yeni Zağra and Tokulluoğlu Mehmed, the *ayan* of İştib (Shtip in present-day Macedonia) and the *Yeniçeri ustası* of Eski Zağra were executed for their support in the

²⁷¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 36; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1588.

²⁷² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 36; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1588. For the *hasekis* see BOA. HAT, 203, 10526, 29 Zilhicce 1210 [5 July 1796].

²⁷³ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1613.

²⁷⁴ Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Humayunları*, pp. 115-118; Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 180.

banditry.²⁷⁵ On the other hand, in order to deter the *ayans* from backing the bandits, Hakkı Pasha also attempted to expropriate the properties of the executed *ayans*.²⁷⁶

Similarly, many bandits were killed and their heads were sent to İstanbul.²⁷⁷ Some of the important bandit leaders, such as Sinab²⁷⁸ and Ejderoğlu and his companions, were killed. It is asserted that during his term, the mountain banditry came to disappear.²⁷⁹ At least Edirne and its adjacent areas were in order while the banditry continued to exist throughout Rumelia. Therefore, the bandits concentrated their activities around Northern Bulgaria, through which the men of Pazvantoğlu, Macar Ali and Gavur İmam with their bandits attacked several times to the districts of Tırnova, Selvi, Lofça, Plevne and expanded their atrocities around Niğbolu.²⁸⁰ It is argued that the offensive of Hakkı Pasha and the cancellation of the amnesty led to the unification of the battalions of the bandits and enabled them to tour even around the capital.²⁸¹

As a result, Hakkı Pasha was deemed unsuccessful and replaced by the warden of Belgrade, Mustafa Pasha.²⁸² By referring to Nuri Halil Bey, Uzunçarşılı indicates that Hakkı Pasha was dismissed since he was not able to fulfill the orders as the intended way and since the bandit leaders, like Macar Ali and Gavur İmam,

²⁷⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 40.

²⁷⁶ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1588.

²⁷⁷ As an already established practice the bandits were beheaded and their heads sent to İstanbul, where they were displayed. Tolga Uğur Esmer informs that their mutilated bodies, sometimes in form of removed ears and tongues and gouged eyes, were even paraded in Rumelia before being sent to the capital. As another humiliating aspect of this ritual, the bandits were denied of proper Muslim burial. "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 126.

²⁷⁸ By referring Mutaftchieva, Başer indicates that Sinab was a highly influential bandit leader, who portioned environs of the Rhodope Mountain out to his nine *bölükbaşı*s. *Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, pp. 36-37.

²⁷⁹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 41; Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 184, 211.

²⁸⁰ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1612; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1822.

²⁸¹ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 163.

²⁸² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 44-45.

increased their activities around Northern Bulgaria.²⁸³ On the other hand, it is argued by Asım Efendi that the success of Hakkı Pasha against the banditry, through which he could become the grand vizier, intimidated the viziers in İstanbul. Thus, he was demonstrated by them to the sultan as unsuccessful and introduced as an opponent of the *Nizam-ı Cedid*. Moreover, the *ayans* were also against him that they supported the viziers in making Hakkı Pasha worthless in the eyes of the sultan.²⁸⁴

It is stated that after Hakkı Pasha, while Selim III nominated the governor of Anatolia, Alo Pasha, the members of the high council (*erbab-ı şura*) did not consider it appropriate. Thus, Mustafa Pasha was appointed as the governor of Rumelia and Alo Pasha was charged against the bandits.²⁸⁵

The efforts of Hakkı Pasha, and later that of Mustafa Pasha and Alo Pasha led some of the mountain bandits to move northwards and during the summer of 1797, the bandits concentrated north of the Balkan Mountains.²⁸⁶ In the meantime, the Janissaries who had escaped from Belgrade also took refuge in Vidin and contributed to the banditry outside Vidin.²⁸⁷ According to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, since the suppression of Pazvantoğlu was not possible, the bandits were attempted to be eliminated one by one. Therefore, the governor of Anatolia, Alo Pasha was also sent with this mission to Rumelia. Moreover, in the meantime, Pazvantoğlu was given the *muhassılık* of Vidin in order to pacify him. Nevertheless, it failed to be beneficial as Pazvantoğlu continued to make disorders around the region and he planned to expand even into Rusçuk and Varna.²⁸⁸

It is argued that in fear of the French expansion over the Mediterranean and victories in Europe, the government responded to the situation by charging Küçük Hüseyin

²⁸³ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 185.

²⁸⁴ As cited in Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1613-1614; Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Humayunları*, p. 119.

²⁸⁵ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 186.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 166.

²⁸⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 45-46.

²⁸⁸ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, pp. 1612-1613, 1652.

Pasha as the *serasker* against Vidin. Meantime, the Janissaries under the service of Pazvantoğlu were tried to be lured into leaving Pazvantoğlu.²⁸⁹

Before January 1798, the governors, many other officials and the *ayans* of the two provinces of Rumelia and Anatolia were charged against Pazvantoğlu Osman, who now controlled various districts through bandit leaders along the Danube and north of the Balkan Mountains.²⁹⁰ Consequently, the confrontation covered a large area and was composed of many actors. In order to pacify Pazvantoğlu's problem, the government attempted to besiege him and his men wherever possible.²⁹¹

Thus, the state did not accept the request of amnesty by Pazvantoğlu and determined to destroy him. Hence, numerous orders were made about that once he was smashed and encircled, in order to prevent the escape of him and his men, the roads were to be closed and some *menzils* were to be established around Vidin and its hinterland. Here, it is also seen that the government appealed to reward those who killed the companions of Pazvantoğlu alive or dead.²⁹² On the other hand, some of the companions of Pazvantoğlu, such as the *ayan* of Plevne, Topuzoğlu, turned against him and participated to the state efforts. These precautions outside of Vidin were successful, wherefore some of the cities and districts occupied by the bandit leaders were recovered and Otuzbiroğlu with his two hundred men was executed in February 1798. Moreover, during the spring of 1798, Macar Ali and Gavur İmam were defeated and reported to be killed in the combats around Lom.²⁹³

However, the siege of Vidin was not prospering. As it prolonged, the military costs increased and with the advent of winter, it became also hard to make military maneuvers.²⁹⁴ On the other hand, due to the French invasion of Egypt and the rumor that the French forces were to invade Bosnia too along with the ongoing Wahhabi

²⁸⁹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, pp. 1653, 1655, 1656.

²⁹⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 48

²⁹¹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1665; Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 132.

²⁹² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 50-51.

²⁹³ Ibid, p. 51, 52.

²⁹⁴ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1667.

rebellion in Arabia²⁹⁵, the state came to accept the request of Pazvantoğlu's amnesty. Accordingly, he would stay peacefully and would not support the *yamaks* of Belgrade any longer.²⁹⁶

Once the government was in trouble with other distractions, one of the important features of its policy in dealing with the banditry was giving the bandits or troubled figures with some titles and duties. Likewise, the state granted Pazvantoğlu Osman the title of *kapıcıcıbaşı* and appointed him as the warden of Vidin. The title of vizierate would follow it in June 1799. Thus, as he remained peaceful for a while and the orders related to the banditry were sent him too, the government was able to focus on the issue of suppressing mountain banditry.²⁹⁷ Nevertheless, his misdeeds became escalated after a while. It is argued that since forgiving the bandits, rebellious *ayans* and officials somehow legitimized the actions of the bandits in the eyes of them, Tirsinikli İsmail, Yılıkoğlu Süleyman and Tepedelenli Ali Pasha would act the same way in the following periods by taking courage of the example of Pazvantoğlu Osman.²⁹⁸

During 1799 and 1800, the movements of the bandits concentrated again around Northern Rumelia. Together with some bandit leaders, like Kara Feyzi, Cenkçioğlu and Kara Mustafa, Cengiz Mehmed Giray operated in the same region between Şumnu and Hezargrad and attempted to expand towards Tırnova. As he had nearly three thousand soldiers, it was hard to overcome him. That is why the state ordered the nearby *ayans* of Rusçuk, Şumnu and Hezargrad to confront Cengiz Giray and to

²⁹⁵ The Wahhabi sect was based on a purified doctrine of the Quran and Islam and even rejected the existence of mosques and the veneration to the Prophet Muhammed. The movement rapidly spread around the Arabian Peninsula and during the beginning of the 19th century, the Wahhabis even attempted to invade Mecca in 1803 and Medina in 1804 and extended their domain by the Persian Gulf. Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, pp. 127-128.

²⁹⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 59, 61; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 3, p. 1667, 1682; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1822.

²⁹⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 59.

²⁹⁸ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1822; Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Humayunları*, p. 121.

hinder their movements if they tried to come over the other side of the Balkan Mountains.²⁹⁹

In the meantime, assertedly, from now onwards, Pazvantoğlu Osman would not become as stronger as than before since Tirsinikli İsmail, the *ayan* of Rusçuk was able to confront his attacks over Northern Bulgaria.³⁰⁰ Actually, it is alleged that Tirsinikli İsmail was another troublesome figure like Pazvantoğlu. However, as he was the only force against the attacks of Pazvantoğlu Osman in the region and as the state had no power to engage with another usurper in the same area, he was regarded loyal by the state. Therefore, from 1799 onwards, the government left the suppression of banditry in Northern Bulgaria to Tirsinikli İsmail, relying much on the rivalry between Pazvantoğlu and him.³⁰¹

To conclude, from the beginning of the mountain banditry, through the involvement of the *ayans*' interaction with the bandits, the unrest in Rumelia escalated and the state measures increased with it. One of the important aspects of the countermeasures of the state lays in the fact that the state did not advance upon the disorders of the mountain bandits and the *ayans* at the same time. By issuing amnesties either to the bandits or Pazvantoğlu, the state attempted to concentrate and eradicate the elements of the unrest one by one. On the other hand, rather than sending the troops stationed in İstanbul, the state undertook to organize local elements such as the officials, *ayans*, influential men and the population of Rumelia itself. Thus, it seems that while the legitimacy of İstanbul in the eyes of the productive population fell relative to the failure of the government in eradication of the banditry in Rumelia, the central authority reasserted itself at least if numerous dispatches related to the suppression of banditry sent into and from Rumelia are taken into consideration.

²⁹⁹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, pp. 62-63.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 68.

³⁰¹ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 216, 219.

CHAPTER V

THE END OF THE MOUNTAIN BANDITRY

5.1. The State Measures towards the End of the Mountain Banditry

5.1.1 Between 1800 and 1803

Around 1800, the bandits even spread to İstanbul that the state became anxious. Therefore, to eliminate their passage across Edirne, the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne was charged with closing the roads to İstanbul. In the meantime, Tayyar Pasha was appointed against the bandits around Edirne on 23 September 1800, dealing with the three famous bandit leaders; Cığercioğlu, İsaoglu and Kara Feyzi.³⁰²

By referring to Schlehta-Wssehrd, Mutaфchieva indicates that the bandits even requested the abolishment of the reforms of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* and the beheading of some of the influential state officials.³⁰³ That is why it is asserted that the appointment of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers was planned to be send against the mountain bandits and Tayyar Pasha was ordered to bring new Anatolian forces.³⁰⁴

In the last days of 1800, Pazvantoğlu Osman's activities in Wallachia brought about foreign pressure to suspend his actions across the Danube. However, as he drew his

³⁰² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 70, 72.

³⁰³ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 231.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 232-233. For the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers' appointment see BOA. C.ZB., 11, 539, 10 Zilkade 1214 [5 Nisan 1800].

forces from there, he directed them around Niş (Niš), leading to his vizierate be dropped and a third siege of Vidin be planned.³⁰⁵

Nevertheless, while the mountain bandits were beset all around Rumelia, it was not possible to wipe out the mountain banditry. They were able to move around and, from time to time, increase their activities. Hence, in January 1801, Hakkı Pasha was once again appointed as the governor and *serasker* of Rumelia. His term of office was initially determined to be three years but later extended with additional two years.³⁰⁶ On the other hand, Musa Pasha was trying to settle the disorders around the Northern Rumelia and he was able to win some of the bandit leaders over while he continued to send soldiers to the villages between Niğbolu and Plevne. However, meeting their salaries along with those of the bandits who then became Musa Pasha's soldiers was a problem for him. Thus, his effectiveness was limited for financial matters. Provisioning of the troops or retinues had always been a big problem in the combats against the bandits.³⁰⁷

On the other hand, during his second term, Hakkı Pasha also had to confront Gürcü Osman Pasha, who opposed the arrival of him towards Sofia and recruited numerous *sekbans*. Osman Pasha is asserted to have become more troublesome than the mountain bandits for Hakkı Pasha.³⁰⁸ Meanwhile, although Hakkı Pasha attempted to capture Cenkçioğlu, İsaoglu and Kara Feyzi, he was not provided the necessary support by the government. Military and financial needs of Hakkı Pasha, such as the required weapons, ammunition and money could not be met due to insufficient funds. Therefore, he became indebted to his soldiers. Moreover, the Anatolian forces which Hakkı Pasha had requested were not sent to his aid in time. Also, it is argued that his request of the punishment of Gürcü Osman Pasha was not accepted due to

³⁰⁵ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 247, pp. 250-252.

³⁰⁶ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1823.

³⁰⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 69, pp. 75-76.

³⁰⁸ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 192.

the ambivalence of the government. On the contrary, Gürcü Osman Pasha was to be charged against the bandits as they became infested again around Edirne.³⁰⁹

In this turmoil, on 19 February 1801, the amnesty of the bandits was again sought by the government. It is attested that during this period, the state attempted to pacify the problem of mountain banditry by pardoning and settling some of the prominent bandit leaders through the cooperation of the *ayans* of Rumelia.³¹⁰ However, unlike the previous ones, this time, the state ordered them to be transported into Anatolia although they did not again comply with their promises to remain peaceful.³¹¹

Thereupon, Hakkı Pasha was also regarded ineffective against the mountain bandits and replaced by his subordinate Ömer Ağa, the *ayan* of Filibe.³¹² Ömer Ağa was given vizierate and ordered to cooperate with Tokatçıklı Süleyman, the *ayan* of Gümülçine. Here, it is argued that while Tokatçıklı had shown respect and obedience to Hakkı Pasha, he did not act likewise towards Ömer Pasha, who as a member of the Rumelian *ayans* was deemed lesser in importance in comparison to Tokatçıklı. That is why he was also dismissed from the office within a short time.³¹³

So far, the state had appointed some viziers and *mirmirans* as the governors of Rumelia against the mountain bandits. Except for Ömer Ağa, after the case of Tokatçıklı against him, a more powerful and respected figure among the local notables was appointed in April 1802 as the governor and *serasker* of Rumelia. Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, being one of the most influential *ayans* in Rumelia, so far, had not attended to the counteroffensives against the mountain bandits due to his conflicts with the neighboring Souliotes around Epirus. He was a powerful man in his area of influence and also in Rumelia because of his wealth and large numbers of

³⁰⁹ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", pp. 194-197; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 253.

³¹⁰ Başer, *Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, p. 41.

³¹¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 72. For the order see BOA. C.DH., 236, 11797 12 Zilhicce 1215 [26 Nisan 1801].

³¹² Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1824.

³¹³ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa", p. 211.

soldiers composed mainly of Albanian *sekbans*.³¹⁴ Apart from the suppression of the banditry, it was asserted that his power was to countervail Pazvantoğlu Osman and Tirsinikli İsmail along with subduing Gürcü Osman Pasha, who continued to rampage in Thrace.³¹⁵

On the other hand, he was to bring the Albanian *sekbans* within the mountain bandits and within the retinues of the pashas and *beys* of Rumelia back to Albania. Since many of them were from Tosk, which was the region of Tepedelenli, it was planned that he could bring them back to Albania and could relieve the density of disorders of the bandits.³¹⁶ Besides, some of the people among the mountain bandits regarded as strangers like those of Anatolians were also attempted to be detached from the bandits. Accordingly, Anatolians were to be sent back to Anatolia.³¹⁷

The appointment of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha itself is asserted to have been effective against the bandits who had much to fear from Ali Pasha's strength and reputation. Therefore, the bandits appealed him for an amnesty and promised to remain peaceful by giving hostages of three hundred men of their own. Kara Feyzi and Kara Mustafa were also pardoned as they promised to be settled in Filibe.³¹⁸ Nevertheless, although Tepedelenli Ali Pasha was ordered to act at once, because of his delay by staying in his region for three months, the companions of Pazvantoğlu are asserted to have been able to move freely and throw Northern Rumelia into disarray.³¹⁹ Therefore, the weakness of the state against Pazvantoğlu forced the government to pardon and entitle him again as a vizier. It is again argued that the task of overcoming the mountain bandits relieved after his pardon.³²⁰

³¹⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, pp. 79-80.

³¹⁵ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 273, 275.

³¹⁶ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1826.

³¹⁷ Ibid, p. 1826.

³¹⁸ Ibid, p. 1826, 1911; Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 81, 82.

³¹⁹ Ibid, p. 81.

³²⁰ Ibid, pp. 82-83.

While Tepedelenli Ali Pasha's office was a period of relative order, it is indicated that as the other influential *ayans* of Rumelia were afraid of him, they did not want him to remain as a superior over them and promised to aid the state in eliminating the banditry in Rumelia if Tepedelenli was dismissed. Therefore, the government could not dare to oppose the request of the *ayans* who could unify against such an order.³²¹ In addition to his delay in acting against the bandits, it is claimed that his request that his son be given the *mutasarrıflık* of Tırhala (Trikala) confused the government with that he could extend his influence with the power of his son's office.³²² As a result, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha was removed from the governorship of Rumelia and replaced by the *mutasarrıf* of Thessaloniki, Vani Mehmed Pasha in the beginning of 1803.³²³

5.1.2 Between 1803 and 1808

It is asserted that upon the dismissal of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, the mountain bandits started their latest offensive in Eastern Thrace. From 1803 onwards, the bandits had been active even around İstanbul and they had become established between Edirne and Çatalca.³²⁴

Therefore, as frequently happened, Vani Mehmed Pasha was displaced and in November 1803, the *mutasarrıf* of Shkoder İbrahim Pasha (the son of Kara Mahmud Pasha of the Bushatlıs) was appointed as the governor and *serasker* of Rumelia. This was designed also to counterbalance the power of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha in Rumelia.³²⁵ Moreover, during October 1803, the government took a serious stand against those who ignored and acted slowly in the matter of the banditry.³²⁶ Some of

³²¹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, pp. 1911-1912.

³²² Ibid, p. 1830.

³²³ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 84.

³²⁴ Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa", (April, 1971), pp. 261-262; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 295, 298.

³²⁵ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1912, 1913.

³²⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 93.

the *ayans* helping the bandits were executed such as, Tokatçıklı Süleyman, who had been suspected of helping the bandits. After his death by the help of Tirsinikli İsmail in 1804, the *ayan* of Filibe, Hüseyin Bey and Menlikli Osman Bey, his brother and some of his men were also executed.³²⁷

In the meantime, as mentioned before, the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers were sent against the bandits and Kadı Abdurrahman marched against the bandits around Malkara on 28 July 1804. He was able to defeat them while some of them escaped towards the Balkan Mountains. This is argued to have led to a temporary stability around Thrace.³²⁸ These new soldiers are asserted to be obedient and disciplined that their importance was welcomed by all.³²⁹

Meanwhile two of the most famous leaders of the mountain bandits Kara Feyzi and Deli Kadri were pardoned in September 1805-6 after two years of devastation throughout Eastern Thrace. Thus, they were pardoned and ratified as the *ayans* of Filibe and Burgaz. The reason for such legalization of them is explained as an “intricate maneuver” by the government. As the state had already attempted to clear the way from İstanbul to Serbia, thus, it was able to send his troops to suppress the Serbian revolt.³³⁰ On the other hand, she maintains that the two *kırcalı* leaders were well aware of the fact that there was no prospect of success any longer for the mountain bandits since the elements of the anarchy which had provided the bandits with a suitable environment now denied the existence of them.³³¹

It is argued that while the Rumelian disorders relieved in this year, there appeared new troubles besides the Serbian Revolt. Now, the rebellion of Tayyar Mahmud Pasha had to be dealt with.³³² More importantly, as Tirsinikli İsmail’s hostile activities against the adjacent regions intensified, he became another problem for the

³²⁷ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1936.

³²⁸ Yeşil, *İhtilaller Çağında Osmanlı Ordusu*, pp 38-39.

³²⁹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1912.

³³⁰ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 327, 331.

³³¹ Ibid, pp. 333- 334.

³³² Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1938, 1976.

state. His main aim is asserted to have been expanding from the Danube, along with the coastline of the Black Sea down to Edirne.³³³ Due to his rebellion, the banditry is said to have been seen once again everywhere in Rumelia. Therefore, to suppress him, the governor of Silistre was charged while the disorders of the bandits increased around Edirne.³³⁴ As an important center of cereals, the region now occupied by Tirsinikli was crucial for the provisioning of the capital. Thus, the order in the region was an important concern of the central government.³³⁵

On the other hand, as a result of the foreign policy, the security of the military roads lying to the west and north were aimed to be established. As a result, after the appeasement of Kara Feyzi and Deli Kadri, the government attempted to get rid of Tirsinikli İsmail in Northern Bulgaria.³³⁶ Accordingly, Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha was planned to be sent to Edirne under the pretext of leading the auxiliary forces against the Serbian uprising and against a possible Russian attack. Nevertheless, the actual plan was to intimidate the *ayans* with the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers and to establish it in Rumelia.³³⁷ Then, composed mainly of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers, his forces are estimated to have been approximately fifteen to twenty thousand.³³⁸ Since the Edirne Event broke out due to the advance of Kadı Pasha and since the Janissaries also led to disorders in İstanbul, these soldiers were called back to Silivri, by leaving the cavalry units in Çorlu and the infantry in Tekirdağ.³³⁹

For the failure against the incident in Edirne, contrary to Ahmed Cevdet's arguments on the achievement of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers and the insolvency of Selim III

³³³ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 23.

³³⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 96-97.

³³⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 18.

³³⁶ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 335-336.

³³⁷ Yusuf Akçura, *Osmanlı Devletinin Dağılma Devri (XVIII. ve XIX. Asırlarda)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), p. 137; Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa", (April, 1971), p. 265, 267.

³³⁸ Akçura, *Osmanlı Devletinin Dağılma Devri*, p. 140.

³³⁹ Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa", (April, 1971), p. 264. Fatih Yeşil asserts that in this rebellion, the leading role was belonged to the *sekbans* who had become unemployed after the war of 1787-1792. Thus, he relates the Edirne event as the continuation of acts of the mountain bandits. he Yeşil, *İhtilaller Çağında Osmanlı Ordusu*, p. 44.

during the period, it is argued by Asım Efendi that while Kadı Pasha had nearly twenty thousand of new soldiers under his command, since many of them were recruited by force and they were reluctant to fight, it was obvious that this army would also become ineffectual.³⁴⁰ On the other hand, while Asım Efendi records that the forces rallied in Edirne against the *Nizam-ı Cedid* were “*karga derneği*” (literally, where confusion reigned), Cevdet Pasha indicates that many of the opponents exceeding twenty thousand were desperados.³⁴¹

To sum, from 1803 onwards, the state considered the expansion of the bandits before İstanbul as the most crucial problem to deal with while engaging in the French invasion of Egypt and later the Serbian revolt. Through the appointment of the two influential *ayans* of Tepedelenli and İbrahim pashas who were in a kind of local rivalry and were potential threats to the central authority, the state attempted at least to bring a balance to the Rumelian affairs. On the other hand, their power and influence were important towards at least splitting the bandits if not exterminating them. Moreover, the success of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* forces broke the back of the mountain bandits that there remained some of the individual battalions, which were also attempted to be pacified through co-optation.

5.2.The Reasons for the Prolonged Banditry

5.2.1 The Weakness of the State

One of the arguments about the failure against the mountain bandits is on the military ineffectiveness of the governors at the end of the 18th century, which is related to the number of the governors’ retinues, which was no longer considerable enough to support a governor to take action like those of previous centuries.³⁴² As already mentioned, the reason was the reduction in their incomes. While the state gave the

³⁴⁰ As cited in Akçura, *Osmanlı Devletinin Dağılma Devri*, p. 140.

³⁴¹ As cited in Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa”, (April, 1971), p. 301.

³⁴² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 24; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 85.

task of the suppression of the mountain banditry to the offices such as the governor of Rumelia and the *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen with additional revenue sources and titles, it is seen that they were always in need of ready cash for prolonged campaigns.³⁴³ On the other hand, mobilizing large numbers of soldiers against the mountain bandits was not quite possible in terms of payment, provisioning and arming the soldiers for long durations. Maintaining such a force was possible only seasonally if the bandits concentrated on a region. Therefore, allied action against them was a necessary compound for a successful result. However, the *ayans* or the other individuals which the state charged against bandits usually could not organize among themselves for a coordinated action.³⁴⁴

On the other hand, according to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, the state was too late to undertake an effective solution against the banditry in the first place. Therefore, once it was tried to be suppressed, the measures even incited the people and, consequently, increased the number of bandits.³⁴⁵ In addition, because of the frequent reappointments, the terms of many governors lasted short. As in the case of Hakkı Pasha's second appointment, it is seen that although the government assured him for five-year term, he was replaced within five months.³⁴⁶ This was a factor preventing the governors and *mutasarrıfs* from being affiliated with the conditions of the region and the banditry. The new officials always had to start from the beginning and they were not always able to differentiate themselves from the deeds of the previous ones. Only with Hakkı Pasha's first term of governorship of Rumelia, some changes can be differentiated in the ways to extinguish the banditry.

It is argued that the occasional amnesties given to the bandit leaders encouraged the bandits in that the pardons were interpreted by them as weakness of the government to handle the issue. Also, some rewards and gifts granted to the famous bandit leaders to incite the lesser ones are argued to have promoted bandits' misdoings in

³⁴³ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 76.

³⁴⁴ Anscombe, "Albanians and Mountain Bandits", p. 104.

³⁴⁵ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 4, p. 1822.

³⁴⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 74.

the hope that they could also be rewarded.³⁴⁷ Apart from the ones given to the bandits and their leaders, the amnesties of Pazvantoğlu are the foremost examples of that forgiving the ringleaders did not provide an absolute solution. Only after the third amnesty of Pazvantoğlu Osman, it is seen that he remained, in theory, loyal to the government that even some orders related to combat with the bandits were sent to Pazvantoğlu Osman.³⁴⁸ Yücel Özkaya asserts that after the amnesties, the bandits continued their plunders for a while under the condition of being forgiven. In addition, the relatives and acquaintances of them helped the settled bandits to further their misdoings. The pardons of the bandits, on the other hand, are argued to be a crucial problem for the public opinion against the central government, through which the trust for the state protection was reversed.³⁴⁹

It can be concluded that there was not a well-prepared program against both the banditry and rebellious *ayans* like Pazvantoğlu Osman. For example, during the siege of Vidin, despite all the time for preparations in the winter, there appeared lack of provisions, ammunitions and also, interestingly, lack of effective siege weaponry. On the other hand, the siege lasted long as result of the inability of the forces towards a unified assault on the castle.³⁵⁰ Yet, it is also argued that the forces sent against the bandits by the government or the local notables lacked the necessary training and discipline that they were either escaped or tended to participate into the bandits.³⁵¹

5.2.2 The Role of the Centrifugal Forces

While the government depended on the assistance of the local officials and *ayans* from the beginning of the movement, many of them did not fully comply with the

³⁴⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 18, 78.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 83.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 90, 92.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 53-56.

³⁵¹ Lamouche, *Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 261.

orders and remained loose in their actions.³⁵² For instance, the *nazır* of Filibe, after engaging in the bandits for a while, he did not pursue the bandits with the pretext of protecting his region. At the end, he returned to his region although it was not ordered him to do so. Similarly, the *nazır* of Drama acted like the *nazır* of Filibe. The government then had to confine itself to warn them about complying with the orders.³⁵³ On the other hand, some of the *ayans* did not take it serious to pursue the bandits who went out of their territories. Similarly, as the siege against Pazvantoğlu Osman lasted eight months, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha came back to his region by expressing that he had been far away from his territory too long. This was because of the fact that they did not want their seat of power to remain vacant and some other influential members of their community to take it over.³⁵⁴ Tirsinikli İsmail is also accused of being not serious about the suppression of banditry and of acted according to his interests, especially after 1803. For example, as he was ordered to pursuit the bandits, while he reported to the government that he surrounded and fought with the bandits around the village of Karaören, he actually returned to Rusçuk after a short time.³⁵⁵

On the other hand, explicitly or in secret, some of the *ayans* protected and patronized the bandits on their own. This played a crucial role in the taking suppression of the banditry long. On the other hand, it is argued that the *ayans* were afraid of being eventually eliminated after the destruction of the mountain bandits.³⁵⁶ Moreover, some of the *ayans* of Rumelia used the bandits to extend their area of influence and destroy their rival *ayans*. In this regard, the most important figure who supported the mountain bandits was Pazvantoğlu Osman. It is claimed that because of him, the disorders of the mountain bandits continued despite the efforts of the government. As mentioned before, he was dispatching his bandit leaders constantly along the Danube

³⁵² Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa”, (April, 1971), p. 261.

³⁵³ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 28.

³⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 50, 57, 92.

³⁵⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 92.

³⁵⁶ Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa”, (April, 1971), p. 267, 299.

River both in Bulgaria and Wallachia.³⁵⁷ Also, whenever the bandits came to be defeated or surrounded, they were able to take shelter in his region that the state had to strive more to engage in banditry over and over again.³⁵⁸

Besides him, Tirsinikli İsmail in Rusçuk and Yılıkoğlu Süleyman in Silistre were the other *ayans* who continually caused disturbances for that purpose. These two are also seen to have attempted to use some of the famous bandit leaders, such as Manav İbrahim, who were under the service of Pazvantoğlu Osman. As Yılıkoğlu was successful in winning over Manav İbrahim, he was able to take advantage from him against Tirsinikli İsmail, through making Manav plundered the districts of Pravadi (Provaida), Kozluca (Suvorovo) and Hacıoğlu Pazarcık (Dobrich), which were under the influence of Tirsinikli. On the other hand, he also benefited from the collaboration of Kuşancalı, who was another companion of Pazvantoğlu Osman, Ali Molla and later Manav İbrahim.³⁵⁹

Futhermore, more individual but effective *ayans*, like those of Hasköy, Emin Ağa and Gümülcine, Tokatçıklı Süleyman, were also important in the continuation of banditry as they clandestinely supported the bandit leaders like Kara Feyzi. According to a dispatch, provided by Esmer, around the end of 1804, after Tokatçıklı Süleyman's death, officials of Karaağaç İskelesi reported that numerous hidden cannonballs and other different kinds of weapons and supplies had been found in his former region.³⁶⁰

If it is taken into consideration that some of the *ayans* like Pazvantoğlu Osman and Tirsinikli İsmail had under their authority lesser *ayans*, stretching to large areas, the importance of their role in the matter becomes crucial. Hence, it can be inferred that their existence was a guarantee for the mountain bandits.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 1, 2, 29.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 68.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 85.

³⁶⁰ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 90, 204, 233, 285.

³⁶¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 103.

5.2.3 The Other Elements

Besides the above-mentioned difficulties, it was a formidable task to control over such a large area on which the bandits spread and frequently moved from one place to another. It was not easy to respond to all the directions at the same time, especially if it is taken into consideration that in fear of plunder, some of the local people had to obey the bandits' requests related to the provisions and the other necessities, providing the bandits to maintain their turmoil.³⁶² As Anscombe mentions about a document dating back before the war of 1787-92, "it would take twenty thousand men to hunt down for a thousand bandits, given the rough and wild terrain in which they hid."³⁶³ On the other hand, if Kara Feyzi is taken exmaple, the bandits stayed away from conventional military strategies and used various types of "guerilla-like tactics", hindering the success of the pashas, *beys*, *ayans* and the others who were sent against them. In addition, they were in touch with other bandit groups that shared their forces, ammunition and intelligence, which were very crucial in the management of their movements. Thus, it is argued that their concomitant and coordinated attacks encompassing a wide area eventually undermined the effectiveness of the forces sent against them.³⁶⁴

Moreover, despite all the rules restricting the passage of the Albanians from Albania into Rumelia, they did not work as intended. In this, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha also had an important part that while he was appointed as the *derbendler başbuğu* around 1802, he did not comply with the orders and let some of the Albanians into Rumelia. Also, it is indicated that his area of control through the *derbend* system did not cover all of the problematic areas.³⁶⁵

On the other hand, the rebellion of the Wahhabis in the Arabian Peninsula, the French invasion of the seven islands near the Morea, the invasion of Egypt and a

³⁶² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 24-25, 41, 65.

³⁶³ Anscombe, "Albanians and Mountain Bandits", p. 103.

³⁶⁴ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 62, 77, 96.

³⁶⁵ Anscombe, "Albanians and Mountain Bandits", p. 105.

possible attack against Bosnia were important distractions for the government. Thus, the state was not able to bring a decisive end to the banditry. As in the siege of Vidin, the commander of the forces sent against Pazvantoğlu had to abandon the siege since the requested ammunition and provisions could not be provided due to the mobilization for repulsing the French invasion army.³⁶⁶ Lastly, Gürcü Osman Pasha, the former governor of Rumelia before Hakkı Pasha, created also problems for the state, paralyzing Hakkı Pasha's efforts against the bandits.³⁶⁷

5.3.The End of the Mountain Banditry

5.3.1 The Liquidation of the Prominent Troublemakers

Among the most convincing arguments about the end of the mountain banditry, the deaths of the prominent *ayans* play a crucial role. In 1804, the death of Tokatçıklı Süleyman, who instigated the mountain banditry around Edirne, had an important part in the pacification of the bandits around Thrace. It is argued that due to his death, after the bandits' defeat inflicted by Kadı Abdurrahman during 1804, the mountain bandits were faded away as they no longer benefited from Tokatçıklı's support.³⁶⁸ Similarly, the death of Tirsinikli İsmail in 1805 is asserted to have brought an end to the unrest in Rumelia.

Similarly, Pazvantoğlu Osman, who had been the most crucial factor in the disorders in Rumelia, is asserted to have stopped being a crucial problem for the state even before his death in 1807. Accordingly, after being pardoned and elevated to the office of the warden of Vidin, he remained for a while loyal and served for the state during the Russian war which started in 1806. On the other hand, it is claimed that his power had already diminished after the Serbian Revolt in 1804 and after the

³⁶⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 16, 46, 56; Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 11.

³⁶⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, p. 81.

³⁶⁸ Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa", (April, 1971), pp. 268-269; Yeşil, *İhtilaller Çağında Osmanlı Ordusu*, p. 53.

defeat of the mountain bandits by the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers.³⁶⁹ Moreover, the ascension of Tirsinikli İsmail in Rusçuk was another blow to the power of Pazvantoğlu Osman while he was losing the alliance of his most prominent bandit leaders, such as Manav İbrahim and Kara Feyzi. It is asserted that *kırca* chiefs no longer relied on him since his power and prestige were undermined by the national movements and blocked by external forces, leading him to shrink in Vidin fortress.³⁷⁰

It is indicated that the date related to the mountain banditry ends with the second phase of the Russian war between 1809 and 1812 in relation to the liquidation of troubled *ayans*. Accordingly, following the end of war with Russia, the central government started to eliminate some of the remaining influential *ayans* like İdris Molla, who had replaced Pazvantoğlu as the *ayan* of Vidin. As he was removed from Vidin, the subordinate *ayans* of Vidin were left without protection of a patron like Pazvantoğlu Osman and İdris Molla. Thus, they came to reconcile with the central government in 1813.³⁷¹ At the same year, the *ayans* of Hasköy and Edirne, Emin Ağa and Dağdevirenöğlu were also executed and Yılıkoğlu was repelled from Silistre.³⁷² Together with the arrestment of Yılıkoğlu in Boğdan (present-day Moldova), it is pointed out that the *ayan* regime along the Danube River came to an end. Later, the lesser *ayans* were also eliminated such as the *ayan* of Hezargrad, Hasan Ağa in 1816.³⁷³ On the other hand, the execution of Emin Ağa and the death of İsmail Bey of Serez are argued to have brought an end to the mountain banditry and the *ayan* regime in the Balkans.³⁷⁴

Meanwhile, some of the influential *ayan* families of Anatolia such as Karaosmanoğulları and Hadımoğulları are indicated to have faded away. Çapanoğlu

³⁶⁹ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, pp. 109-110; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 320, pp. 324-325.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 317-318, 333.

³⁷¹ Ibid, p. 374, 378.

³⁷² Ibid, p. 375.

³⁷³ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, pp. 194-195.

³⁷⁴ Başer, *Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, p. 28.

was also eliminated and forced to escape into Russia.³⁷⁵ The deaths or the elimination of the influential Anatolian *ayans* were important that the state could turn its attention to Rumelian matters and centralization efforts in general. Lastly, together with the execution of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha in 1822, the only remaining prominent *ayan* became Mustafa Bushatlı because of his help in the suppression of Tepedelenli and in the Greek uprising.³⁷⁶

On the other hand, it is maintained that after winning the battle for the division of political power over Rumelia, the *ayanlık* could not tolerate more mobile tumult. For similar reasons, even after 1802, the brigands are assumed to have turned into *ayan* battalions which now were disciplined and undivided.³⁷⁷ Similarly, Başer argues that the strengthening of the *ayans* to such an extent and their control of a considerable part of Rumelia and the Balkans limited their activities and thus downplayed the importance of banditry.³⁷⁸

Apart from the liquidation of prominent *ayans*, the deaths or pacification of some troublesome leaders of the mountain bandits were also crucial in the end of the banditry. Actually, according to the documents around December 1802 and April 1803, it is seen that the state orders speak of the elimination of the banditry and the request of reinstating the migrated population to their places.³⁷⁹ From this time onwards, the orders seem to focus on completing the resettlement of the bandits. Therefore, it can be concluded that except for some of the individual bandit leaders, like Kara Feyzi, whose negotiation did not go well with the state and continued to roam around Edirne, the banditry came to be subsided as a whole in Rumelia.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁵ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 135, 198.

³⁷⁶ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, pp. 376-377.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Başer, *Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, p. 27

³⁷⁹ BOA. C.DH., 38, 1883, 29 Şaban 1217 [25 December 1802], BOA. C.ZB., 8, 397, 29 Şaban 1217 [25 December 1805]; BOA. C.ZB., 9, 440, 27 Zilkade 1217 [21 Mart 1803]; BOA. C.D., 79, 3944, 09 Zilhicce 1216 [12 April 1802].

³⁸⁰ BOA. HAT, 65, 2837, 29 Zilhicce 1217 [22 April 1803]; BOA. HAT, 65, 2837 A, 29 Zilhicce 1217 [22 April 1803].

The deaths of Manav İbrahim and Celiloğlu by Tirsinikli İsmail and Alemdar Mustafa in 1805 were asserted to have already brought about an end to the banditry in Northern Bulgaria.³⁸¹ Being among the most troublemakers in Rumelia from the beginning of the 1790s till the midst of the first decade of the 19th century, Kara Feyzi was co-opted and incorporated into the Ottoman provincial system as the *ayan* of Breznik and İznebolu around 1806-1807, turning much or less an obedient and peaceful element of the social life in Rumelia.³⁸²

Moreover, the population of Rumelia is asserted as another point in the weakening of the mountain bandits since they accustomed to defend themselves more successfully against their actions, such as through founding defensive systems.³⁸³

In addition, it is indicated that during the war with Russia, at least against the Russian forces, together with twenty thousand Janissaries and the ten thousand Anatolian soldiers sent by Çapanoğlu and Karaosmanoğlu, there were numerous Rumelian bandits composed of different nationalities. Through the war, many of the mountain bandits were cut off from their habitual field of action, namely Thrace.³⁸⁴ Like Kuşancalı Halil and his companion İpsalalı Ahmed, Gavur Hasan and Kara Feyzi, some important bandit leaders cooperated with the prominent *ayans* of Rumelia against the Russians. Afterwards, Kuşancalı Halil and Gavur Hasan are said to have disappeared from the scene.³⁸⁵

Likewise, the troublesome pashas who had distracted the government from the issue of the banditry were also eliminated, like Gürcü Osman and Tayyar pashas.³⁸⁶

Lastly, many of the Albanians, who had been so far created tremendous disorders over much of Rumelia, were now sent to the war with Russia in 1806. Thus, the employment of the Albanians reduced the scale of the banditry. It is also asserted that

³⁸¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 21.

³⁸² Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion", p. 2, 12, 310.

³⁸³ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 377.

³⁸⁴ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 174; Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 378.

³⁸⁵ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 172, 180, 194.

³⁸⁶ Мутафчиева, *Кърджалийско Време*, p. 311.

due to the increase in trade as a result of the “Napoleonic wars” and the peaceful conditions brought by the successors of Kara Mahmud Pasha, Albania gained relative stability.³⁸⁷

5.3.2 The *Nizam-ı Cedid* Soldiers and Alemdar’s Rise to Power

İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı assumes that the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers under the command of Kadı Abdurrahman inflicted the decisive strike to the mountain bandits.³⁸⁸ Similar to him, Jorga indicates that these soldiers uprooted the bandits in Rumelia.³⁸⁹ Miller also adds that after the defeat of the mountain bandits, in which many of them were killed by the regular troops, the mountain bandits lost their importance and later, they became a part of the reactionaries in 1806.³⁹⁰

On the other hand, it is argued that after having become the *ayan* of Rusçuk, Alemdar Mustafa was a moderate and obedient figure towards the government.³⁹¹ Accordingly, he tried to improve the agriculture and attempted to remove illegal taxes and forced labor in his domain, which became beneficial for the return of the people to their places.³⁹² Moreover, once on the way to İstanbul when Selim III was attempted to be re-enthroned, he brought with him the majority of former *kırcalı* forces composed of those who after the defeat of 1804 and the weakening of Pazvantoğlu had come under the service of Alemdar Mustafa and regarded him as a safer master.³⁹³ It is estimated that his forces, including the soldiers of the *ayans* who were devoted to him, were twenty thousand.³⁹⁴ On the other hand, as Alemdar

³⁸⁷ Anscombe, “Albanians and Mountain Bandits”, pp. 105-106.

³⁸⁸ Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa”, (April, 1971), pp. 299; Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, p. 114.

³⁸⁹ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 136.

³⁹⁰ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, p. 115.

³⁹¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 29, 50, 53.

³⁹² Ibid, p. 29, 55.

³⁹³ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha*, p. 125.

³⁹⁴ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 162.

Mustafa became *sadrâzam*, the *ayans* of Rumelia are said to have obeyed the state orders in fear of him. Besides, since Alemdar had been the *ayan* of Hezargrad and later replaced Tirsinikli İsmail Ağa in Rusçuk, the rest of the *ayans* and local notables are argued to have regarded him as one of their own and trusted his deeds.³⁹⁵

Lastly, the *Sened-i İttifak* is argued to be an element in the end of the mountain banditry. Alemdar Mustafa Pasha requested all the influential *ayans* of Rumelia and Anatolia to convene in İstanbul to discuss the state affairs. In this convention, the authority of the sultan and the central government was planned to be established while the authority and power of the *ayans* were also guaranteed by the state. Therefore, in 1808, an alliance under the name of the *Sened-i İttifak* between the state and the *ayans* was devised to reestablish the central administration in the provinces and also to prevent the opposition to the reforms the state.³⁹⁶

As it is seen, the death of the “rebellious” *ayans* and the prominent bandit leaders as well as the “rebellious” pashas played a crucial role in the end of the mountain banditry. It is argued that the nature of the banditry had already changed after the 1800s that some individual bandit leaders like Kara Feyzi and Deli Kadri rallied around them a considerable force, who attempted to negotiate with the state so that they were integrated into the Ottoman administrative system as *ayans* of some of the districts. Together with the death or elimination of some prominent troublemakers (patrons of bandits), therefore, their cooptation brought an end to the banditry.

It is also claimed that then, as the banditry in Rumelia did not threaten the state to such an extent like between the mid-1780s and 1808, the term the “mountain bandits” disappeared.³⁹⁷ Similar argument is also provided by Alper Başer. Initially, he cites from Kemal Beydilli that Hafız Mehmed Efendi ends the mountain banditry with the accession of Mustafa IV. Similarly, he adds that since the history works of Şanizade and Cabi do not provide separate headings for the mountain bandits after

³⁹⁵ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 5, (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1984), p. 2240.

³⁹⁶ Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından*, p. 138, pp. 140-141.

³⁹⁷ Özkaya, Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, pp. 102-103.

the year 1808, it could be interpreted that the mountain banditry came to an end after 1808.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Başer, *Kırcaalili Emin Ağa*, p. 26.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The banditry known by the name of its protagonists, the mountain bandits or the *kırcalis*, occurred throughout the province of Rumelia in the Ottoman Balkans between approximately 1785 and 1808. The most affected regions were much of the present-day Bulgaria, Northeastern Greece and Thracian part of Turkey, in which economic and social order was undermined through the long unrest that many of the local population migrated to safer places. On the other hand, by endeavoring to repel the bandits or participating into them, many of the local people became militarized or, at least, became acquainted with a militarized life. This was to play an important role in the subsequent periods, in which the nascent Balkan nationalism was to benefit from this development.

On the other hand, the subject was an integral part of the historical forces leading to the development of Ottoman “centralization” and “modernization”. It was a product of a process in which, from the late 16th to the beginning of the 19th century, the two centuries-long Ottoman military and fiscal transformations brought with the characteristics of kind of autonomous regional administrations, on which the Ottoman state mechanism came to depend more and more in administrative, financial and, most importantly, military matters.

Consequently, under these economic, social, financial and military developments, the phenomenon of banditry had already become a part of social life in Anatolia and the Balkans before the emergence of the mountain bandits. Thus, unable to deal with external and internal powers at the end of the 18th century, the state became obliged to reform its institutions and to regain the control of financial and military resources in the provinces. Arguably, the true development of the mountain banditry corresponds to the beginning of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* reform program, through the establishment of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiery and imposing new taxes related to it.

Therefore, it seems that as the state paid more attention to pacify the issue of banditry and regain the control of the provinces, it turns out that the banditry aggravated in relation to the participation of other actors into the tumult in Rumelia.

The *ayan* rivalries and later secessionisms are seen to have recurred from the early 1790s to the midst of the first decade of the 19th century. As the most important figure of the time, Pazvantoğlu Osman was not unique in his “rebellion” against the central authority. Before him, Kara Mahmud Pasha of the Bushatlıs had already tested and proved the capacity of the central government against such developments and the several pardons and cooption of him by the government was a mere response to its inefficiency in the control of the provinces.

In this respect, the *ayans* or prominent members of the local notables of Rumelia such as Kara Mahmud of the Bushatlıs in Shkoder, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha in Janina, Pazvantoğlu Osman in Vidin, and later Tirsinikli İsmail in Ruse and the other lesser ones are seen refractory unlike those of Anatolians in relation to the loyalty and support for the state efforts over “centralization” and “modernization”. This is not to say that the banditry was totally depended on the *ayan* rivalries and secessionisms in Rumelia. Nevertheless, as a driving power, the institution of *ayanlık*, at least, partially enabled the bandits to further their disorders, which paralyzed the Ottoman reassertion of central control in Rumelia. As it is seen in the state measures against the mountain bandits, the banditry could be suppressed if there was no existence of the kind of *ayans* who protected and incited the bandits, let alone their cooperation with the government to confront and suppress the bandits. Distinctively, in the case of Pazvantoğlu Osman and later Tokatçıklı Süleyman, it appears that the banditry played a role of leverage for their irredentist political and financial concerns.

Conversely, it is argued that with the strengthening of the local notables at the turn of the 19th century, the nature of the relationship between the *ayans* and the bandits changed, no longer, allowing a similar uncontrolled anarchy in Rumelia. Then, only some individual bandit leaders were able to continue their disorders between Sofia and İstanbul. However, it was also different than the previous years that they pursued legitimate financial and political careers by forcing the government to recognize them as *ayans* of some lucrative districts.

On the other hand, becoming a part of the reaction against the reforms in its last phase, the mountain bandits seemingly played a part in the abolishment of the *Nizam-ı Cedid*, whose military wing at least would be restored in a short time under different name “*Sekban-ı Cedid*”, which was led by Alemdar Mustafa Pasha.

As to the effects and limits of the government response against the mountain bandits, it seems that there was not much to reinvent a systematic liquidation of the troublemakers. Rather, the most remarkable attempt of the government seems to have been the cooptation and integration of the troubled figures into the existing order when the government had not the capacity to overcome the problem. By trying first pardoning and settling the bandits, the government tried to pacify them. In addition, it was not uncommon that the bandit leaders or those who had had bandit careers became *ayans* or a part of the local notables. As in the case of Kara Feyzi and Kuşancalı Halil, the government made use of them against the Russians during the war which started in 1806.

Whether success or failure against the entire uproar, the result of the state efforts against the mountain bandits was the infiltration of the Ottoman central authority into Rumelia. This happened through a series of correspondences of orders and reports, collaboration with the local notables and population, cooption and integration of the troublemakers into the Ottoman mechanism. On the other hand, the banditry provided the state with the legitimate ground to eliminate or at least intimidate recalcitrant elements in Rumelia as well as Anatolia. In the pretext of accusing some *ayans* of collaborating with the bandits, the state was able to confront and to seek the support of the other *ayans* and local notables.

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APPENDICES

A. THE FIRST DOCUMENT SPEAKING OF THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS



The document indicates that before this time, the *kadı* of the district (*kaza*) of Servi (Sevlievo) had already informed İstanbul of that there had been no mountain bandits in their *kaza* and also indicates that there was still none in their district. BOA. C.DH., 309, 15409, 29 Muharrem 1200 [2 December 1785].

B. THE PHYSICAL MAP OF BULGARIA



C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu alıřmada, 18. yzyıl sonu ve 19. yzyıl bařlarında, 1785 ve 1808 yılları arasında Rumeli’de ortaya ıkan Dađlı Eřkıyası ele alınmıřtır. Daha ok bugn Bulgaristan sınırları ierisinde kalan Osmanlı topraklarında yođunluk kazanarak uzun bir sre devam eden eřkıyalıđın ortaya ıkıřı, geliřimi ve sona eriři, eřkıyalıđa karřı Osmanlı hkmeti tarafından alınan nlemler ve Devlet’in eřkıyalıkla uđrařtıđı sırada karřılařtıđı sorunlar zerinden incelenmiřtir. Sonu olarak, eřkıyalıkla mcadele zerinden Devlet’in bilhassa Rumeli’de yeniden merkezileřme srecine girdiđi, ve eřkıyanın ortadan kaldırılmasına paralel olarak adem-i merkeziyeti bir hviyet kazanan belli bařlı ayanların ortadan kalkması veya kaldırılması zerinden ayanlık kurumunun tasfiye edildiđi tespit edilmiřtir.

Bu alıřma ođunlukla ikinci el kaynaklar zerinden oluřturulmuřtur. Eřkıyalıđın ortaya ıkıřı, geliřimi ve sonulanması, devletin aldıđı tedbirler ve karřılařtıđı glkler konusunda ortaya atılan tartıřmalar ve bilgiler zerinden dađlı eřkıyalıđı ele alınmıřtır. Vera P. Mutafovchieva ve Ycel zkaya’nın dađlı eřkıyası zerine hazırladıkları eserler temel alınarak dnem zerine yapılmıř diđer alıřmalar da bu bađlamda mmkn olduđunca gzden geirilmıřtir. Konunun ayanlıkla i ie bulunmuř olması, ayanlıđın da ok alıřılan konulardan biri olması bakımından eřkıyalıkla ilgili olduka ok bilgiye rastlanılmıřtır. Ancak zerinde durulan sorunlar ve tartıřmalar genellikle birbirine benzemektedir. Eřkıyalıđı kapsayan alıřmalar gz nne alındıđında, zerine alıřma yapılan ve dnemin en dikkat eken isimlerinden bazıları Pazvantođlu Osman, Tirsinikli İsmail, Yılıkođlu Sleyman, Tokatıklı Sleyman, Hakkı Pařa ve Kadı Abdurrahman Pařa’dır. Bu alıřmada, kullanılan belgelerin ođunu Bařbakanlık Osmanlı Arřivi’ndeki Cevdet tasnifleri oluřturmaktadır. Dađlı eřkıyalıđı, bu alıřmada bir btn olarak ele alındıđından ancak literatrde boř kalan veyahut yapılan bazı gzlemlerin ve sonuların desteklenmesine ynelik bir arřiv alıřması yapılabilmiřtir. Nitekim dađlı eřkıyalıđı uzun bir dnemi kapsaması ve eřitli konu bařlıkları altında toplanabilmesi bakımından kendi iinde zengin bir arařtırma sahası barındırmaktadır. Bu alıřmada,

eşkîyalık ve devlet tedbirleri üzerinden III. Selim'in saltanatına denk gelen bir döneme ışık tutulmak istenmiştir. İkinci Mahmud dönemi merkezileşme ve reformları ve 19. yüzyılda Balkanlarda ortaya çıkan milliyetçilik konularının daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi açısından dağlı eşkıyalığının toplum ve devlet üzerine bıraktığı etki bakımından bu konu oldukça önemli görülmüştür.

Dağlı Eşkîyasının ortaya çıkış ve gelişim sebeplerini anlamak adına ilk iki bölümde Osmanlı Devleti'nin 16. yüzyıl sonlarından 18. yüzyıl sonuna kadar geçirdiği sosyo-ekonomik, mali, idari ve askeri değişimler ele alınmıştır. Anlaşıldığı üzere, konunun esasını oluşturan eşkıyalık faaliyeti daha 16. yüzyıl sonlarından başlayarak 18. yüzyıl sonlarına gelinceye kadar başta Anadolu ve daha az olmak üzere Rumeli'de ciddi boyutlara ulaşan sosyo-ekonomik ve demografik karışıklıklara neden olmuştur. Bunun arkasında, 16. yüzyıl sonunda yaşanmaya başlayan "krizler ve değişim dönemi" yatmaktadır. Birinci bölümde, Osmanlı Devleti'nin 16. yüzyıl sonundan 18. yüzyıl sonuna kadar geçirdiği kriz ve değişimler üç ana başlık altında değerlendirilmiştir. Bunlar, 16. yüzyıl sonu ve 17. yüzyıl başı krizleri, askeri değişim ve mali değişim olarak adlandırılmıştır.

Genel olarak Akdeniz havzasında ve özelde Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki nüfus artışına paralel olarak bu yüzyıl sonunda ortaya çıkan sorunlar arasında paranın değer kaybetmesi ve buna karşılık olarak temel tüketim maddelerinde görülen fiyat artışları, Osmanlı idari ve mali, dolayısıyla, toplum yapısını da değiştirecek önemli etkiler yaratmıştır. Bu dönemde görülen Celali İsyanlarının ortaya çıkış sebeplerinden bir tanesi, bahsi geçen nüfus artışı ve buna bağlı olarak tarım arazilerinin artan nüfusu karşılayamamış olmasıdır. Diğer sebepler arasında fiyat artışlarının yaşanmış olması yer alır. Amerika'dan Avrupa yoluyla Osmanlı topraklarına giren ucuz gümüş neticesi Osmanlı parası değer kaybetmiş, bunun yanında Devlet tarafından da paranın değerinin düşürülmesi sonucunda yükseliş eğiliminde olan fiyatların daha da artarak ekonomik krize neden olduğu görülmüştür. Diğer taraftan, maaşlı devlet görevlileri ve tımarlı sipahiler de paranın değer kaybetmesi sonucunda ekonomik olarak ciddi şekilde etkilenmiştir.

Aynı şekilde, artan nüfusa yeterli iş imkânını sunamayan köy yaşamının, köylerini terk eden insanlar yüzünden bozulmaya başladığı görülür. Köyden kente yaşanan göç

sonrası, kentlerde de nüfus baskısı meydana gelmiştir. Topraksız ve işsiz kalan bu gurup içinden çıkarak sekban olan insanların, bu durumda eşkıyalığa meylettikleri ve neticede hali hazırda kötü durumda olan sosyo-ekonomik durumu daha da zor duruma soktukları görülür. Celali-sekban isyanları olarak da adlandırılan ve Anadolu’da görülen bu eşkıyalık yüzünden Anadolu’da zirai üretim ve ticaret sekteye uğramıştır.

Devletin “klasik dönemi” içerisinde temel idari, mali ve askeri yapılanmasını oluşturan tımar sistemi bu gelişmeler neticesinde yıpranmış ve eski etkinliğini kaybetmeye başlamıştır. Bunu ve dolayısıyla devletin yeniden-yapılanma sürecini oluşturan bir diğer önemli etken ise, bu yüzyıl sonu itibarıyla Avrupa’da ortaya çıkan yeni askerî gelişmelerdir. Askeri teknoloji ve savaş idaresindeki gelişmeler neticesinde, o zamana kadar Osmanlı Devleti ordusunun temelini oluşturan ve ancak ekim ve hasat zamanı (bahar başlangıcı-yaz sonu) arasında savaşı sürdürebilecek tımarlı sipahiler yerine, daha çok maaşlı tüfekli-piyade askerine ihtiyaç duyulmuştur. Buna bağlı olarak, sayıları artırılan ulufeli Yeniçeriler kadar dönemin en önemli gelişmelerinden birisi de savaş başlangıcı veya sırasında toplanılan ve savaş bitiminde terhis edilen maaşlı-geçici sekban askerlerinin ortaya çıkışı olmuştur. Sayıları artan Yeniçeriler, merkezde ve daha sonra taşrada merkezi Devlet otoritesini sarsarak siyasî hayatı ve bunun yanında bölgesel sosyo-ekonomik yaşantıyı değiştirecek önemli bir unsur olmaya başlamıştır. Yeniçeriler kadar, sekbanlar veyahut bir diğer adıyla levendler de silahlı ve askerî bir yaşantıya alışık bir şekilde Anadolu ve Rumeli’de eşkıyalık yaparak ciddi karışıklıklara neden olmuştur.

Osmanlı hükümetinin daha fazla tüfekli piyadeye ve dolayısıyla daha çok nakit paraya ihtiyaç duyması ise diğer taraftan bozulmaya başlayan tımar sisteminin yerine daha çok kaynak sağlayacağı düşünülen iltizam sisteminin yerleşmesine neden olmuştur. Açık artırma usulüyle mukataa adı verilen belirli toprak ve finans ünitelerinin vergi toplama hakkının üç yıllığına verildiği bu uygulamanın toprağı ve köylüyü korumakta aciz kaldığı görülmüştür. Bunda etkili olan önemli bir etmen olarak mültezimlerin kısa zamanda çok kar elde etmeye çalışmaları gösterilmiştir. Böylelikle, vergi toplama hakkına sahip oldukları birimlerin çeşitli ihtiyaçlarını gözetmemeleri -veya köylüye kredi ve borç vererek onları borçlandırmaları-

sebebiyle köylü ve dolayısıyla vergi kaynağı perişan olmuştur. Buna engel olmak adına 17. yüzyıl sonlarında kayd-ı hayat ile verilen malikâne uygulamasına geçilmiştir. Bu sistemle beraber, malikâne sahiplerinin toprakların ve dolayısıyla köylünün korunmasına özen gösterecekleri düşünülmüştür. Ancak reayanın ve vergi kaynağının korunması sağlanamamıştır. Burada, malikâne olarak verilen toprakların da tıpkı iltizam sistemi içerisinde olduğu gibi alt birimlere ayrıldığı görülür.

Ayrıca, bu dönemle ilgili en önemli gelişmeler arasında “çiftlikleşme” eğilimi yer almaktadır. Keza, köylünün borçlandırılması ile arazilerinin ellerinden alınması sonucunda çiftliklerin yaygınlaştığı ve bu köylülerin buralarda ücretli çalışanlar durumuna düştükleri görülür. Eşkîyalığın artmasının sebeplerinden biri olarak bu sürecin yer aldığı söylenebilir.

Buna ek olarak, finansal açığı kapatmak üzere devletin olağan üstü vergileri olağanlaştırması ve yeni vergiler konmasının yanında, devlet görevlilerinin halktan usulsüz topladıkları “tekâlif-i şakka” türünden vergiler de ekonomik ve sosyal hayatı derinden etkileyerek konunun esasını oluşturan eşkıyalık olgusunun ortaya çıkmasına katkıda bulunmuştur.

Belirtilen değişim dönemine kadar Osmanlı Devleti’nde Anadolu ve Rumeli’de uygulanarak sosyal hareketliliği engelleyen ancak nispeten güvenliğin ve üretimin devamlılığı açısından önemli bir yere sahip olan tımar sistemi, etkinliğini ve yerini kaybetmeye başlamıştır. Bunun sonucunda, taşradaki “çiftlikleşme” süreci de hesaba katılırsa, topraksız kalarak köyünü terk etmeye başlayan halk, daha çok da bu sosyo-ekonomik çevreden ortaya çıkan genç-bekâr erkekler, iş bulmak adına taşra yöneticilerine ve ileri gelenlerine, savaş zamanlarında ise devlete de “kapılanarak” yeni bir zümreyi oluşturmuşlardır. Eşkîyalık için önemli bir kaynak teşkil eden bu paralı askerler, aynı zamanda ortaya çıkmaya başlayan ancak çok daha köklü biçimde kendisini taşra hayatında hissettirecek olan ayanların güçlenmesinin de önemli bir parçası olmuştur.

Mali ve askeri değişimlere ve dolayısıyla devletin merkezi otoritesinin taşrada eskisi gibi etkisini hissettirememesine paralel olarak, ayanlar üstlendikleri çeşitli vazifelerle taşra yönetiminin bir parçası olarak sivrilerek 18. yüzyılın sonuna gelindiğinde

merkezce kontrol altına alınmaları güç olacak finansal ve askeri güce ulaşmışlardır. Devletin, 18. yüzyıl başında ayanlığı –içinde bulunduğu askeri, idari ve finansal zarurete nazaran- resmî bir vazife olarak tanınması neticesi, yüzyıl boyunca ve özellikle yüzyıl sonlarına doğru, ayanlar arasında ve ayanlarla devlet arasındaki nüfuz mücadeleleri artarak Rumeli’de sürekli bir karışıklık ortamı oluşmuştur.

Özellikle yüzyıl ortasından sonra, savaş dönemleri sırasında ve sonrasında güçlenen ayanlık ve ayan mücadeleleri yanında eşkıyalık da Rumeli’de kentsel ve daha çok kırsal olmak üzere sosyo-ekonomik hayatı derinden etkilemiştir. Devletin gerekli idari ve askeri güce sahip olmaması neticesi adalet dağıtımı da bundan etkilenerek toplumun güçlü olan kesim tarafına meyiletmesine neden olmuştur. Bunun haricinde birçok kimse toprağını veyahut işini gücünü bırakarak daha güvenli gördükleri şehir ve kasabalara ya da -daha çok Hristiyan kesim- Osmanlı toprakları dışına göç etmişlerdir.

Bu şartlar altında 1787 ve 1792 arasındaki savaştan da yenik ve finansal olarak iflasın eşiğinde ayrılan Osmanlı Devleti, taşrada merkezi otoritesini, daha da önemlisi finansal ve askeri kaynaklarını yeniden merkezde toplama amacına yönelik reform hareketlerine girişmiştir. Ancak hem toplum nazarında yeni koyulan vergiler hem de ayanlar nezdinde devletin merkezileşme çalışmaları reformlara karşı olan bir tepkiyi de beraberinde getirmiştir. 1793 yılında kurulan Nizam-ı Cedid askeri teşkilatı ve daha sonra İrad-ı Cedid hazinesinin kurulması, dolayısıyla yeni vergiler konulması üzerine, bu dönemde, Devlet hem merkezde Yeniçerilerin, ulemanın ve İstanbul halkının tepkisini üzerine çekmiş hem de taşrada ayanlar başta olmak üzere, Yeniçeri ve halkın nefretine neden olmuştur. Bu hususta, Anadolu ve Rumeli birbirinden ayrılmaktadır. Yeni askeri teşkilatın desteklenmesi açısından Anadolu ayanlarının devlete sadık kalarak reformlara destek oldukları görülürken, Rumeli ayanlarının bu yenilik hareketlerinin karşısında oldukları anlaşılmaktadır. Bunda, Rumeli’de ki Yeniçeri karakterinin daha baskın olması da önemli rol oynamıştır. 18. yüzyılın sonlarına gelindiğinde Rumeli’deki nüfuzlu bazı ayanların Yeniçeri geçmişlerinin olması ve bunlarla ilişki ağları kurmaları neticesinde, yapılan yeniliklerle ellerindeki ayrıcalıkları kaybetmek istememeleri Devlet’e karşı olan hareketlere bu gurupların daha kolay katılmalarına neden olmuştur. Pazvantoğlu

Osman ele alındığında, Yeniçeri ocağına mensup bulunması nedeniyle, Belgrad yamaklarını yanına çekebilmiştir. Aynı zamanda, yeni koyulan vergilere karşı görünerek de bölge halkının desteğini kazanmaya çalışmıştır. Tam da bu döneme denk gelerek ortaya çıkan ve gelişen dağlı eşkıyalığının uzun bir süre etkisini artırarak devam ettirmesi üzerine Devlet'in bu sorunu bastırmak adına almış olduğu tedbirlerle, kaynaklarını ve zamanını harcaması sonucunda merkezileşme ve yenileşme işi uzamış ve sekteye uğramıştır.

1785 civarında ilk defa belgelerde “dağlı eşkıyası” olarak adına rastlanan kalabalık eşkıya grupları 1791'den itibaren 1787-1792 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya savaşı sonlarında savaştan kaçan ve savaşın sonunda terhis edilen askerlerin de katılımıyla yeni bir şekil almıştır. Anadolu'dan getirilen askerlerin firari olmaları nedeniyle tekrar evlerine veya bölgelerine dönememeleri ve Rumeli'den toplanan askerlerle birlikte işsiz ve geçimden mahrum olmak üzere kalabalık ve silahlı olarak eşkıyalığa başvurması sonucunda Rumeli'deki eşkıyalık daha çok paramiliter bir görünüme dönüşmüştür. Dağlı eşkıyasını oluşturan unsurların büyük çoğunluğunu Müslüman Osmanlı halkından bir kesim oluşturmuştur. Bunların içerisinde Arnavutlar, Boşnaklar, Tatarlar, Anadolu'dan gelen askerler ve bir kısım Rumeli halkı önemli rol oynar. Ancak, eşkıyalar arasında Hristiyanların da yer aldığı görülmüştür. Bu kesim daha çok Pazvantoğluna bağlı eşkıya gurupları arasında yer almaktadır. Eşkıyaların savunmasız köy ve panayırlar kadar tahkim edilmiş kasaba ve şehirlere, dağlık araziler yanında düzlük alanlara da saldırımları sonucunda Osmanlı yöneticileri bunları ortadan kaldırmak için eşkıyalığın şiddetinin arttırmasına paralel olarak çeşitli tedbirler almıştır.

Alınan önlemler arasında en dikkat çekici olanını, merkezden atanan paşalar nezaretinde bölgesel güçlerin eşkıya üzerine atanması oluşturmaktadır. Rumeli'deki ayanlar, kendi maiyetleriyle veyahut bölgelerinden topladıkları askerler ile eşkıya üzerine görevlendirilmişlerdir. Bunun yanında, Anadolu ayanının yardımına da önemli derecede başvurulmuştur. Rumeli ayanına nazaran Anadolu'daki ayanların, Devletin atmış olduğu merkezileşme ve yenileşme adımlarına daha sadık görünerek yardımda bulunmasına rağmen eşkıyanın tedibi için Anadolu'dan istenen askerler bazen zamanında gönderilememiş bazen de hiç Rumeli'ye ulaşmamıştır. Ayanlara ek

olarak, Rumeli’de görev alan bazı paşalar ve diğer devlet görevlileri de topladıkları askerler ile eşkıya takibinde görev almıştır.

Dağlı eşkıyası sorununun büyümesi ve engellenememesine denk olarak, Devlet’in bu sorunla mücadele adına zaman içinde daha kudretli ve nüfuzlu paşaları Rumeli’de görevlendirmeye çalıştığı görülmektedir. 1780’lerin ortalarından 1791’e kadar dağlı eşkıyası ile mücadelede Edirne bostancıbaşısının en önemli unsur olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bunun dışında, merkezden atanan veyahut Rumeli’de bulunan bazı hasekilerin de dağlı sorunu üzerine görevlendirildiği görülür. Ancak, savaş sona erdikten sonra eşkıyaya karşı görevlendirilen asıl isim Çirmen mutasarrıfı olmuştur. Bu dönemde çeşitli paşalar Çirmen mutasarrıfı olarak atanmış veyahut Çirmen mutasarrıflığına getirildiklerinde vezarete yükseltilmişlerdir. Dönem içerisinde Çirmen mutasarrıfının zenginliği ve askeri kaynakları artırılmaya çalışılarak eşkıyaya karşı başarılı olması amaçlanmıştır. Ancak, 1795 yılında, Pazvantoğlu Osman’ın eşkıyaya destek olmasına karşı alınan tedbirler sonucunda başarısız olunması ardından eşkıyalığın artması nedeniyle 1796 yılında artık Rumeli’de eşkıyaya karşı görevlendirilen en yetkili unsurun Rumeli valisi olduğu görülmektedir. Hakkı Paşa ile birlikte Rumeli valilerinin eşkıyaya karşı en üst makam olarak görevlendirilmelerinin yanında önceki diğer unsurların da eşkıyaya karşı görevlendirilmeye devam ettikleri görülmektedir. Çirmen mutasarrıfı, Edirne bostancıbaşısı ve bunların yanında Silistre valisi bizzat dağlı üzerine görevli kılınmışlardır. Ancak, Hakkı Paşa’nın ikinci Rumeli valiliğinden sonra dağlı eşkıyası ile mücadele etmek üzere Rumeli valiliğine önce Filibe ayanının, daha sonra da Tepedelenli Ali ve İbrahim paşaların atandığı görülmektedir. Rumeli’de nüfuz ve kudret sahibi olan bu iki ayanın Rumeli valiliğine atanmasıyla, eşkıyaya karşı önemli bir güç kazanmayı hedefleyen hükümet aynı zamanda bu iki ayan arasındaki güç mücadelesinden de yararlanarak Arnavutluk dolaylarında güç kazanan bu ayanlardan birinin diğerine nazaran daha çok sivrilmesini engellemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bunun yanında, dikkat çeken bir diğer husus da, bilhassa bu iki Arnavutluk ayanının, Kuzey Bulgaristan ve Rodoplar çevresindeki güçlü veya güçlenmekte olan ayanları dengelemek amacıyla Rumeli valisi olarak atanmış olmalarıdır.

Ayanlar kadar, eşkıya ve ayan-paşa kuvvetlerinin arasında görülen Arnavutlar da bu dönemdeki en dikkat çekici unsurlardan birini teşkil etmektedir. Bunun nedeni ise Arnavutların daha çok paralı asker olmaları nedeniyle kolaylıkla saf değiştirebilmeleri ve eşkıyaya katılmalarıdır. Ayrıca, eşkıya arasında önemli miktarda Arnavut'un yer aldığı görülmektedir. Daha önce bahsedilen sebeplerin dışında, bu dönem Arnavutluk'ta yaşanan nüfus artışı ve bölgedeki çiftlikleşme sorunu da hesaba katılırsa maişetsiz kalan Arnavut halkının, Arnavutluk dışındaki bölgelere taşması Rumeli'de çok sayıda görülmelerini açıklamaktadır. Ayrıca, savaşlarda ve ayanların maiyyetlerinde sekban olarak görev almaları da bölgede sürekli mevcut olmalarına neden olmuştur. Eşkıyalığın önlenmesi için alınan tedbirlerin en önemlilerinden bir kaçını, bunların Arnavutluk'tan Rumeli'ye geçirilmemesi veyahut eşkıya arasında ve ayan ve paşaların maiyyetlerinde bulunanlarının Arnavutluk'a gönderilmeleri oluşturmaktadır.

Bununla beraber, eşkıyaya karşı savunma ve saldırı tedbirleri arasında nefir-i amm yani halkın silahlı bir şekilde eşkıyaya karşı organizasyonu önemli bir yer teşkil etmiştir. Bu bakımdan, eşkıyanın elinde bulunan silah ve cephaneden yoksun bulunan Rumeli halkının, "kanun-ı kadim"e ters düşecek şekilde, silahlanmasına izin verilmesi, hatta yeri geldiğinden bizzat devlet tarafından silahlandırılması da milliyetçilik çağında görüleceği üzere toplumun askeri bir tecrübe kazanmış olması bakımından önemlidir.

Ancak, alınan bütün tedbirlere karşı, eşkıyalık uzun bir süre devam etmiştir. Bunda, bazı ayanların, kendi nüfuz alanlarını genişletmek veyahut hiç olmazsa devletin kendileriyle uğraşmasını önlemek adına, eşkıyayı himaye ederek desteklemesi önemli yer edinmiştir. Bu ayanlardan veyahut Rumeli toplumunun ileri gelenlerinden en önemlisi Pazvantoğlu Osman'dır. Tuna Nehri üzerinde Vidin'de konuşlanıp Belgrad, Kuzey Bulgaristan, Eflak ve hatta Balkan Dağlarının güneyine kadar sarkarak kendi alanını eşkıyaları ve Belgrad yamaklarını destekleyerek genişletmeye çalışmıştır. Bu yüzden, eşkıyalar, Pazvantoğlu Osman'dan maddi destek gördükleri kadar, Devlet tedbirleri sonucu üzerlerine gidilip sıkıştırıldıklarında Vidin'e kaçma imkânını bulmuşlardır. Pazvantoğlu Osman kadar aleni olmasa da diğer birçok irili ufaklı ayan ve ileri gelenler de eşkıyaya kendi çıkarları adına destek olmuştur.

Pazvantoğlu Osman örneğinde görüldüğü üzere, Devlet'in, yeri geldiğinde Rumeli'de yer alan en nüfuzlu ayanlardan birinin üzerine gidebildiği ve diğer ayanların desteğini isteyerek onları yanına çektiği görülmektedir. Ancak, bu döneme gelinceye dek Devlet'in Rumeli'deki ayanlara karşı aldığı tavır, birinin üstüne hat safhada meşruiyet sağlanmadan kati bir şekilde gitmektense birbirleri arasındaki nüfuz mücadelelerine sessiz kalarak birini diğerine kırdırmak ve her iki taraftan birinin çok fazla güçlenmesine mani olmak üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu usul, ayanlığın kuvvetlenmesine paralel olarak 18. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren Devlet tarafından benimsenmiş bir politika şeklinde görünmekte ve dağlı eşkıyalığının sürdüğü dönemde daha da önem kazanmaktadır. Bu açıdan değerlendirildiğinde, eşkıyanın ve isyana meyilli ayanların aynı döneme denk gelen varlıkları, zaman zaman birinin çıkardığı sıkıntılar sonucu diğerine katlanmak durumunda kalınmasıyla sonuçlanmıştır.

Devletin eli güçlendiğinde ise, Pazvantoğlu Osman eşkıyaya ve Belgrad yamaklarına desteğinden dolayı cezalandırılmak istenmiş ve Vidin iki sefer kuşatılmıştır. Bunlarda başarı sağlayamayan hükümet, ister istemez Pazvantoğlu'nu affetmek ve hatta sonunda ona vezirlik vermek zorunda kalarak gailesini defetmek yolunu seçmiştir. Bu dönemde görülen en ilgi çekici tedbirlerden birisi, sorun çıkaran unsurlardan birinden birinin ortadan kaldırılmasına dikkat edilmesidir. Eşkıyalık sorunu ortaya çıkıp gelişme aşamasıyken Arnavutluk'ta Kara Mahmud Paşa'nın isyanı bastırılmadan evvel, Devlet, eşkıyalar için genel af ilan etmiş ve Mahmud Paşa'nın üzerine yürümüştür. Aynı şekilde, Pazvantoğlu Osman kuşatıldıktan ve affedilerek Vidin Muhafızlığı kendisine verildikten sonra, Devlet, eşkıyaya verdiği afları geri çekmiş ve onları ortadan kaldırmayı hedeflemiştir.

Alınan tedbirlerin başarısızlığa uğraması veyahut eşkıyalığın devam etmesinin sebeplerinden bir diğeri de bu döneme rastlayan tedirgin edici uluslararası gelişmelerdir. Fransa'nın Avrupa'daki savaşları ve İyon Denizi civarında genişleyerek Osmanlı Devleti'ne sınırdış olması, dış gelişmelere karşı tedbirli davranılarak eşkıyalığa karşı alınan tedbirlerin sınırlı kalmasına neden olmuştur. Aynı şekilde, Fransa'nın Mısır'ı işgal etmesi ve arkasından Bosna'yı da işgal edeceği haberinin alınması eşkıyalığa karşı bir süre için de olsa yeteri kadar tedbir alınmasını

engelleyen faktörlerdendir. Arabistan’da uzun süre devam eden Vahhabi isyanları da, yenileşme ve merkezileşme adımları kadar, eşkıyalık konusunda da Devlet’in elini kolunu bağlayan diğer sebepler arasında yer almaktadır.

Nitekim eşkıyalığın sürmesinde en çarpıcı unsurlardan birisi olarak ayanların onları himaye etmeleri veyahut eşkıya takibinde gerekli yardımı yapmaktan çekinmeleri yer alır. Devletin çeşitli kaza ayanlarını, paşalar vasıtasıyla organize ederek eşkıyayı gerekli görüldüğü şekilde sıkıştırması sonucu, yardım alacak unsurlardan mahrum olacak eşkıya da ister istemez sönmek zorunda kalabilirdi. Ancak burada, bölgenin dağlık olması ve eşkıyanın kolayca bir bölgeden diğer bir bölgeye kaçması da onların takibini zorlaştıran etmenlerden olmuştur.

Ayanların, eşkıyalığın sürmesinde olduğu kadar eşkıyalığın sona ermesinde de rolleri önemli olmuştur. 1800’lü yıllardan itibaren, bazı ayanların çok güçlenip artık eşkıyalara eskiden olduğu gibi rağbet etmeyerek kuvvetlerini kendi bölge halkından oluşturmaları veya eşkıyaları kendi kuvvetleri içine düzenli ve disiplinli bir şekilde katmaları neticesinde eşkıyalığın Kuzey Bulgaristan’da sona erdiği görülmüştür. Aynı şekilde, uzun zamandır eşkıyaya karşı mücadele etmekte olan Rumeli halkının da eşkıyalığa karşı direncinin artması ve etkili savunma tedbirleri alması neticesinde, genel olarak, eşkıyalığın görünüm değiştirdiği görülmektedir. Geride kalan eşkıyaların ise, Osmanlı hükümetiyle anlaşma arayışı içerisinde olup bir kazanın ayanlığını elde etmek isteyen eşkıya liderleri etrafında birleştiği görülür.

Bunun yanında, bazı güçlü ve nüfuzlu ayanların ölmeleri veyahut öldürülmeleri de eşkıyalığın sona ermesinde önemli rol oynamıştır. 1804 ve sonrası dönemde, ölen veyahut 1806’da başlayıp 1812’de biten Osmanlı-Rus savaşından sonra İkinci Mahmud’un merkezileşme politikası ile beraber bazı önemli ayanların tasfiye edilmesi neticesinde eşkıyalar destek görecekları kimselerden mahrum kalarak eskisi kadar şiddetli ve yaygın hareketlerde bulunamamışlardır. Ayanların bazılarının eşkıyayı düzenli asker olarak kuvvetleri arasına katmaları, bazılarının da ölmeleri veya öldürülmeleri sonucunda eşkıyaların kuvvetli birer hamiden mahrum kalmalarının yanında, 1804 yılında Nizam-ı Cedid adı altında kurulan ve Avrupa teknik ve teçhizatıyla donatılan yeni tip askerin eşkıyaya karşı göstermiş olduğu başarı da eşkıyalığın belinin kırılmasında etkili olmuştur.

Tespit edilebilen Osmanlı belgelerinde dađlı eřkıyasına ait son belgeler 1805 yılına ait olup daha 1802-1803 yıllarında eřkıyalığın bittiđine ve yerini yurdunu terk eden Rumeli halkının yerlerine geri döndürölmelerine dair birçok evrak bulunmaktadır. Bu da dađlı eřkıyalığının 1802-1803 yıllarından sonra, en azından eskisi kadar yoğun ve yaygın olmadığını göstermektedir. Döneme ait vekayinamelerde, 1808 yılından sonraki dönemde, dađlı eřkıyasına dair çok fazla bilgi yer almamaktadır. Aynı şekilde, bu tarihten sonra gerçekleşen münferit eřkıyalık olaylarının da eskisi gibi Devlet'i uğraştıracak boyutlarda olmamasından dolayı dađlı eřkıyalığının sona erdiği tahmin edilmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu dönem sırasında ve sonunda, merkezileşme adına dađlı eřkıyalığını ortadan kaldırmak üzere Devlet tarafından alınan tedbirler ile birlikte Rumeli'de olduğu kadar Anadolu da ayan ve paşalarla sıkı ilişkiler kurulduğu görölmüştür. Eřkıyanın ve eřkıyaya yardımcı olan ayanların tedibi üzerine gönderilen sayısız emir ve bunların takibi neticesinde, Devlet'in Rumeli'deki daha şiddetli ve adem-i merkeziyete meyilli olan ayanları meşru bir zemin üzerinden, en azından, tasfiye etmeye çalışmış olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

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