

THE AGRARIAN BACKGROUND TO THE “*DAĞLI*” REBELLION
IN THE RHODOPE MOUNTAINS (1780-1810)

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IN THE RHODOPE MOUNTAINS (1780-1810)

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Çağdaş Salih Öztaş, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Agrarian Background to the “*Dağlı*” Rebellion in the Rhodope Mountains (1780-1810)

This thesis examines the “*dağlı*” rebellion that emerged in the Rhodope Mountains between 1780-1810 through agricultural, environmental, and economic factors. At the end of the eighteenth century, the *dağlıs* formed large and small bandit groups in the east of the Balkans and served as mercenaries under the command of the local notables. The study looks at the activities of the *dağlıs* from a regional perspective. It investigates how the region's mountain system shaped local people's economic activities. It focuses on agricultural and animal products that were grown by the local populace as subsistence and commercial products. Specifically, it asserts that the deterioration of the balance in the production of agricultural products led to the *dağlı* rebellion.

While explaining the rebellion, it refers to the characteristics of the rural rebellions in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, the property system, and landlord and peasant relations. It reveals the macro-economic structure of the settlements in the Rhodope Mountains through *salnames*. It examines the micro-economic structure on the basis of villages and households by using *temettuat* registers. In the light of these data, it emphasizes that environmental, agricultural, and economic factors were effective in the emergence of the *dağlı* rebellion.

ÖZET

Rodop Dağları'nda Dağlı İsyanı'nın

Tarımsal Arka Planı (1780-1810)

Bu tez 1780-1810 tarihleri arasında Rodop Dağlarında ortaya çıkan Dağlı İsyanı'nı tarım, çevre ve ekonomi faktörleri üzerinden incelemektedir. 18. yüzyılın sonunda dağlılar Balkanlar'ın doğusunda irili ufaklı eşkıya grupları oluşturmuş ve ayanların emrinde paralı asker olarak görev yapmışlardır. Bu çalışma dağlıların faaliyetlerine bölgesel bir perspektiften bakmaktadır. Bölgenin dağlık yapısının halkın ekonomik faaliyetlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir. Yerel halk tarafından geçimlik ve ticari olarak yetiştirilen tarımsal ve hayvansal ürünlere odaklanır. Tarımsal ürünlerin üretimindeki dengenin bozulmasının dağlı isyanına yol açtığını savunmaktadır.

İsyanı açıklarken 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda yaşanan kırsal isyanların mahiyetine, mülkiyet sistemine, toprak sahibi ve köylü ilişkilerine değinmektedir. Ardından Rodop Dağları'ndaki yerleşim yerlerinin makro iktisadi yapısını *salname* verileri aracılığıyla ortaya sermektedir. Mikro ekonomik yapıyı köyler ve haneler bazında *temettuat defterlerini* kullanarak incelemektedir. Bu veriler ışığında çevresel, tarımsal ve ekonomik değişkenlerin isyanın ortaya çıkmasında etkili olduğunu vurgular.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Balkans had witnessed huge political turmoil. The strife among *ayans* (local notables) to broaden their political claims on adjacent regions and the central government's struggle to cope with these self-ordained actors became the main subject of this period's historiography. Therefore, the studies have mainly focused on powerful *ayans* and their relationship with each other and the central government. However, there was another phenomenon of the period in which mainly ordinary people were the main actors. This phenomenon was the *dağlı isyanları* (the rebellions of the mountain people) that took place roughly between 1780-1810, and its main actors were mountain bandits known as the *dağlı eşkıyası* or the *kırcalı eşkıyası*.

The rebellion of the *dağlıs* has not drawn much attention despite an abundance of documents about this issue in the Ottoman archives. There are few studies about the issue, and existing ones generally relate to the relationship and struggle among the bandit leaders, *ayans*, and dignitaries. The studies about *dağlı* rebellion provide some insight on the emergence of the rebellion by mainly focusing on the relationship between *ayans* and bandits, the struggle of the central government to suppress the rebels, and the emergence of bandits as remains of mercenaries that fought in the wars against the Russian and Habsburg Empires during the years between 1787-1792.¹ Yet, the term *dağlı* has also a hint about the emergence of these

¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*; Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion;" Esmer, "Economies of Violence, 163–99; Başer, *Eşkialıktan Ayanlığa*; Başer, "Faaliyetleri ve Merkezi Hükümetle Olan İlişkileri;" Mazı, "The Sultans of the Countryside.

events, which underlines a geographical affiliation and makes us think about possible environmental causes of the rebellion.

Especially, using the term *dağlı eşkıyası* for all banditry activities during this period in the Balkans and for the actions of unruly *ayans* against the central government led to the emergence of a broader phenomenon. Ottoman documents referred to some bandits as *Hasköy eşkıyası* and *Kırcaali eşkıyası* by remarking their origins apart from labeling these groups as *dağlı eşkıyası*. However, *dağlı* and *Kırcaali* naming began to include Albanians and some *ayans* like Pazvandoğlu Osman Ağa, who was active in a region far removed from the Rhodope Mountains.² This phenomenon probably stemmed from the widespread activities of the bandit groups in the whole Balkans. It makes it hard to put this phenomenon into a more coherent context because of their wide range of activities. They were plundering nearby villages and towns, attacking ordinary people like peasants and merchants under the leadership of their chieftains, and sometimes they were serving as mercenaries under powerful local notables throughout the Balkans and fighting against the forces of rival *ayans* and central government.³

Their loyalty was very problematic, and they could easily change alliances, abandon their chiefs and *ayans* who enrolled them and begin to plunder any region where they set foot. The loyalty problem caused a widespread upheaval and banditry activities from Gallipoli to Wallachia in the northern-southern directions and from Tekirdağ to Sofia in the eastern-western directions. Despite the prevalence of their activities in broad geography and possible bandit participation from other regions, these mountain bandits mainly originated from settlements located around the Rhodope Mountains in the Southern Balkans, which included the administrative

² Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 61–64.

³ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 11, 61, 269.

districts of Gümülcine (Komotini present-day Greece), Yenice-i Karasu (Genisea in present-day Greece), Çağlayık, Dimetoka (Didymóteicho in present-day Greece), Sultanyeri (Momčilgrad in present-day Bulgaria), Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy (Haskovo in present-day Bulgaria), and Kırcaali (Kardzhali in present-day Bulgaria).⁴

The hilly area that was home to these bandits roughly stretches from Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy in the north to Gümülcine in the south and Dimetoka in the east to Ahiçelebi (Smolyan in present-day Bulgaria) in the west. The fact that these men originate from a mountainous region provides us an opportunity to look at these events from a geographical and environmental perspective, which previous studies have not taken into consideration. Therefore, this thesis aims to look at the phenomenon of banditry of mountain people from a different perspective and bring new explanations to the widespread unrest of these people in the Balkans by getting inspiration from various historians with a geographical sensitivity, such as J. R. McNeill and Faruk Tabak.⁵

The first comprehensive study about the banditry of mountain people as a distinct phenomenon is Yücel Özkaya's *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Dağlı İsyanları (1791-1808)*, first published in 1983. Relying mainly on archival sources and the works of Ottoman historians, this study focuses on the measures that the Ottoman Empire had taken to suppress the activities of these bandit groups and the role of *ayans* in the spread of banditry. The work suggests possible causes of the rebellion, within a general context of the decline of the central political power of the empire. The second part of the book focuses on the appointment by the central government of certain notables to cope with the rebellion. It shows how the Ottoman Empire struggled to end the *dağlı* rebellion for a long time. The study also provides a

⁴ Başer, *Eşkıyalıktan Ayanlığa*, 18–23.

⁵ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*; McNeill, *The Mountains*.

timeline for the events. Kırcaali region is mentioned as the first place that *dağlı eşkıyası* was born, with the participation of other men from the Deliorman region and some Albanian groups.⁶

Alper Başer's book, *Eşkialıktan Ayanlığa Kırcaalili Emin Ağa* presents a brief history of Hasköy Ayanı Kırcaalili Emin Ağa from his rise at the beginning of the 1800s until his death in 1813. The first part of the book is about the *dağlı* rebellion. It tries to describe and date the events surrounding the rebellion by relying on Ottoman historians such as Cevdet Paşa, Asım Efendi, and Ahmed Vasıf Efendi. The study is significant in giving the names of important bandit centers and their adjacent regions. It also provides information about the names of specific bandits, their villages, and activities in nearby regions. The second part of the book deals with the life of Emin Ağa, who struggled to achieve *ayanship* of Gümülcine and Filibe regions but largely failed. The book attributes Emin Ağa's roots to *dağlı eşkıyası* and presents his network and connections with other bandit leaders.⁷

Erol Ozan Yılmaz's master's thesis, *Militarization of Ottoman Rumelia: The Mountain Bandits (1785-1808)*, analyses the *dağlı* phenomenon from a similar perspective to Özkaya. First, the study focuses on the reasons that caused the emergence of *dağlı* bandits and brings a systematic approach to the general conditions that led to the unrest. The context is said to be the collapse of the Ottoman central authority in the provinces, the decline in the power of governors and *kadis*, the rise of the *ayans*, the collapse of the Ottoman military system, and the decay of the socio-economic conditions in the provinces. The book also details the emergence and development of mountain banditry in chronological order. In this chronological structure, the study focuses on the period between the emergence of mountain

⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*.

⁷ Başer, *Eşkialıktan Ayanlığa*.

bandits in 1785 and its end in 1808. The study also looks at military and other state measures taken against the rebellious groups.⁸

Alper Başer's master's thesis focuses on the relations of certain *ayans* with each other and the state, who were called mountain bandits from time to time. Among these *ayans* were Tokatçıklı Süleyman Ağa and Ali Molla, both of whom struggled for the *ayanlık* of certain areas in Western Thrace. According to the study, a certain political vacuum was what caused their struggles because, after the death of Gümülcine Ayanı Mestan Ağa, Tokatçıklı was able to occupy his place at the expense of Ali Molla. This study expands the area of the rebellion towards Ferecik, where Ali Molla was located but he had to leave the town after the failure of his endeavors. From after this that Ali Molla collaborated with other bandit leaders and became a mountain bandit. Tokatçıklı was appointed to suppress these groups, but he was not successful in this mission. Also, he was not a fierce opponent of *dağlı* bandits. He sometimes supported and guarded them from time to time. Başer's thesis mainly focuses on the activities of these two local notables. The study later concludes by describing how Ali Molla's group was finally settled in Ferecik again.⁹

Tolga Uğur Esmer's Ph.D. thesis, *A Culture of Rebellion: Networks of Violence and Competing Discourses of Justice in the Ottoman Empire, 1790-1808*, is a comprehensive study about the *dağlı* rebellion published in 2009. It focuses on Kara Feyzi, one of the most famous bandit leaders, and presents the developments in that he played a vital role from his rise as a bandit leader until he died in 1823. It examines practices, networks, and mechanisms that made Kara Feyzi an influential actor in Ottoman imperial politics. His network brought men together from different social strata, including peasants, mercenaries, and dignitaries. The study is important

⁸ Yılmaz, "Militarization."

⁹ Başer, "Faaliyetleri ve Merkezi Hükümetle Olan İlişkileri."

in terms of presenting a bandit leader as a significant power broker in the imperial playground and his prolonged struggle, which ended up with his resettlement as a local *ayan* on the Serbian border.¹⁰

While Kara Feyzi was one of the most notorious bandit leaders, he was also a kind of top representative of bandits in his retinue because the central authority negotiated with him as the first person. At the end of these negotiations, he would be an *ayan* on the Serbian border. His difference from other *ayans* derived from the fact that he negotiated with the central government in the name of other group members on the issue of settling the group, as a result of which he not only became an *ayan* but also his men were allowed to settle down with him.¹¹ However, Kara Feyzi was not the only leader who bargained with the authorities. Also, Ali Molla negotiated the settlement with the authorities.¹² The negotiation between the central authority and rebels was an ordinary situation in the Ottoman Empire. The rebels aimed to acquire administrative positions and political privileges due to their bargaining. The capital was generally inclined to accept the demands of rebel leaders by appointing them to powerful positions. Thus, the central authority incorporated rebels into the state apparatus and prevented their harmful activities.¹³ In the *dağlı* rebellion, the empire similarly solved the problem as in the case of sixteenth-century *celali* rebellions. However, the collective resettlement of bandit groups directs us to ask some questions. Why did the *dağlı* bandits negotiate resettlement with the central government, or why did the central government offer resettlement as a solution to banditry? Did rebel's request to be settled in another place derive from the conditions or changing dynamics in their usual settlement areas?

¹⁰ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion."

¹¹ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 2.

¹² Başer, "Faaliyetleri ve Merkezi Hükümetle Olan İlişkileri," 56.

¹³ Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 236.

I think separating the banditry of mountain people into a number of aspects will allow us to see its local roots, and to look at the issue from a regional perspective will help to better explain the emergence of mountain bandits and bring new perspectives. At this point, John R. McNeill's above mentioned book is a beneficial book for analyzing mountain environments. It is a comprehensive study that focuses on five mountain ranges throughout the Mediterranean. It explains the similarities and historical developments in the mountain way of life in the Mediterranean mountain ranges. Although the book does not mention the Rhodope Mountains at the northern edge of the Aegean Sea, this mountain range is part of this common mountain geography in the Mediterranean.¹⁴ Therefore, it is probable for the inhabitants of the Rhodope Mountains to experience similar changes in these five ranges.

McNeill proposes that after about 1800, many mountain communities in the Mediterranean started to experience an overshoot in population and market integration. In the late eighteenth century, the population in the mountains began to grow, and numbers had grown beyond the sustainable point. The unsustainable environment led to several adaptations and results ranging from agricultural experimentation to specializations, from military service and brigandage to emigration.¹⁵ Therefore, we can assume that the inhabitants of the Rhodope Mountains experienced a similar fate to other Mediterranean highlanders due to their increasing banditry activities in roughly the same period.

The role of market integration was crucial for mountain environments because it facilitated the marketing of mountain products and increased the living standards of the inhabitants. However, this created a vulnerable situation because

¹⁴ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 13–14.

¹⁵ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 4.

concentrating on a specific product might lead to a catastrophe in the face of adverse weather conditions, wars, political instabilities, and decreasing prices which lead to declining production and trade.¹⁶ McNeill's theoretical scheme provides us with an example to look at the Rhodope case from an environmental and geographical perspective and helps us to ask some relevant questions about the region. For example, can we relate the *dağlı* rebellion with overpopulation and market integration? Was their settlement (*iskan*) in other places due to such changes? Was there any product specialization in the regions where the *dağlı* community inhabited?

Faruk Tabak's book provides other insights into the *dağlı* people from an environmental perspective. He focuses on how the Little Ice Age, from about the fourteenth century to about the nineteenth century, affected the lowlands around the Mediterranean and caused people to settle in the uplands. He proposes that cooling weather conditions turned plains into wetlands. As a significant crop of the plains, wheat left the lowlands and was exiled to hilly regions of the Mediterranean. Tree crops covered hillsides and these areas became the main living places of the inhabitants. However, these developments continued only until the second half of the eighteenth century because, after this time, highland areas began to lose their attraction for the local people.¹⁷

We can expand Tabak's crop-based evaluation of the Mediterranean economy by focusing on tobacco as a significant cash crop that changes many local communities in the Balkans. Tabak mentions the role of certain crops such as wheat, sugar, and cotton. Yet, he only briefly discusses the arrival of tobacco to the Mediterranean basin and its transforming role in the mountainous regions, especially in the Levant. He also draws attention to the role of maize that enabled easier living

¹⁶ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 5.

¹⁷ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 14–15.

conditions in the highlands of the Balkans. Primarily, these two products are essential to see the impact of the Columbian Exchange in the Balkans. Maize and tobacco were introduced to the region after the discovery of the New World. Therefore, they did not have any share in the agriculture and economy in the Balkans.¹⁸ Notably, the region that the *dağlıs* originated from was one of the most important tobacco-producing centers of the empire, almost from the beginning of tobacco agriculture in the Ottoman Empire.

Fehmi Yılmaz's unique comprehensive study, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Tütün; Sosyal, Siyasi ve Ekonomik Tahlili (1600-1883)* provides considerable data for the empire-wide tobacco production. It deals with tobacco agriculture, trade, tobacco customs, and taxes throughout the empire. At the end of his study, Yılmaz gives a chart of tobacco producers in the empire in 1691 according to the *tütün tahrir* registers. According to the table, we see that 5437 out of 10487 tobacco producers throughout the empire were located in Gümülcine, Yenice-i Karasu, Çağlayık, Dimetoka, Sultanyeri, Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy, and Kırcaali, the geographical scope of this thesis. This shows the early introduction and expansion of tobacco agriculture in the region where *dağlı* rebels originated. Also, he shows how tobacco agriculture expanded in Yenice-i Karasu and Çağlayık until 1771. According to the *tahrir* registers in 1771, the volume of tobacco fields increased by 250% and reached 3.5 *dönüms* per farmer in Yenice-i Karasu and Çağlayık from 1691 to 1771. There were 3,127 tobacco farmers in 98 villages of Yenice-i Karasu in 1771 and 114 *dönüms* of fields per village.¹⁹ The registers that were used in the study only measure tobacco fields, so it does not contain any information about other agricultural products. Therefore, it is hard to predict the volume of tobacco production in the total

¹⁸ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 229, 259.

¹⁹ Yılmaz, "Tütün," 42–43.

agricultural output by comparing tobacco production with other kinds of field crops and livestock production. However, the high number of tobacco farmers and increasing tobacco fields direct us to ask some questions about the presence of agricultural specialization in the region. Was there a relationship between the *dağlı* rebellion and the agrarian system that was shaped around tobacco and other agricultural products?

Drew A. Swanson's book, "*A Golden Weed: Tobacco and Environment in the Piedmont South*," is a good example. It is a significant book which shows how tobacco changed the environment and fate of people in the hilly areas of Virginia and South Carolina in the USA. Swanson's book starts with a question, "How did such a poor land make some people so rich, and how did they so quickly become poor again?" and tells the story of tobacco agriculture in the region. It presents how tobacco production (dark tobacco) in the coastal part of East Virginia spread to the mountainous parts and how good quality tobacco (bright tobacco) of the hills enriched the region thanks to environmental conditions. However, this was not an age-long development. As a result of everyone's orientation on tobacco agriculture, the soil became completely unfertile and after a while, tobacco agriculture became unprofitable. Opening new fields for tobacco production and cutting down trees to dry tobacco accelerated the erosion in the hilly areas and made the region unfertile. This situation caused people to leave the area or prefer other crops.²⁰ This scheme of the book can provide a significant base for relating the role of tobacco in the Rhodope Balkans and its possible effects on the environment, agrarian patterns, and people.

²⁰ Swanson, *A Golden Weed*.

The *dağlı* rebels emerged in the Balkans during a tumultuous period. It was a widespread phenomenon that affected vast geography. However, it has until recently been mainly studied in terms of a narrow political perspective. The social and economic reasons for the *dağlı* rebellion have been associated with other realities of the period, such as their relationship with powerful *ayans*, the financial predicament of the empire, and the effects of long-lasting wars. Recent studies showed that environmental factors were significant determinants in the unrest of people in pre-modern societies, who almost entirely relied on the environment for their subsistence. Therefore, this study will try to seek environmental factors within an agrarian framework behind the rebellions of mountain people in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and bring a new perspective to a phenomenon that the political developments of the period have overshadowed.

The thesis deals with three types of primary sources: *hatt-ı hümayuns*, *vilayet salnames*, *temettuat* registers. This study firstly draws the boundaries of the Rhodope Mountains where the rebels originated to determine environmental factors. It focuses on the region's economic, social, and political structure by using Ottoman yearbooks (*vilayet salnames*). Then, it analyses *temettuat* registers (land and income surveys) of 30 villages in the Rhodope Mountains and provides an overall economic structure of these villages and their agricultural production. In brief, it firstly delineates the macro-level portrait of the region by using *salnames* and then the micro-level portrait of villages by examining the *temettuat* registers. Thus, it aims to shed light on the developments that led to the rebellion of mountain people in the region by looking at these macro and micro-level structures in the Rhodope Mountains.

Thirty villages in the districts of Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy and Dimetoka are selected by using historical maps of the region. Since not all villages and districts in

the Rhodope Mountains have *temettuat* registers, the study focused on surveys of the villages that could be found in both the list of *temettuat* registers and the historical maps. Although there are hundreds of villages in these two districts, I selected the villages that are located on the high lands. 22 villages of Hasköy district and eight villages of Dimetoka district are analyzed by using surveys of each village. Their collective data were used to shed light on these villages' agricultural production, economic activities, production, and landholding patterns.²¹ Tevfik Güran's *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı* is an instructive work that helps how to use the *temettuat* registers. Also, it provides examples of the villages of Filibe that are mainly located in the plains to compare with the villages of Hasköy and Dimetoka that were located in the highlands.²² The maps that are used in the detection of the villages are the maps of *Dimotiko* and *Stara Zagora (Eski Zagora)* produced by Imperial and Royal Military Geographical Institute of Austria-Hungary.²³ Also, *Special Map of All Oriental Tobacco Regions (Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece)* by Marco Nestoroff provides a detailed map of settlements that produced tobacco in 1925. Although it is a later map, it is crucial in terms of showing unchanged production patterns in the Balkans.²⁴

The second chapter starts with the geographical portrayal of the Rhodope Mountains. It delineates the boundaries of the mountain range and the geographical structures that form the region. Then, it presents the economic, agricultural,

²¹ BOA. ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5513, 5567, 5580, 5591, 5613, 5696, 5700, 5979, 6407, 6411, 6412, 6415, 6418, 6444, 6445, 6447, 6451, 6454, 6458, 6459, 6467, 6469, 6470, 6494, 6500, 6507, 6508, 6513, 6520

²² Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı*.

²³ E. Gautsch, R. Fischbacher, *44°-41° Dimotika*, 1/200.000, Wien: K.u.k. Militärgeographisches Institut, 1906, from <http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/200e/44-41.jpg>;

K. Maschka, R. Fischbacher, *43°-42° Stara Zagora (Eski Zagora)*, 1/200.000, Wien: K.u.k. Militärgeographisches Institut, 1903, from <http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/200e/43-42.jpg>.

²⁴ Nestoroff, *Special Map of All Oriental Tobacco Regions (Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece)*, 1/500.000, Sofia: FUMARO, 1925, from <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/109049>.

administrative, and demographic characteristics of Kırcaali, Dimetoka, Gümülcine, and Sarışaban districts by analyzing *salnames*. Based on findings from *salnames*, the last part of the chapter evaluates economic activities and agricultural production patterns in these districts. Mainly, it focuses on the importance of tobacco, grape, and cereal productions and shows how tobacco was significant for the region's economy.

The third chapter provides a detailed narrative of the *dağlı* rebellion. In general, it presents the activities of rebels chronologically. It depicts the struggle of the central government to suppress the rebellion and the relationship between bandits and *ayans*. Then, it discusses the usage of rebel and bandit terms. Based on secondary literature and archival documents shows how these men prefer to identify themselves. The next part draws the boundaries of the region populated by the *dağlı* community and highlights their communal differences from other groups by looking at archival documents and dialect studies. Later, it shows how historical documents establish a link between the impact of geography and *dağlıs'* characters.

The fourth chapter deals with more than one issue. It firstly describes the nineteenth century rural rebellions in the Ottoman Empire. It examines the possible roots of the rebellions in Vidin, Lebanon, Samsun, and conflicts in Western and Eastern Anatolia. After showing the importance of property and land struggles in these conflicts, it analyzes the landholding patterns in the Rhodope Mountains. It discusses the presence of the *çiftlik* system in the region. Then, it focuses on how the status of locals in the Rhodope Mountains changed at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In the third part of this chapter, *temettuat* registers of Dimetoka and Hasköy villages were analyzed and revealed agrarian patterns in these villages. It gives what crops were produced and how many shares these crops had in the total production.

The registers show that land shortage was a significant problem in the Rhodope villages. It portrays how certain products such as tobacco, maize, and rye contributed to the peasants' lives. After describing village structures, it shows how the environmental and agricultural characteristics of the region played a role in the emergence of the *dağlı* rebellion. Primarily, population and market integration are described. The link between these phenomena and crop patterns in the Rhodope Mountains are discussed. It explains how tobacco production started in the region and developed. Finally, it concludes how the agrarian background of the region paved the way for the rebellion of *dağlıs*.

CHAPTER 2

GEOGRAPHICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND ECONOMIC PORTRAIT OF THE RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the boundaries of the Rhodope Mountains, the geography of this region, and the settlements. First of all, it presents the mountain ranges that formed this geography, rivers, and the plains surrounding these mountains in order to grasp the geographical boundaries and structure of the region. Then, it focuses on the administrative, economic, and demographic structure of the settlements located within these geographical boundaries. Thus, it forms an introduction in terms of showing geographic factors that influenced the emergence of mountain bandits, which is discussed throughout the thesis.

The chapter aims to provide a detailed geographical boundary of the region where the *dağlı* bandits emerged, which has been generally opaque in previous studies about the rebellion. Although studies on the subject point to the Rhodope Mountains and settlements here as the homeland of the mountain bandits, these studies do not attempt to draw the administrative borders of the region.²⁵ After describing the geographical boundaries of the Rhodope Mountains, this section focuses on the settlements located here. It deals with the characteristics of these settlements and the administrative units that they formed. Based on “*vilayet salnameleri*” (provincial yearbooks), this chapter tries to reveal the economic, social,

²⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 1–3; Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 66.

and administrative structure of these centers. It discusses the population, economic activities, varieties of agricultural products, and settlement density.

2.2 Geographical portrait of the Rhodope Mountains

The region that we focus on covers a significant part of the Rhodope Mountains, which are now within the borders of Greece and Bulgaria. Meriç Valley in the north and east, the Aegean Sea in the south, and the left bank of Karasu (Mesta) River in the west constitute the region's geographical boundaries.²⁶ When we try to draw the boundaries through the settlements, Çirmen, Dimetoka, and Ferecik towns form the eastern border, and Despot Plateau forms the western border. The settlements in the south start from Ferecik in the east and continue to Mekri, Gümülcine, and İskeçe towns and end with Sarışaban in the west. On the northwest axis of Sarışaban, Çağlayık and Despot Plateau lines roughly constitute the western borders of this region. Uzuncaabad-1 Hasköy district, on the other hand, forms the northern border where this elevated region ends. Kırcaali, Ahiçelebi, Daridere, Sultanyeri towns are important centers that are located in the middle of these geographical borders. Apart from these town centers, there are countless villages administratively affiliated with these units. All these settlements constitute the geography of *dağlıs* (mountain people).²⁷

The Rhodope Mountains, where all these settlements are located, are one of the two main mountainous regions in today's Bulgaria. *Koca Balkan* Mountains (Stara Planina) in the north and the Rhodope Mountains in the south formed the most stable settlements in the region. These high lands, strategically located and covered

²⁶ Viquesnel, *Voyage*, 486.

²⁷ BOA C.DH. 37, 1815 [29 Z 1206 (18 August 1792)], BOA AE.SABH.I. 23, 1893 [29 Z 1193 (7 January 1780)].

with dense forests, served as a shelter and asylum in times of pressure and provided the human resources needed by the fertile plains in times of peace.²⁸ However, in the period between 1780-1810, the Rhodope Mountains became one of the main sources of instability in the region rather than creating stability. In addition to being employed in the plains, the human resource of the mountains served as mercenaries in the armies of local notables. When this opportunity was not available, they started to banditry. Since the Rhodope Mountains were the homelands of mountain bandits, the mountains served as their natural stronghold when they needed to escape from soldiers of the central authority. As we mentioned before, although the Rhodope Mountains are given as the birthplace of these bandits, the geographical, economic, and social structure of this region has not been the subject of a detailed study. For this reason, it is helpful to first look at the geographical structure of the Rhodope Mountains and then the economic and administrative structure of the settlements in this region.

2.2.1 The Rhodope Mountains

The Rhodope Mountains are the mountain range between Bulgaria and Greece today, which are one of the few mountain ranges in the Balkan peninsula. The mountains are located on the southern border of Bulgaria and block the country's access to the Mediterranean. While the massif that gave the name Balkan to this region was called *Koca Balkan* by the Turks, they named the mountain range that formed the Rhodope Mountains as *Kara Balkan*. Rila Mountain, which is known as *Altun Balkan*, is located in the west of the Rhodope Mountains. The Rhodope Massif extends to the east as a branch of the Rila Mountains in the west. The Rila Mountains form the

²⁸ Hoffman, "Transformation," 47–48.

southern border of the Sofia plateau, and Musalla peak, the tallest peak in the Balkans at 2925 meters, is part of this range. A deep rocky valley separates the Dospat range, the northwest end of the Rhodope Mountains, from the Rila Mountains. This range has an elevation of 1675 meters and stretches to the southeast. *Kara Balkan*, the center of the Rhodope Mountains, is located south of Filibe (Plovdiv). Persenk peaks with a height of 2090 meters, and the Perelik peaks with a height of 2173 meters situate here. The eastward part of this range divides into two branches. The area surrounding the Arda valley gradually descends as it approaches the Meriç River near Edirne. The other branch includes the 1283-meter-high *Koca Yayla* Mountain and ends in the coastal plain in the north of the Aegean Sea. Its other branches extend to the Dedeagaç coast, the Meriç River in the east, and the Arda River in the north.

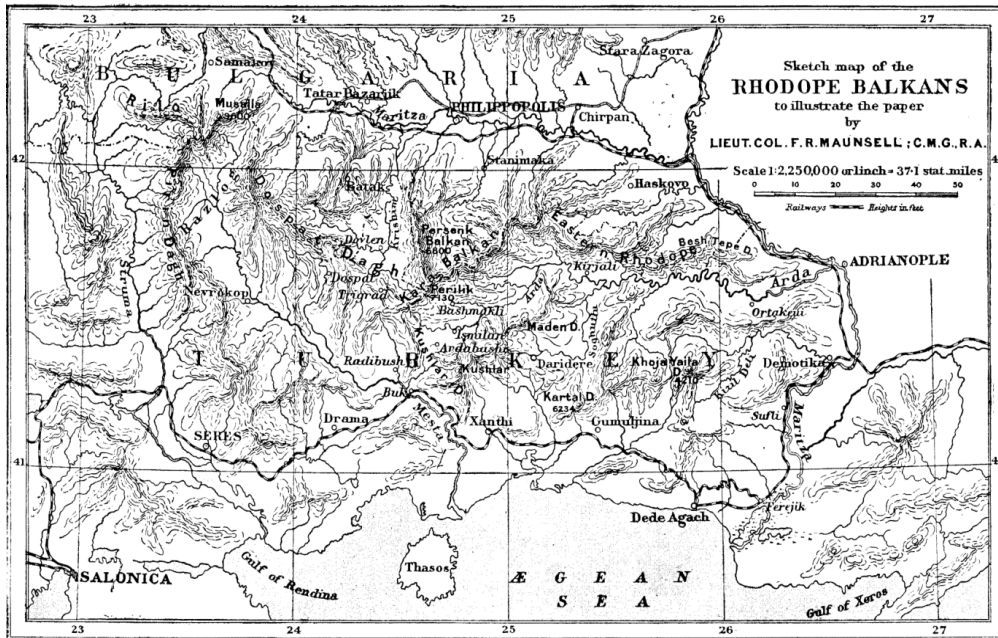


Fig. 1. Sketch map of the Rhodope Balkans²⁹

²⁹ Maunsell, "The Rhodope Balkans," 9.

Considering the previously mentioned administrative borders, the main region we focus on geographically covers the east and center parts of the Rhodope Mountains. While the altitude reaches 2000 meters in the center, it descends to 1000 meters in the east. The moderate altitude levels have led the region to become more suitable for settlement.³⁰

2.2.2 The rivers

One of the most important geographical features of the region is the rivers that arise from these mountains and irrigate the surrounding plains. On the northern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains, many small streams emerge from narrow valleys and flow into the wide plains of Southern Bulgaria and form the tributaries of the Meriç River. This river passes through the eastern border of the Rhodopes and reaches the Aegean Sea near Dedeğaç. The Arda River, which is the main river of the Rhodope Mountains, rises from the center of the mountainous region and flows between two mountain ranges that form the Rhodopes' eastern end. The Arda River merges with many branches arising from these two ranges and joins with the Meriç River near the city of Edirne. It is one of the main tributaries of the Meriç River. A little further south, *Kızıldeli Çayı* (Erythrotamos), rises from the east of *Koca Yayla* Mountain and joins the Meriç River near Dimetoka.³¹

There are no large streams in the coastal plain south of the Rhodope Mountains. The largest is *Yardımlı* in the south of *Koca Yayla* Mountain, which reaches the sea by crossing wide, cultivated lands that include meadows and scattered forests in the east of *Gümülcine*. A stream rises from the mountainous area

³⁰ Maunsell, "The Rhodope Balkans," 8.

³¹ Maunsell, "The Rhodope Balkans," 8.

in the north of İskeçe, but it can hardly exist in summer temperatures. Local people benefited from this stream to irrigate their gardens in the vicinities of the town.³² Karasu (Mesta), another important river in the region, reaches the sea in the west of İskeçe. Emerging from Rila Mountain, many branches along the Pirin and Dospat ranges join Karasu and form the wide Karasu valley in the western part of the Rhodope Mountains. It passes through a deep canyon along Razlık and enters the Nevrekop plain. It then turns in the direction of Drama, passes through deep passages, and heads towards the Aegean Sea. It flows into the sea right across the island of Thasos. The river formed a wide sandy delta in this area with the alluvion it carried from the mountains.³³

2.2.3 The agricultural life in the Rhodope Mountains

While these mountains formed the geographical borders of the region, they also shaped the lifestyles of their inhabitants. They had decisive impacts on both settled life and pastoral life. A lifestyle based on mountains has developed in the Rhodope Mountains as well. Mountains often served as forests and pastures for their inhabitants. At the same time, the geographical characteristic of the mountains affected agricultural activities. In the Rhodope Mountains, the combination of altitude, thin soil layer and summer drought resulted in low grain yields. As a result of this situation, different kinds of agricultural patterns developed in these areas. Fallowing was widely practiced. For example, one-third of the agricultural lands in the Ahiçelebi region were left for fallowing. Although wheat was the dominant crop in Köstendil and Kırcaali, rye was the most important crop grown throughout the region. Small cereals, barley, and oat were also dominant in higher altitudes. Apart

³² Maunsell, "The Rhodope Balkans," 8.

³³ Maunsell, "The Rhodope Balkans," 10.

from cereal production, another important crop of the Rhodopes and its vicinities was tobacco.³⁴

Especially the climate and soil conditions made the region suitable for the production of high-quality tobacco. In the mountainous areas, there were rich alkaline soils composed of eroded and fragmented volcanic material, while in the lowlands the soils were generally sandy alluvial soils at a depth of 1-1.5 meters. These soils are loose, porous, and contain little organic matter. This soil structure is ideal for the tobacco plant. The high capillarity of soils provides sufficient moisture for tobacco plants during dry summer months. Both alluvial and mountain soils contain sufficient amounts of calcium, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which are necessary for the production of high-quality tobacco. The climate conditions are equally favorable. Rhodope and Thrace regions have long, dry, and warm summers. Humidity increases at the beginning and towards the middle of the growing season, but the humidity rate is at its lowest at the end of the season. This is advantageous for producing a high-quality dry and aromatic tobacco leaf. Also, destructive winds that can damage crops are rare. The only disadvantage of tobacco agriculture is the diseases that are difficult to overcome.³⁵ To understand this structure in detail, it is better to look at the Ottoman documents about the region.

2.3 Administrative, economic and demographic structure of the settlements in the Rhodope Mountains according to the *Vilayet Salnames*

The *vilayet salnames* (provincial yearbooks) are descriptive and statistical yearbooks that started to be published by the Ottoman Empire after 1846/1847. They give

³⁴ Cousens, "Changes in Bulgarian Agriculture," 18–19.

³⁵ Beshkov, "Tobacco in Bulgaria," 188–89.

detailed information on the administrative and economic characteristics of provinces.³⁶ Therefore, they are unique sources from which we can obtain general information about the settlements in the Rhodope Mountains. Although there are eight decades between the publication dates of the *salnames* and the end of the rebellion, it is very important that the *salnames* contain a compact cluster of information about the economic and agricultural activities in these settlements in terms of providing a general perspective on the region.

Edirne Vilayet Salnameleri and *Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi* provide a general perspective on the administrative and economic situation of the region. In this part, two *salnames* of Edirne dated 1892 and numbered 19 and 20 are used. Unlike the *salnames* published in the previous years, these two *salnames* have a detailed account of Edirne's districts (*kaza*). Similar to these two *salnames* of Edirne, *Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, dated 1907 provides a detailed portrait of Sarışaban district. *19 Numaralı Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi* mentions the settlements of Kırcaali, Dimetoka³⁷, Gümülcine, Sultanyeri, Ahiçelebi, İskeçe, Eğridere, Darıdere³⁸ and Mekri.³⁹ In this *salname*, these settlements are given as districts of Edirne Province. In the *Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi* number 20 published in the same year, Kırcaali and Dimetoka⁴⁰ are the towns of the Edirne Province, while Gümülcine⁴¹ and Dedeğaç (Mekri)⁴² are described as sanjaks. İskeçe, Sultanyeri, Eğridere, Ahiçelebi and Darıdere are the districts of Gümülcine Sanjak. *Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi* provides

³⁶ McCarthy and Hyde, "Ottoman Imperial and Provincial Salnames," 10–11.

³⁷ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 316–53.

³⁸ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 408–81.

³⁹ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 579–85.

⁴⁰ "1310 Senesine Mahsus Edirne Vilayeti Salnamesi," 125–36.

⁴¹ "1310 Senesine Mahsus Edirne Vilayeti Salnamesi," 145–74.

⁴² "1310 Senesine Mahsus Edirne Vilayeti Salnamesi," 203–10.

information about Sarışaban which is a district in Drama Sanjak of Selanik Province.⁴³

2.3.1 The district of Kırcaali

The small Kırcaali town of that time was an important settlement in terms of being at the center of the region that we focus on and giving its name to the rebels. At this point, *19 Numaralı Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi* contains important information about the administrative status, agricultural production, and economic activities in Kırcaali and its vicinities. According to the *salname*, the district of Kırcaali consisted of 102 villages and eight *nahiyes* named Selmanlar, Osmanbeşeler, Hocalar, Yahyalı, Ferağlar, Şaban, Gabrovo and Kurucaviran. It was located in the west of Edirne province and was 24 hours away from Edirne. There were Hasköy, Harmanlı and Hacılyas townships in the north, Ahiçelebi and Eğridere townships in the west, Gümülcine and Sultanyeri towns in the south, and Ortaköy town in the west.⁴⁴ There were 250,428 *dönüms* of cultivated and uncultivated land within the district's boundaries. The population of the center of Kırcaali consisted of 305 households, and the district's total population was 2140 in 1892.⁴⁵ The district covered a largely rural area, and its main economic activity was agricultural production.

The fertility of the soil was moderate in the district of Kırcaali. The main crops were wheat, barley, *kızılca*, rye, maize, tobacco, and grapes. Secondary products consisted of vetch, beans, lentils, onions. Also, local people produced certain fruits such as cherries, pears, apples, quince, and apricots. There was no significant industrial production in the region. There was only spoon production and

⁴³ "1325 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesidir," 435–44.

⁴⁴ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 320.

⁴⁵ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 323.

trade in Nuşaliler, Yaşlı, and Şahinler⁴⁶ villages. Villagers produced some textile products in order to meet their needs. In every village, women made socks and weaved clothes. However, if we looked at the general production of the region in 1893, it is clear that cereals had the most significant share of the total output. In that year, 309,876 kilograms of wheat, 89,830 kilograms of *kızılca*, 1,643,460 kilograms of barley, 444,000 kilograms of rye, 1,250,000 kilograms of maize, 24,000 kilograms of vetch⁴⁷, 15,000 *kıyye* beans, 7,000 *kıyye* chickpeas, 15,000 *kıyye* lentils, 30,000 *kıyye* onions were produced. Also, animal husbandry was a significant part of economic activities and livelihood. There were 18,206 sheep, 30,998 goats, 2,528 oxen, 106 buffaloes, 51 horses, 158 mules, 3,500 cows, 900 calves, and 110 female buffaloes in the settlements of Kırcaali.⁴⁸ While the share of barley, maize, and rye in total cereal production shows the impact of mountainous side of the region on the production patterns, they also show that animal husbandry was a significant activity in Kırcaali district because these cereals were primarily used as fodder. Goat breeding is the main livestock activity since they formed the main animal stock in the district. Also, the high amount of goats in the district shows that the mountains and forests covered a significant place in the region.

Vineyards had an important place in the town. Local people used their grapes for domestic consumption and sold the remaining amount to neighboring regions.

There were 14,689 *dönüms* of vineyards in the district and its villages, and these

⁴⁶ The spoon production in Şahinler village can be seen in the village's *temettuat* register. There are two households that have income from spoon making.

⁴⁷ Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey*, 374–75. Since the *salname* gives the production amount of wheat, *kızılca*, and barley in kilograms, I converted the products that are weighed in kile to kilograms based on the rates in Issawi's book: 1 *kile* = 36,8 liter, 1 *okka* = 1,2828 kg, 1 *kile* of barley = 17 to 20 *okkas* (approx. 23,7318 kg), 1 *kile* of wheat = 22 to 26 *okkas* (approx. 30,7872 kg), 1 *kile* of oats = 14 to 16 *okkas* (approx. 19,242 kg), 1 *kile* of maize = 23 to 25 *okkas* (approx. 30,7872 kg), 1 *kile* of rye = 23 to 24 *okkas* (approx. 30,1458 kg).

⁴⁸ “1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne,” 327–28.

lands produced 700,000 *kıyye* grapes. Since the town's population was Muslim, they mainly used their grapes for making molasses. However, they sold 200,000 *kıyye* of total production to the neighboring towns since the main consumption field of grape was winemaking.⁴⁹ Another important product of the region was tobacco. However, the production of this product fluctuated year by year. In this town, 90,071 kilos of tobacco were produced in 1302 (1885), 43,044 in 1303 (1886), 27,392 in 1304 (1887), 41,470 in 1305 (1888), 28,581 in 1306 (1889), and 80,000 kilos in 1307 (1890). One third of this production was consumed in the town, and they exported the rest. Production had decreased every year in Köklemezler, Ferağlar, and Kurucaviran villages. The reason for the decrease in the production was that while tobacco was sold at a price of 14-20 kuruş in the past, prices decreased and a disease that occurred due to drought caused the destruction of tobacco plants in certain years. This situation led farmers to stop growing tobacco.⁵⁰

2.3.2 The district of Dimetoka

Dimetoka, located at a lower altitude on the eastern border of the Rhodopes, was one of the centers of the bandits because it had a significant number of villages in its mountainous regions. The town was located seven hours south of Edirne on the banks of the *Kızıl Deli* River, a tributary of the Meriç River. It had four sub-districts. Kuleliburgas had 11 villages, Karacahalil 13, Saltık 6 and Karakilise 12 villages. In 1893, the town center had a population of 8,707 in 1,702 households and 3,122 in 42 villages. The total population, which consisted of various nationalities, was 17,578.⁵¹ Most of the district's lands were extremely fertile and suitable for producing all kinds

⁴⁹ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 329.

⁵⁰ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 325-26.

⁵¹ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 339.

of grains. *Kızıl Deli* River, which flows next to the town center, had a decisive role in the agricultural production of the town. The river basin was a flood plain, and the river flooded almost every year until the *hidrellez* (May 6). After the flood had ended, farmers planted summer crops such as corn, millet, and orchards. These products gave good yields because of the fertility of the flood plain. When the river did not flood, farmers planted winter crops such as wheat, red barley, and barley. These crops grew very well and gave a product of forty-fifty to one.⁵²

The primary crops of the town and villages of Dimetoka were wheat, barley, rye, oats, *kapluca*, corn, sesame, vetch, lentils, beans, chickpeas, grapes, and silk cocoons. Secondary products were tobacco, cotton, watermelon, melon, onion, garlic, and various fruits. There were 176,377 *dönüms* of cultivated and uncultivated land.⁵³ In 1893, the district produced 178,000 bushels of wheat, 60,000 bushels of barley, 48,000 bushels of rye, 20,000 bushels of oats, 16,000 bushels of *kapluca*, 64,000 bushels of maize, 12,000 bushels of sesame, 1,200 bushels of vetch, 4,000 bushels of millet, 8,000 *kıyye* vetch, 4,000 *kıyye* birdseed, 16,000 *kıyye* lentils, 32,000 *kıyye* beans, 40,000 *kıyye* chickpeas, 64,000 *kıyye* grapes, 32,000 *kıyye* silk cocoons, 464 *kıyye* tobacco, 8,000 *kıyye* cotton, 95,000 *kıyye* onions, 180,000 *kıyye* garlic and 4,000 ox cart of watermelon melons. There were 1,000 beehives producing 10,000 *kıyye* honey and 400 *kıyye* beeswaxes. Women wove socks, *şayak*, *aba* (coarse woolen clothes), and various fabrics. 64,236 kilograms of wine and 72,000 kilograms of raki were produced.⁵⁴ There were 5,166 oxen, 200 buffalos, 25 buffalo bulls, 1,300 female buffalos, 900 buffalo calves, 40 bulls, 1,500 cows, 600 calves,

⁵² “1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne,” 346.

⁵³ “1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne,” 339.

⁵⁴ “1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne,” 345.

1,200 horses, 39,134 sheep, 24,915 goats, 35 mules, 500 donkeys, and 3256 pigs in the town.⁵⁵

Dimetoka had 2,824 acres of vineyards and produced 640,000 *kıyye* grapes annually. 642.360 *kıyye* wine was made. The local population consumed 600.000 *kıyye* of the produced grape and sold the remaining 42.365 *kıyyes* in neighboring towns.⁵⁶ Three villages produced tobacco in 1307. 308 *kıyye* tobacco were produced in Ağurlu village, 15 *kıyye* in Divanemusa village and 141 *kıyye* in Hacıali village. These tobaccos were low-grade type. For this reason, the *reji* administration burned some of the tobacco because it was not of good quality, and bought the rest by pricing 60 *para* to 2 *kuruş*.⁵⁷ Therefore, Dimetoka was the only place where tobacco was not a significant agricultural product when the *salname* was published. Yet, it is evident that the decrease in the production of tobacco was a phenomenon of a later period. A French geographer, Auguste Viquesnel, published a report that surveyed the production of tobacco in the Rhodope Mountains as an appendix of his book, published in 1868 about the geography of this region. In the report written in 1847, Viquesnel gives testimony of Monsieur Badetti, a merchant living in Edirne for more than twenty years. According to Badetti, while Kızıldeli was producing 800,000 *kıyye* tobacco 10 years ago, the trade of tobacco could reach 50,000 *kıyye* at the most in recent years.⁵⁸ This shows that although there was a drastic decrease in tobacco production in Dimetoka when the *salname* published, the crop had a significant share in the region's total production in the past.

⁵⁵ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 348.

⁵⁶ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 347.

⁵⁷ "1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne," 343.

⁵⁸ Viquesnel, *Voyage*, 501.

2.3.3 The district of Gümülcine

Gümülcine was another important center of the region where bandits emerged. It was the largest and most significant town in the Rhodopes region and the Western Thrace. The town was at the junction point of the Via Egnatia and the road that connects the coastal area to Filibe through the Rhodopes and Arda Valley.⁵⁹ It is comprised of three geographical parts: *ova*, *yaka*, and *cebel*. *Ova* (plain) describes the lower plains adjacent to Aegean Sea. The area that formed the skirts of the Rhodope Mountains was called *yaka* (the skirt of a mountain), and the mountainous region was called *Balkan/Balkan Kolu* or *cebel* (mountain).⁶⁰

While Gümülcine was a district governorship of Gallipoli Sanjak until the end of April 1879, it was later given the status of a sanjak, and the towns of Ahiçelebi, Darıdere, İskeçe, Sultanyeri and Cebel were included in this sanjak. The district of Gümülcine consisted of eight townships, Maroniye, Şaphane, Yassı, Kura-yı Cedit, Şeyhçuması, Çakal and Kirli, and 262 villages. İskeçe district included Sakarkaya, Yassiören, Celebli, Yenice, Yeniköy sub-districts, 93 villages and two towns. Darıdere district had Akpınar and Şahin villages and 30 villages. Ahiçelebi district had a town center, Ismilan, Pasavik, Söğütçük, Çatak, Tuzburun, Karşılı towns and 42 villages. Sultanyeri district had Ada, Tekye, Geve, Taşlı, Mestanlı towns and 146 villages. Eğridere district had 71 villages which subject to Davud, Dolaşdır, Hotaşlı, Vahidler-i Kebir, Meşkullu and Küçükviran towns. Finally, Rupçoz district had 26 villages, Tımişvar, Despot and Trigrad towns. As can be seen, Gümülcine sanjak was the largest center of the region, which included seven towns, 41 sub-districts and 670 villages.⁶¹ Indeed, these towns could be compared to Kırcaali and Dimetoka towns,

⁵⁹ Kiel, "Observations," 417.

⁶⁰ Alp, "Batı Trakya Türkleri," 614.

⁶¹ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 14–15.

but all these settlements were described under the Gümülcine article in the *salname*.

Therefore, the data about Gümülcine district involves numerous settlements.

In 1893, the total population of Gümülcine district was 245,072. 44,761 people lived in the town center. The population of Cebel was 20,088, İskeçe was 30,796, Daridere was 20,599, Ahiçelebi was 28,162, Sultanyeri is 49,816, Eğridere was 32,485, and Rupcoz was 13,996. The majority of the population was Muslim. 206,914 of total population were Muslims, 15,241 were Greeks, 20,671 were Bulgarians, 360 were Armenians, 739 were Jews, 912 were Coptic, and 235 were foreigners.⁶² Except for İskeçe and the town center of Gümülcine, all these settlements were located in the Rhodope Mountains. This means that 69% of the total population in Gümülcine lived in the mountain parts of the district.

The primary crops that were produced in Gümülcine district were wheat, barley, corn, rye, grapes, and tobacco. Secondary crops were cotton, sesame, chickpea, millet, feedstuff, beans, olives, acorns, melons, and watermelons. İskeçe produced a large amount of tobacco. Since the tobacco crop of İskeçe was famous worldwide, it was exported to Russia, Austria, Greece, and other countries. Although products such as wheat, barley, corn, and rye were grown in İskeçe, these products were few compared to the amount and value of tobacco. In the districts of Daridere, Ahiçelebi, Sultanyeri, Rupcoz and Eğridere, maize and rye were generally grown, and some wheat, barley, feedstuff, silk cocoon, beans and grapes were also produced. Also, the district produced a significant amount of wine and raki every year. In Ahiçelebi and Daridere, *aba* and *şayak* were made and they were famous. At the same time, textile products such as *kebe*, rug, belt (*kuşak*), pillow (*yastık*), prayer rug (*seccade*), undershirt (*fanila*) were a part of domestic production.⁶³

⁶² Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 39.

⁶³ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 35–36.

Gümülcine produced 500,000 bushels of wheat and *kızılca*, 500,000 bushels of barley, 16,000 bushels of oats, 400,000 bushels of rye, 750,000 bushels of maize, 20,000 bushels of millet, 3,000 bushels of vetch, 500 bushels of sesame, 100 bushels of *kapluca*, 300,000 *kıyye* beans, 175,000 *kıyye* chickpeas, 20,000 *kıyye* lentils, 10,000 *kıyye* fava beans, 1,000 *kıyye* peas, 200,000 *kıyye* potatoes, 2,500,000 *kıyye* tobacco, and 60,000 *kıyye* cotton. The total amount of these products reached 2,189,600 bushels and 28,160,000 *kıyye*.⁶⁴ In the district, there were 22,500 oxen, 4,400 buffalo, 75 buffalo bulls, 4,500 buffalo cows, 1,600 buffalo calves, 650 bulls, 30,000 cows, 15,000 calves, 8,000 horses, 444,635 sheep, 332,558 goats, 9,500 mules, 750 camels, 6,000 donkeys and 75 pigs.⁶⁵

In Gümülcine and İskeçe, 209,671 kilograms of tobacco were produced on 3,533 *dönüms* of land within the *reji* administration on these dates. Highly aromatic and good-quality tobacco was produced in the villages of Mülklü, Arabacı, Yassı, Bahşışlı, Solumluhoca, Özbek, Ahmedsipahi, Semerciler, Aşçılar, Tepealtı, Hisarcık, Velicanbaşı, Çamdere in the district of Gümülcine.⁶⁶ The *liva* of Gümülcine had 49,030 households. In the *liva*, there were 1,503,225 *dönüms* of fields and 63,306 *dönüms* of meadows, 44,630 *dönüms* of pastures, 1,000 summer pastures, 177,974 winter pastures, and 210 mulberry gardens.⁶⁷ The surroundings of Gümülcine town entirely consisted of vineyards and gardens. The vineyards were 11,888 *dönüms* and there were various fruit trees such as walnut and quince. Vegetable gardens consisted of 592 *dönüms*, and all kinds of vegetables were grown. In this town, 275,000-

⁶⁴ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 30.

⁶⁵ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 32.

⁶⁶ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 24.

⁶⁷ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 28.

500,000 kilograms of wine were produced annually. Some of it was consumed within the borders of the district; the rest was consumed in neighboring towns.⁶⁸

2.3.4 The district of Sarişaban

Sarişaban town was located at the southwest border of the region. It was four hours away from Kavala and ten hours away from the town of Drama. There were mountains in the north and west of Sarişaban district. The town center was established on a wide plain. There was a large forest called *Koca Orman* in the east and the Aegean Sea in the south.⁶⁹ The area around the sea was composed of marshes and wetlands. The ground started to elevate from two hours away from the sea, and olive trees covered these hills. The lands were so fertile and produced all kinds of grains. Tobacco was one of the primary products.⁷⁰ The wealth of the region increased by means of highly aromatic tobacco production. It was the main source of trade and export. 650,000 *kıyye* tobacco was produced in the town.⁷¹ Sarişaban district consisted of three geographical parts, *ova*, *yaka*, and *cebel*, as in the case of Gümülcine. Except for some of the villages in the plain and mountain, the villages in this district generally produced tobacco. Especially the tobacco of the *yaka* villages was famous for its aromatic taste. Mountain villages produced second-degree tobacco. Apart from tobacco agriculture, other kinds of economic activities were also significant. The pastures of the town were home to lots of sheep and livestock coming from neighboring areas for wintering. The number of beehives is also high, so farmers produced honey and beeswax. Industrial production consisted of various

⁶⁸ Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 29.

⁶⁹ “1325 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesidir,” 435.

⁷⁰ Cousinéry, *Voyage Dans La Macédoine*, 76.

⁷¹ “1325 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesidir,” 436.

textile products, socks production, and the production of necessary tools for the region. However, they were not exported because the amount of production was not high.⁷²

2.4 The agricultural and artisanal production of the districts

The *salnames* offer important insights into the economic activities, livelihoods, and administrative structure in the Rhodope Mountains, which former studies about the *dağlı* rebellion mainly neglected. The inhabitants of the districts mentioned above mainly lived in the mountains. Although mountains did not have abundant fertile lands, the economic structure of all these settlements clearly shows that agricultural production was the primary source of income in the region. There was no large industrial or artisanal production in the region except for *aba* and *şayak* production in Darıdere and Ahiçelebi.

2.4.1 Cereals and grape

Grains such as wheat, barley, corn, rye, and oats had the most significant share in agricultural production. Since the geography was mountainous and high, high yields of these products were not possible except for some parts of Gümülcine, Dimetoka, and Sarışaban. This situation was understandable when the production patterns were taken into consideration. Crops such as rye, and maize, which were preferred especially in mountainous regions, were the most produced cereals, following wheat and barley.⁷³ There is no information about the export of these grains although the *salnames* mention how much tobacco or grape were consumed within the borders of the districts and how much was exported. However, Viquesnel says that the plains of

⁷² “1325 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesidir,” 437.

⁷³ Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı*, 192.

Dimetoka, Hasköy, and Edirne exported grains when the demand from Europe increased in 1848, which led to the decrease in tobacco production.⁷⁴ Therefore we can say that while in-demand crops such as wheat and barley was exported, especially cheaper grains in the region were produced for the subsistence of locals.

Grape production was common in the region. Villagers used grapes for making molasses and wine. The consumption of this product differed from settlement to settlement. In the settlements where Muslim population were dominant such as Kırcaali, grape was mainly used for making molasses. The remaining amounts were sold to neighboring regions, but this amount was insignificant. Since there were Christian populations in Gümülcine and Dimetoka, there was wine production. Some of it was consumed in these districts. The rest was sent to neighboring towns. In addition to being a subsistence crop, grape also had the feature of being a commercial product. However, grapes had a lower share in trade than tobacco, and such a limited grape trade was a part of the subsistence economy of villagers.

⁷⁴ Viquesnel, *Voyage*, 505.

Table 1. Agricultural Production in Kırcaali, Dimetoka and Gümülcine (in kg)

	Kırcaali	Dimetoka	Gümülcine
Wheat and <i>kızılca</i>	399,706	4,272,000	12,000,000
Barley	1,643,460	1,110,000	11,750,000
Rye	434,750	1,128,000	9,400,000
Maize	1,200,000	1,536,000	18,000,000
Vetch	22,500	120,000	30,000
Beans	19,242	41,049	384,840
Chickpeas	8,979	51,312	224,490
Lentil	19,242	20,524	25,656
Onion	3,848	121,866	-
Grape	897,960	820,992	-

2.4.2 Tobacco

The *salnames* clearly show that the most important commercial crop in the region was tobacco. Except for Dimetoka, there was a high amount of tobacco production in the villages in Gümülcine, Kırcaali, and Sarışaban, and especially İskeçe and Sarışaban produced very high-quality tobacco. There was a demand from foreign countries for the tobacco grown in these towns. For this reason, the tobacco crop was exported abroad.⁷⁵ The tobacco of each district was exported to different countries and cities. Dimetoka, Gümülcine, Fere, and Mekri exported their tobacco to Egypt, Greece, İzmir, Livorno, and Trieste. The product of Hasköy was transported to

⁷⁵ “1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne,” 325–26, 343; Eren and Türe, *Mühimme Defterlerinde Gümülcine*, 35–36.

Valachia. Drama and Sarışaban's tobacco were sent to France. However, the best quality tobacco in these districts was sold within the Ottoman Empire, especially to Istanbul.⁷⁶

The quality of tobacco leaves was determining factor in the trade of this commodity. Tobacco produced in small quantities in Dimetoka was not offered for sale because its quality was not high. This shows that tobacco production had particular vulnerabilities, and natural, geographical, and economic factors could easily affect tobacco quality. Villagers planted tobacco under changing conditions which affected the amount of product that they harvested. The inevitable impact of these factors on the producers in the region was undeniable. However, we understand from *salnames* that this situation did not drastically affect İskeçe and Sarışaban, which produced high-quality tobacco because the *salnames* tell that these places were getting richer day by day thanks to tobacco production. The nearness of the two towns indicates that there was an ideal microclimate and soil structure to produce aromatic tobacco at high standards in the vicinities of İskeçe and Sarışaban. However, this was not the case in Kırcaali and Dimetoka, which were located further inland. The geographic location and local climate created an obstacle for these places to produce high-quality products compared to İskeçe and Sarışaban.

Tobacco production fluctuated year by year in certain districts such as Kırcaali and Dimetoka. In Kırcaali, while production in 1884 was 90,071 *kıyye*, it decreased to 27,392 *kıyye* in 1886. There was a 70% decrease in production. A fluctuation continued with ups and downs in production in the following years.⁷⁷ As Viquesnel reported in 1847, the tobacco production in Dimetoka decreased from

⁷⁶ Viquesnel, *Voyage*, 502–3.

⁷⁷ “1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Salname-i Vilayet-i Edirne,” 325–26.

400,00 *kıyye* to 50,000 *kıyye*, and it did not reach higher proportions in the past. There was 87,5% decrease for ten years period after 1837.⁷⁸ The reason for this fluctuation was the decrease in prices and drought-related diseases according to the *salname*. Although, these accounts were recorded after 90-100 years from the *dağlı* rebellion, they are significant in terms of showing the fluctuations in tobacco production in the region. Also, when they are compared with *hatt- ı hümayuns* (1787, 1790, 1798, 1803), Viquesnel's account (1837), and *temettuat* registers (1844), we can see the continuing importance of tobacco agriculture in the region throughout years.

Also, Viquesnel mentions a civil war (*la guerre civile*) that harmed tobacco production in the Rhodope Mountains. According to the author, the Rhodopes' local population supported the remnants of janissaries who escaped from the abolition of their corps. Janissaries organized a military resistance against the central government and took refuge in the Rhodopes. During the so-called civil war, the region experienced confiscations. The devastation ruined the wealthy landowners and led to the destruction of livestock which formed the main wealth in the region. This situation led to the scarcity of fertilizer that made itself felt since those times, and the fields became infertile.⁷⁹ These phenomena show that tobacco production was vulnerable to certain factors such as diseases, the lack of fertilizers, and price

⁷⁸ Viquesnel, *Voyage*, 501.

⁷⁹ Cette décadence remonte à l'époque de la destruction des janissaires. Les montagnes du Rhodope, habitées en très-grande partie par une population musulmane fanatique, et favorable à la cause des janissaires, servit de refuge aux débris de cette milice formidable. Une résistance armée s'organisa. Il fallut la dompter par la force. La guerre civile, les confiscations et les dévastations qui en furent les tristes conséquences ruinèrent les riches propriétaires et entraînèrent la destruction d'une quantité considérable de bestiaux qui formaient la principale richesse du pays. La rareté des engrais s'est fait sentir depuis cette époque; cependant la tranquillité paraît avoir réparé, du moins en partie, les désastres de la contrée, puisque, d'après M. Badetti, le Kizildéli produisait encore, il y a dix ans, 800,000 oques de tabac. Ce district n'en fournit plus actuellement au commerce qu'une cinquantaine de mille. Sa décadence réelle et celle des pays de montagnes remontent donc à l'époque du tanzimat ou réforme. Viquesnel, *Voyage*, 504.

fluctuations. Viquesnel's attribution to a civil war that stemmed from the abolition of janissary corps is interesting. He probably referred to the *dağlı* rebellion while mentioning the armed resistance of janissaries in the region because there is no information about a janissary rebellion in the Rhodopes during the reign of Mahmud II. He probably made a mistake about the civil war while associating it with the janissary revolt and wanted to mention the *dağlı* rebellion. Indeed, he might have referred to the *Nizam-ı Cedid* (New Order) reforms of Selim III because the reforms also aimed to abolish janissaries, and the reform movement and the *dağlı* rebellion occurred during the same period.

2.4.3 Animal husbandry

As Viquesnel stated that livestock raising had a significant place in agricultural activities in the region. The region had high numbers of animal population. Especially, Gümülcine had the highest numbers of livestock population since it included many districts. Sheep had the first place in animal husbandry in this region, and goat raising followed sheep raising. The geographical structure of the region can be seen from these numbers as well. The settlements in the highlands had higher numbers of goat population as in the case of Kırcaali. Kırcaali had almost twice as many goats as sheep. Although there was less goat than sheep in Gümülcine, the gap between these numbers were not high. The high numbers of goats in Gümülcine derived from the fact that most parts of Gümülcine district were mountainous. The numbers in *salnames* show that animal husbandry was an important economic activity for the local populace. This economic activity was generally a secondary activity that provided extra income or subsistence for peasant households. However, there were also households that earned their existence only from animal husbandry.

We can not infer the share of households that primarily engaged in animal husbandry from *salnames*. Yet, Viquesnel's account and *temettuat* registers provide some hints about the importance of livestock raising in the region.

Table 2. Livestock Numbers in Kırcaali, Dimetoka, and Gümülcine

	Kırcaali	Dimetoka	Gümülcine
Sheep	18,206	39,134	444,635
Goat	30,998	24,915	332,558
Cow	3,500	1,500	30,000
Oxen	2,528	5,166	22,500
Horse	51	1,200	8,000
Calf	900	600	15,000
Water buffalo	216	200	4500
Mule	158	35	9,500
Pig	0	3,256	75
Donkey	-	500	6,000

As we have seen above, livestock consisted of main wealth in the region and the rebellion devastated the wealth according to Viquesnel. Also, *temettuat* registers show that there were certain villages that primarily raised livestock for their subsistence.

2.4.4 The artisanal manufacturing

Apart from agricultural production in the region, there was also handicraft production consisting of various textile and weaving products for domestic

consumption. These products included products such as cloth (*bez*), *aba*, *şayak*, rug, undershirt (*fanila*), pillow (*yastık*), prayer rug (*seccade*), socks. Women mainly produced them within their homes. The *salnames* do not mention the intensive production of these products for the foreign market. Therefore, the production was likely to be consumed within the region. However, the fact that textile products such as *aba* and *şayak* were important trade commodities in the Balkans may indicate that these products were produced for the foreign market.⁸⁰ While certain regions in the Balkans were famous production centers of *aba* and *şayak*, it is not possible to talk about a large-scale and intensive production in the Rhodope Mountains except for Ahiçelebi and Daridere towns. Production in other settlements was consumed within the district borders.

⁸⁰ McGowan, "The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812," 698.

CHAPTER 3
EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE “*DAĞLI*” (MOUNTAIN PEOPLE) REBELLION

3.1 Introduction

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Balkan peninsula witnessed a long-term turmoil that was led by *dağlı eşkıyası* (mountain bandits). Bandit groups under the command of famous bandit leaders ravaged the vast areas that stretched between the Danube River, the Aegean and Marmara seas, and along the Maritsa River. The roads between Edirne, Sofia, and Belgrade were encroached by bandits. They attacked merchants, travelers, military expeditions and imposed heavy tributes on the local populace of the towns and villages.⁸¹ These banditry activities turned into systematic and all-encompassing violence and rebellion.⁸² This situation had radical impacts on the society, economy, and politics of the period.

The most important phenomenon of the same period was the increasing power of *ayans* (local notables) and provincial families. These actors dominated the Ottoman political, economic, and social sphere from Albania to eastern Anatolia, and from Egypt to Bosnia during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. They formed the governing body in the provinces by acquiring offices and contracts from the empire. Their relationship with the central order was not stable. Depending on their interests, they were at the service of the sultanic order or conflicting with it.⁸³

⁸¹ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 227.

⁸² Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion,” 24.

⁸³ Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 67–68.

The rise of these provincial local notables became the characteristic of the eighteenth century and mingled with the problems of that period. Therefore, this era has been called the age of the *ayans*.⁸⁴ It seems that the phenomenon of *dağlı* banditry/rebellion has been overshadowed by the age of the *ayans* although the impacts of bandits' activities were drastic in Rumeli as much as rivalry among *ayans*, and *ayans*' struggle with the central government. Although the abundance of documents about *dağlı* banditry in the Ottoman archive is obvious, there are still few studies on the subject. Many obscure points wait to be illuminated. Therefore, I would try to describe the *dağlı* banditry or rebellion while pointing out some missing aspects of the subject but firstly I will draw the main lines and chronology of the issue.

Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Thrace did not witness large-scale battles in the eighteenth century. However, political anarchy and the consequences of wars drastically affected these regions. The weakening of the central government caused the emergence of power struggles among local officials, military men, and Muslim notables in the Balkans. Extensive banditry activities of armed groups that were consisted of deserters and disbanded soldiers ravaged the area. The region between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains faced the worst case. Armed bands, known as *kirdjalıs*, and the proponents of Pazvandoğlu led to the depopulation and devastation of the area.⁸⁵ Therefore, the local memory of the inhabitants of the Central Balkans called the period between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century as the "*kırcalı* time".⁸⁶

⁸⁴ McGowan, "The Age of the Ayans," 642.

⁸⁵ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 97.

⁸⁶ Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin," 105.

The agricultural and urban production critically decreased because of unending raids of *dağlı* bands. It created a new form of social and economic relationships in which the peasants and corrupted auxiliary soldiers provided their subsistence by marauding local communities of the Balkans.⁸⁷ They created armed bands and became famous as *dağlı eşkıyası* (mountain bandits) and also, they were called as “*Hasköy eşkıyası*” or “*Kırcaali eşkıyası*” by referring to their homelands in some imperial dispatches.⁸⁸ These bandits originally emerged in the mountains of Kırcaali. Indeed, they were peaceful farmers who had left their villages in search of booty.⁸⁹ Later, other groups of bandits from different parts of the Balkans, such as Albanians participated in them. They dispersed around the region, and they plundered towns and villages in Rumeli. However, when we looked at their primary movement area, *dağlı* unrest is specific to regions that are mainly parts of today’s Bulgaria.⁹⁰

It lasted approximately thirty years, but the exact starting point and date of the rebellion are obscure. Moutaftchieva gives the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century as the period of *dağlı* rebellion.⁹¹ The district of Haskovo was the place where the first attempts of the revolt occurred at the beginning of the 1780s.⁹² Özkaya makes a precise assumption about the start of the rebellion by depending on an Ottoman document dated 1791 and indicates that he could not find any document about the issue before that date. However, he again remarks that bandits were most probably operating before this date. He determines

⁸⁷ Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion,” 25.

⁸⁸ Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion,” 61–62.

⁸⁹ Moutaftchieva, *L’Anarchie*, 105.

⁹⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 1–3.

⁹¹ Moutaftchieva, *L’Anarchie*, 6.

⁹² Moutaftchieva, *L’Anarchie*, 66.

1791 as the first year of unrest because the capital ordered *kadı* and officials in Edirne to campaign against the *dağlı* rebels in this year.⁹³ As an ending point, he says that the issue finished in 1807 because there were few mentions of *dağlı* term in the Ottoman documents after 1807.⁹⁴

A later study points out an imperial dispatch that was written in 1785 to show that *dağlı* rebels had already existed during the middle of 1780s.⁹⁵ Further inspection of the Ottoman documents provides to trace back the rebellion in a slightly earlier period. An archival document shows that the banditry problem had already started in 1779 in Yenice-i Karasu, Gümölcine, Dimetoka, Sultanyeri, Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy, and Kırcaali Mountains. However, the bandits were not described as *dağlıs* in this document.⁹⁶ Also, another document dated 1796 indicates that the unrest began to spark thirty years ago before that date. It shows that some banditry activities of the local populace around the Rhodope Mountains in the 1760s were seen as the sparking of the *dağlı* rebellion by the central government.⁹⁷ However, the intensity of *dağlı* banditry must have increased gradually after the 1780s. Especially after 1792, the anarchy spread to all parts of Rumelia.⁹⁸

There were specific reasons for the spread of anarchy according to Ottoman historians. Vasıf Efendi explains the power struggles among the *ayans*, their protection of bandits, their unending desire for wealth, and unjust behaviors and

⁹³ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 18–19.

⁹⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 112.

⁹⁵ Yılmaz, “Militarization,” 44–45.

⁹⁶ Başer, *Eşkyahtan Ayanlığa*, 11–12.

⁹⁷ “... işbu zikr olunan dağlıların sinin -i kesireden berü sureta devlet-i aliyyeye tabi’ katı çok _____ sergerdeleri eksik olduğu yokdur ancak devlet-i aliyye işbu şerare-i fesad bad-ı zaman ateş serkeş olub katı çok mahalleri harab edeceğini mülahaza ve ol emirde keyfiyet-i mezburenin def’-i çaresini mütalaa itmediğinden bu defa Rumeli ahvali işbu cereyan iden sureti kesb eyledi ve vakıa otuz sene mukaddem Hasköy tarafında Hacı İbrahim oğlu dimekle maruf bir nefer kimesne işbu dağlıların _____ sine revaç virmekle başlayub badehu mezburun vefatından sonra Kır Yusuf ve Ak Kabak ve Derdli ve Köprücükli ve Halil Ağa ve İdris Ağa on sekiz nefer evladıyla me’an Ahiçelebi kazasında Süleyman Ağa nam kimesneler suret-i hakkaniyetde icra-yı memuriyet ve saltanat-ı seniyyeye arz-ı hizmet vaiyesiyle töhmet-i ihanetlerin perde-i ihtiraz ile setr iderek...” BOA HAT 1344, 52527.

⁹⁸ Moutaftchieva, *L’Anarchie*, 67.

inabilities of officials as the main reasons for the spread of banditry. Asım Efendi relates this issue with the increase in tax rates and interest rate of *muqataas* and adds that the local populace took arms and participated in the bandits due to these developments. Also, he attributes this problem to the inadequacy of *Edirne Bostancı Ocağı*, small numbers of *bostancıs* could not cope with the bandits. Pehlivan Ibrahim Pasha points out the resentment derived from the formation of a new army and the provocation of enemy agents to explain the emergence of banditry.⁹⁹ Foreign diplomats also reported to Sublime Porte that there were French revolutionaries among these bandits.¹⁰⁰ Cevdet Pasha wrote that the ones who were appointed with the solution to the banditry problem were despots. Their involvement did not finish the problem but rather accelerated it. Also, the problem of Pazvandoğlu and the invasion of Egypt impeded the solution. Some contemporary officials like Firdevsi Emin Beg held Tatar khans responsible for the increase in anarchy because they gathered these bandits in their retinue, and they damaged the economy.¹⁰¹

Yücel Özkaya mainly attributes the causes of *dağlı* banditry to the deterioration of the administrative authority and the rising power of *ayans* in the Balkans. There are several reasons for the loss of authority in the region according to the author. The Russian-Ottoman wars in 1768-1774, the Habsburg-Ottoman wars in 1787-1791, and the Russian wars in 1787-1792 caused the capital to lose authority in the Balkans. The governors appointed by the capital lost their prestige in the eyes of soldiers and local people due to the impacts of long-lasting wars. The corruption of the state officials increased, which caused economic, administrative, and social problems. The *ayans* demonstrated themselves as powerful and effective local rulers

⁹⁹ Başer, *Eşkialıktan Ayanlığa*, 13-15.

¹⁰⁰ Firges, *French Revolutionaries*, 137.

¹⁰¹ Başer, *Eşkialıktan Ayanlığa*, 16-17.

as an alternative to the administrative authorities appointed by the central government in this period. They began to act independently and bypassed the viziers while contacting the capital. Also, they implemented extra burdens on the local populace as tax collectors. They recruited militias from local people, used bandits as mercenaries, and began to struggle to expand their authority to the neighboring regions held by rival *ayans*. The *ayans*, as the corrupt and self-seeking governors of the region led to the chaos and corruption in the Balkans for years. Therefore, some local people chose to leave their lands, some started banditry and others continued to suffer in this turmoil.¹⁰²

Another important factor in the emergence of *dağlı* banditry is the disbandment and desertion of the auxiliary soldiers in the Ottoman army and *ayans*' forces, especially during and after the Russian-Ottoman wars in 1768-1774, the Habsburg-Ottoman wars in 1787-1791, and Russian-Ottoman wars in 1787-1792.¹⁰³ The deserters and ex-soldiers were naturally bandit candidates.¹⁰⁴ When the wars ended, the mercenaries (*sekbans*) in the Ottoman army, which were recruited from the surrounding areas became unemployed and began to plunder the settlements around the Balkans. Also, some of these mercenaries continue to serve for *ayans* but some were discharged and participated to the bandit groups due to the lack of livelihood. Their numbers increased quickly because the urban and rural populace participated in their groups continuously. The widespread violence led banditry to turn into means of existence, and poor and landless peasants who could not serve in the armies of *ayans* participated in bandit groups for their livelihood.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 11-15.

¹⁰³ Yılmaz, "Militarization," 31.

¹⁰⁴ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Yılmaz, "Militarization," 47.

3.2 The activities of *Dağlı* bandits in Rumelia

Indeed, just before the wars in 1787 broke out, a bandit group numbered around 700-800 men, led by Hacı İbrahimoglu, Ak Osman, and Kıvırcıklı Halil were operating around Hasköy region in 1785. The *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne was sent to the region to organize a resistance against the bandits. He bound the local population to a vow¹⁰⁶ (*nezir*) that included certain obligations. According to the *nezir*, local people pledged to maintain order. They had to act jointly with authorities and send captured bandits to the government. If they did not fulfill their requirement, they needed to pay a certain amount of penalty.¹⁰⁷ However, these measures did not become effective on the bandits, and their activities increased incrementally from that period forward.¹⁰⁸

The response of the Ottoman central authorities for increasing banditry was to send troops on the bandits. At first, the central government tried to suppress these events by using *Edirne Bostancı Ocağı* between 1779 and 1791. When *bostancıs'* of Edirne failed to handle with rising activities of *dağlıs*, the central, thereupon, appointed certain pashas to quell mutinous *dağlıs* after 1791.¹⁰⁹ In 1791, certain *dağlı* bandits attacked the merchants who went to İslimye fair and passengers. They plundered and burned villages. After that, the capital ordered the judge and officials of Edirne to capture bandits. Therefore, Çirmen Mutasarrıfı Tahir Pasha would recruit soldiers from nearby towns, Zağra-i Atik, Çırpan, Filibe. The *voyvodas* of Dimetoka, Sultanyeri, Gümölcine, Ahiçelebi would keep the borders of these towns under control. The *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne, the *ayans* of Sultanyeri, Dimetoka, Ahiçelebi, Filibe, Çırpan, Zağra-yı Atik, Zağra-yı Cedid, Akçekızanlık, Çirmen and

¹⁰⁶ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Canbakal, "Vows as Contract," 92–93.

¹⁰⁸ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Başer, *Eşkivalıktan Ayanlığa*, 23.

Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy would work collaboratively for the destruction of the bandits. However, Tahir Pasha could not get along with *ayans* and he was dismissed.¹¹⁰ The government needed a collective effort to suppress these events with the help of local forces at first, but it seems that the situation was more complex than an issue that could be handled with the local forces. Therefore, the central government appointed officials to solve the banditry problem by bringing local forces of *ayans* together, but local politics prevented the first attempt of the central government.

After the dismissal of Tahir Pasha, the central government successively appointed Damat Alaaddin Pasha in 1791 and Hamamizade Ahmed Pasha in 1792 for the mission. At the beginning of 1792, military units from Edirne, commanded by Halil and İdris, were sent to defeat the rebels in Hasköy. They clashed with the bandits, but they could only capture a few. The bandits from Kırcaali (*Kırcaali eşkıyası*) devastated several areas. The army was discouraged and dispersed. After Hamamizade Ahmed Pasha, Zihneli Hasan Pasha who was the governor of Silistre became responsible for the suppression of the *dağlı* bandits. The central government ordered Topuzzade Mustafa, the *ayan* of Yenice-i Karasu, to serve under Hasan Pasha's command. On April 18, 1792, Hasan Pasha clashed with the bandits in Karakaya which is a village between Gümülcine and Ferecik. However, this did not put end to the activities of bandits. Especially, paying wages to the soldiers that were deployed for chasing *dağlıs* was a severe problem for Hasan Pasha. The bandits were constantly on the move. In September 1793, the bandits moved from Filibe to Gümülcine and Yenice-i Karasu. Upon bandits' oppression of the local populace, the capital commanded *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne, Serbestzade Mehmed, to advance on the bandits. The same order was sent to the authorities of Filibe, Sofya, Siroz, Drama,

¹¹⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 18-19.

Pazarcık, Samakov, Nevrekop, İzladı, İskeçe, Pravişte, Gümülcine, Dimetoka, Plevne, Çirmen, and Kızanlık. They had to work under the command of Hasan Pasha. However, Hasan Pasha could not become successful in wiping out the bandits. Therefore, Seyyid Ali Pasha (Alo Pasha) replaced him.¹¹¹

In 1794, the banditry activities of *dağlıs* increased, and their raids reached the vicinities of Gelibolu. They attacked some villages of Gelibolu and threatened the community of Gelibolu to attack them. The presence of *baruthane* and *peksimadhane* in Gelibolu made the town a target for the bandits, and this situation frightened the populace. Also, the bandits demanded money from the townsfolk of Bolayır and threatened them to set afire the town. Therefore, the capital ordered the *ayans* and naval units in the region to guard Gelibolu until the threat of *dağlıs* passed. The measures that were taken by local authorities prevented the attack of bandits on the town.¹¹² While in the southeast of Rumelia was being under attack, the bands of Kara Feyzi and Kara Hasan were ruining everything in their way towards Belgrade in the southwest.¹¹³

In July 1794, the bandits deployed in Cuma town. Therefore, the capital ordered certain *ayans* to recruit soldiers and to fight under the command of Ali Pasha. The *ayan* of Hezargrad would send 300 soldiers and the *ayan* of Samakov 400 soldiers. Ali Pasha assaulted bandits who stayed in Kirli village near Hasköy with the soldiers that were recruited with the help of *ayans*. The bandits could not resist and dispersed to other villages. However, Ali Pasha chased them and killed lots of bandits in Yasi and Yoğurdcu villages. Therefore, the bandits escaped to *Despot Yaylası* for saving their lives. At the same time, the central government demanded a

¹¹¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 20-21.

¹¹² Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 23-24.

¹¹³ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 72.

complete solution to the banditry problem from Ali Pasha, and other local authorities.¹¹⁴

The efforts of local authorities and the number of soldiers to suppress the rebels show that *dağlı* subject was not a simple banditry issue. Indeed, the towns above were not attacked by *dağlıs*, except Hezargrad and Samakov, but the local population in the areas that were under *dağlı* threat could sometimes collaborate with the bandits.¹¹⁵ Therefore, the units that were recruited from these regions, which are close to mountainous neighborhoods, were insufficient. Also, they were unreliable, and recruiting more soldiers from these areas could lead the local population to incline toward the bandits.

The impacts of widespread banditry were drastic in the eastern parts of the Balkans. Local population in the areas between Küçük Çekmece and Selanik left their homes due to increasing banditry activities.¹¹⁶ The state sent orders to prevent the migration of people, so it offered the dispensation of taxes like *tekalif-i şakka* and *örfiye* or demanded lesser taxes.¹¹⁷

At the end of 1794, *dağlı* bands were under pressure, and they appealed for mercy from the authorities. Ali Pasha got wounded during clashes with the bandits. In November 1794, Ali Pasha sent a dispatch that informed the capital about his situation. In this document, he stated that he would attack *dağlıs* after he recovered and gave good news about the solution to *dağlı* problem. However, the amnesty that was given to *dağlıs* did not mean the issue was over. Later developments showed that their peaceful position did not last a long time. It was a strategic decision that saved

¹¹⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 24.

¹¹⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 23.

¹¹⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Yılmaz, "Militarization," 55.

them from destruction.¹¹⁸ Ali Pasha commanded regular troops made up of local troops. Therefore, he preferred to negotiate with the chiefs of the bandits and succeeded in obtaining their consent to go and settle in Anatolia. The Sublime Porte agreed to finance the emigration of the bandits. However, most of the bandits had no intention of leaving Rumelia, unlike some of their leaders, so the plan did not actualize.¹¹⁹

Although it seemed that Ali Pasha overcame the *dağlı* problem by granting amnesty to the bandits, they again started plundering activities not long after. Ali Pasha was dismissed due to this situation, and he was sent to Anatolia. Hacı Abdi Pasha took his place and began to work with local administrators like his predecessors to cope with this issue. However, some local notables had close relationships with *dağlıs* and used these bandits in their struggles against rival notables. Thus, they aimed to expand their domains. The bandits took refuge in these *ayans* when they faced a serious problem.¹²⁰ In 1795, Hacı Manav who was a bandit leader, gained strength and took control of Plevne. While he was trying to capture Lofça, the town dwellers prevented this attempt. Abdi Pasha realized that he could not cope with the bandits as they continued to collaborate with the *ayans*. Therefore, he took some of them to his troops. He cooperated with the *ayans* of Şumnu and Hezargrad and killed 500-600 bandits in Kadı Bican village. After that, Hacı Manav escaped to Gümülcine, and the banditry in the northern parts of the Balkans ended, but it accelerated in the regions around the southern Balkans and Edirne.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 26.

¹¹⁹ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 97-98.

¹²⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 27-28.

¹²¹ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa," 182.

The *ayan* of Gümülcine Mestan Agha, the *ayan* of Dimetoka Veysioğlu Halil, the *ayan* of Fere Ahmed Haseki, the *ayan* of Hasköy Emin Agha, the *ayan* of Sultanyeri Tokatçıklı Süleyman Agha were the main protectors of *dağlı* bandits.¹²² These *ayans* were ruling the areas where the bandits were mainly originated from, and they had *dağlı* background. Nevertheless, their attitude towards bandits was not stable, and they could also fight bandits from time to time when the state needed their aid.¹²³ As a result of their unreliable actions, most of them would be eliminated by the state in the end.

The prominent bandit leaders recognized Pazvantoğlu as their supreme chief, gave him part of their booty, and placed themselves under his command.¹²⁴ He patronized famous bandit leaders such as Macar Ali, Gavur İmam, Ali Molla,¹²⁵ Cenkçioğlu, İsaoglu, Kara Feyzi, Deli Kadri, Bekirlili Mustafa, Kara Yusuf, and Sinab.¹²⁶ He used them in his power struggle against rival *ayans* and the central government. Vidin and its vicinities became a refuge for *dağlı* bands since 1793. The *dağlı* groups and the units of Pazvandoğlu began to encroach distant places like Şehirköy (Piro), Belgrade, and Plevne. The Ottoman authorities decided to siege Vidin at the end of 1795 due to Pazvandoğlu's power and growing popularity. However, the imperial forces could not become successful, and they had to retreat in February 1796.¹²⁷

After the temporary end of the Pazvandoğlu problem, the Ottoman authorities could easily focus on the *dağlı* subject. They tried to settle them to finish their banditry, but this did not happen. Therefore, Hakkı Pasha was appointed to suppress

¹²² Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Hümayunları*, 115-116.

¹²³ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 29.

¹²⁴ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 90.

¹²⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 31.

¹²⁶ Uzunçarşılı, "Vezir Hakkı Mehmed Paşa," 182.

¹²⁷ Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin," 122.

dağlı rebels in January 1796. After the arrival of Hakkı Pasha to Edirne in February, efforts to end *dağlı* issue accelerated. It was realized that soldiers that were recruited from Rumeli were not enough to eradicate bandits, so the central government also demanded soldiers from the Anatolian *ayans*, Karaosmanzades and Çaparzades. They would recruit soldiers from Ankara, Çankırı, İskilip, Kırşehir, Aksaray, and Niğde and these soldiers would participate to the troops of Hakkı Pasha.¹²⁸

Before Hakkı Pasha started his campaign, famous bandit leader, Hacı Manav was killed. Hakkı Pasha firstly determined the notables who collaborate with the *dağlıs* and eliminated the *ayan* of Dimetoka Veysioğlu Halil, the *ayan* of Yeni Zağra Halil, the *ayan* of İştıp Tokulluoğlu Mehmed, the *ayan* of Edirne Eyüb, the *ayan* of Gümülcine Mestan, the *ayan* of Samakov Emin.¹²⁹ He sent their heads to Istanbul together with 500 bandit heads. He was quite active in the elimination of *dağlıs*. He attacked the village of Aliköy, where the famous bandit leader Mehmed Sinab had fortified castles. Sinab defended himself against Hakkı Pasha with 600 men but could not resist artillery fire, and he died in this clash.¹³⁰ At the end of 1796, the state was seeking a remedy for the problem. For this, Hakkı Pasha would register how many villages there were in Çirmen, how many neighborhoods there were in these villages, how many households there were in these neighborhoods, and wrote the names of every man who lived in these houses. Thus, they would determine the men who incline to be bandits. The local populace would be the guarantor for their neighbors, and they would be supervised. They had to report the men who helped the bandits and hand them over to the authorities.¹³¹ However, these measures did not prevent banditry activities.

¹²⁸ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 34-36.

¹²⁹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 40.

¹³⁰ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 128

¹³¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 40-41.

In the spring of 1797, Hakkı Pasha was dismissed because the problem did not end. Mustafa Pasha was appointed as the governor of Rumeli. Mustafa Pasha had 1000 *kırcalı* soldiers because he was from Gümülcine, known as the center of the *kırcalıs*. The capital sent 600 artillerymen, but Mustafa Pasha could not use these soldiers because a conflict erupted between him and the *ayan* of Sofia. Therefore, he could not even access the center of the territory and could not solve the *dağlı* problem. At the same time, large rebel bands devastated both banks of the Meriç River and established themselves in some Thracian villages. These offensives reached to the surroundings of Edirne, to the regions of Plovdiv and Çirmen. It is evident that by the summer of 1797, the attacks of bandits took an unprecedented scale. Especially, the offensive of Hakkı Pasha forced the *dağlıs* to regroup and launch campaigns. In 1797, the attacks of the bandits were no longer disorderly since they manifested themselves in campaigns that targeted the capital.¹³²

The victories of the bandits in eastern Thrace took on an alarming dimension that it was decided to demand reinforcements from Ali Pasha, the governor of Anatolia. He went to the help of Edirne with 1,000 janissaries because the bandits sieged the city and occupied certain suburbs to exert their pressure better and obtain the ransom that they requested. The intervention of Ali Pasha would be effective, and the *dağlıs* commanded by Kara Feyzi found themselves caught between the troops of Ali Pasha and Mustafa Pasha. Therefore, they chose to retreat to the mountains.¹³³

In December 1797, the central government decided to undertake a second campaign against Pazvandoğlu. Küçük Hüseyin Pasha was appointed for this mission. The governor of Anatolia Seyyid Ali Pasha, Çaparzade Süleyman, Karaosmanoğlu and some Anatolian *ayans* would participate him. Also, certain

¹³² Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 130-131

¹³³ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 131.

officials from the parts of the empire would enter under his service. The end of *dağlı* banditry was almost unthinkable without Pazvandoğlu's elimination because *dağlı* bands were serving for Pazvandoğlu when they needed to hide.¹³⁴

In the spring of 1798, the Ottoman army sieged Vidin for the second time, but it could not succeed. As a result, Pazvandoğlu was forgiven and given a vizierate title. After that, Pazvandoğlu sometimes dealt with the suppression of *dağlı* banditry. After the amnesty of Pazvandoğlu, the state could focus more on *dağlı* issue.¹³⁵ However, this situation increased Pazvandoğlu's charisma and the intensity of violence and banditry as a means of existence in the Balkans. Also, the imperial documents reveal that Pazvandoğlu still kept on his connection with Kara Feyzi despite his vow to destroy Kara Feyzi and his followers. Pazvandoğlu did not put an end to his relations with *dağlı* rebels and continued to support them behind the curtain by providing shelter, weapons, food, and other supplies. In this way, Pazvandoğlu tried to show that he could still exert his control on *dağlı* groups alone, but it was obvious that Kara Feyzi and other bandit leaders had their agendas, and they did not share the same concerns with Pazvandoğlu.¹³⁶

The *dağlı* rebels were operating around the Balkans under the leadership of certain names. In 1799, a group consisted of Kara Feyzi, Manav İbrahim, Filibeli Mustafa and Hızır, Manavoğlu, İsaoglu, Mestanağaoğlu İbrahim assaulted merchants returning from *Selimiye panayırı* near Edirne. The *ayan* of Gümülcine Tokatçıklı Süleyman Agha who sometimes collaborated with *dağlıs* campaigned against rebels and they had to escape. Manav İbrahim, Filibeli Mustafa and Hızır went to the vicinities of Bergos and began plundering. Kara Feyzi Cenkçioğlu, and İsaoglu

¹³⁴ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 47, 49.

¹³⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 61-62.

¹³⁶ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 109.

headed towards Kırkkilise. The soldiers in Edirne, and the *ayan* of Gümülcine engaged in a great battle with *dağlıs* in June 1799 and many bandits were killed.¹³⁷

The *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne, Yusuf Pasha was making effort to eradicate these bandits. Ali Zot escaped to Albania with Albanian soldiers. Manav İbrahim, and other bandits fled to the mountains of Gümülcine. Yusuf Pasha sent orders to the *ayans* of Tatarpazarı, İskeçe, Gümülcine, Akçekızanlık, Zağra-i Atik, Çırpan, and Zağra-i Cedid to attack bandits who stays in their regions. However, bandits were highly mobile, and when they got a harsh blow, they were escaping to another place. Tepedelenli Ali Pasha reported that some Albanians also participated *dağlıs*. Therefore, he would keep mountain passes to prevent their passage. However, Yusuf Pasha also reported that the soldiers who were recruited to suppress *dağlıs* in the mountains of Gümülcine consisted of Albanians, and their return to their homelands would be acceptable. Thus, a bandit whose name was Ali Zot went to Albania with his soldiers.¹³⁸

Indeed, the actions of the bandits under the command of Kara Feyzi was horrible for the capital. They defeated the troops of the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne and devastated the northern part of Eastern Thrace in 1799. They retreated to rest in the winter and share immense booty. At the end of winter, new recruits reinforced them and headed south again. It was still under the command of Kara Feyzi. Kara Feyzi launched a campaign, 4000 to 5000 *dağlıs* advanced under a single command, towards the most prosperous regions of Thrace. 5000 men led by Kara Feyzi seized Karinabad and set fire to Fakya, Karabunar, and Kırkkilise. Then, they settled in Lüleburgaz and cut off all communication between Edirne and İstanbul. The flow of refugees surging towards the capital alerted the authorities. There was a panic in

¹³⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 62-63.

¹³⁸ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 64-65.

Istanbul. All infantry in Levend Çiftlik were launched against the bandits, and the governor of İznik was called for help. Sixty messengers were sent to the *ayans* of Rumelia to throw all their forces against Kara Feyzi.¹³⁹ The first campaign of the *dağlıs* in eastern Thrace and before the gates of Constantinople took power in haste for months but ended with a retreat towards the mountains¹⁴⁰.

Palaslı Mehmed Pasha was appointed in 1800 and became a prominent agent in the suppression of *dağlı* banditry, although there were some doubts about his attitude in the beginning. Tirsinikli Mehmed Ağa, the *ayans* of Şumnu and Hezargrad, governor of Silistre, *nazır* of Filibe, and voyvoda of Tırnova would collaborate with him. However, there were some difficulties according to naib of Eskicuma. Mehmed Giray captured Eskicuma with his 5000-6000 bandits and stayed there for 40-50 days. They burned lots of villages and plundered some of them. Therefore, recruiting soldiers was so hard in this area. Also, the *ayans* did not help appointed officials willingly on this issue. They did not participate in these campaigns personally and just sent some soldiers. Despite these negative effects, Palaslı Mehmed Pasha and the *ayans* attacked the bandits in Tırnova, and bandits escaped towards other directions.¹⁴¹

When *dağlı* bandits were defeated in Tırnova, they escaped to Eflak lands by passing the Danube River. While they were escaping, they burned the towns of Plevne and Niğbolu. Their arrival at Eflak created fear among the community. The *nazır* of İbrail recruited 250 soldiers and deployed them in certain places. The governor of Silistre Musa Paşa and Tokatçıklı Süleyman would chase the bandits. However, the *ayans* could not work in a coordinated manner. Therefore, the rebels

¹³⁹ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 192-193

¹⁴⁰ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 196.

¹⁴¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 69-70.

continued to plunder nearby regions. At the same time, Pazvandođlu again began to act rebelliously and gathered bandits around himself. The *ayans* who helped the bandits were being punished. The *ayan* of Babaeski was one of them. He permitted burning and plundering of villages by the bandits. Therefore, people in Babaeski requested his dismissal¹⁴²

The activities of bandits around Edirne scared the state because Istanbul was under threat. Therefore, Tokatçıklı Süleyman Agha would chase bandits, and the bostancıbaşı of Edirne would keep the roads that go to Istanbul with his soldiers. In October 1800, Tayyar Mahmud Pasha was appointed for the *dađlı* issue. He came to Edirne and sent his soldiers to Ciğerciođlu, and İsaiođlu. The treason of the *ayan* of Edirne was realized, and he was executed. Also, Ciğerciođlu was killed during the clashes. At the same time, the *dađlı* bandits were active in several parts of Rumelia. They attacked Eflak by taking help from Vidin. They attacked Babaeski and Bergos, but they were repelled. The massive banditry activities led to the purge of the Ottoman lands. Some of Tekfurdađı populace left their homes and arrived Silivri, and some went to Anatolia.¹⁴³

During the governorate of Osman Pasha, the *dađlı* bandits were hounded seriously, but the problem was not solved. In January 1801, the bandits raided many places, and soldiers were sent on them, but the issue was not over. The central government appointed Hakkı Pasha as the governor of Rumelia for the second time.¹⁴⁴ In 1801, the local authorities carried out serial offensives against *dađlı* bandits. The governor of Silistre Musa Pasha wrote how he struggled with the bandits in Plevne and Lom. Süleyman Agha and the bostancıbaşı of Edirne chased

¹⁴² Özkaya, *Dađlı İsyamları*, 70-73.

¹⁴³ Özkaya, *Dađlı İsyamları*, 74-76.

¹⁴⁴ Özkaya, *Dađlı İsyamları*, 79.

the bandits in the vicinities of Edirne, and Babaeski. The *ayan* of Zağra-i Atik Hacı Emin Agha, *ayan* of Kızanlık Mustafa Agha, *ayan* of Yanbolu, and *ayan* of Samakov clashed with the bandits in their regions. The bandit leader Manav İbrahim went to Vidin, and Kara Feyzi came to Edirne and plundered the vicinities of Kırkkilise. The *voyvoda* of Eflak defeated the bandits Manav İbrahim and Koşancalı Halil who attacked Rahova. While some bandits were staying in the villages of Tırnova, the *ayan* of the town reported that he waited for the soldiers would come from Kızanlık. Also, the state still needed the soldiers that the *ayans* of Anatolia would send. For this, Çaparzade Süleyman sent 260 soldiers from Anatolia.¹⁴⁵

In 1802, Hakkı Pasha was dismissed, and the *ayan* of Filibe was appointed as the governor of Rumeli. However, his mission did not last long, and Tepedelenli Ali Pasha replaced him. Ali Pasha went to his place of duty late. This led to an increase in bandits' activities. They came to Bucharest, and the beg of Eflak escaped to Austria. Other bands attacked Samakov, but the *ayan* Raşid Beg repulsed the bandits. At the same time, the authorities in İskeçe recruited 3000 soldiers to chase the bandits. When Ali Pasha moved against the bandits with lots of soldiers, the bandits in Sofia appealed for mercy by pledging to stay in their homes. The state forgave them on condition that Kara Feyzi and Cenkçioğlu settle in Hasköy, Kara Mustafa in Filibe. Ali Pasha gained over Albanians among the bandits and split them.¹⁴⁶

The fear of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha caused bandits to stay calm for a while. The state sent Çavuşbaşı Osman Agha to negotiate settlement issue with the *dağlı* leaders Kara Feyzi and Ali Molla. They agreed on a decision that Ali Molla would settle in Fire, but Tokatçıklı Süleyman did not accept this situation. Also, the *ayans* of Rumeli did not accept the governorate of Rumeli and requested his dismissal from

¹⁴⁵ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 81-84.

¹⁴⁶ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 87-89.

the central government. Hereupon, Vani Mehmed Pasha replaced him. At the same time, Manav İbrahim was causing trouble. He held Tutrakan and launched an offensive against Eflak lands. Tirsiniklizade İsmail sieged Manav İbrahim and defeated him. Manav İbrahim was not killed and surrendered to Tirsiniklizade. He took Manav İbrahim to his retinue and gave him farmland, but this situation did not last long. Manav İbrahim and his friends continued their unruly behaviors. Therefore, Tirsiniklizade attacked his band and executed him.¹⁴⁷

However, the killing of one bandit leader did not end this issue. In 1803, Selim III was furious because of the unending turmoil that was caused by the bandits. He told his feelings by saying that,

Yesterday, I could not express myself properly. I could not get over the fulness of my indignation because of *dağlı* issue. These hogs brought us into derision in front of the world. Take strict measures and eliminate them!¹⁴⁸

He criticized unsuccessful attempts of amnesty for the bandits by stating that it leads their activities to continue. Also, he was complaining about the indecision of the selection of officials who would march on the bandits. Following the orders of the sultan, the state sent orders to the *ayans* of Rumelia to eradicate the *dağlı* bands and to unite with Tokatçıklı. However, they could not act together, so the bandits continued their plundering activities. Sirozlu İsmail Beg scattered the group of Kara Feyzi that plundered the area between Filibe and Pazarcık. Also, Tokatçıklı defeated the *dağlıs*, but their spread to different areas caused new problems. Therefore, the

¹⁴⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 91-93.

¹⁴⁸ “Dünki gün kemal-i infialimden güzelce ifade eyleyemedim. Şu *dağlılar* maddesinde ben bir dürlü gazabımı hazm eyleyemiyorum. Bir değil iki değil bu hınzırlar bizi ‘aleme mashara eyliyor, tamam tedbir alunub, def ü ref’lerine mübaşeret oluna...” BOA HAT 174, 7538 [29 Ra 1217 (16 April 1803)].

central government wrote orders to the authorities of Bergos, Kırkkilise, Şumnu, İskeçe, Çorlu and Edirne.¹⁴⁹

The state gave the governorate of Rumelia to Ibrahim Pasha in November 1803. At the same time, the actions of Tokatçıklı Süleyman casted doubts. Although he worked for the destruction of *dağlı* bandits, the state realized that he secretly supported the bandits as well. Therefore, the central government secretly looked for some means for the killing of Süleyman Agha. Ibrahim Pasha was assigned to kill Tokatçıklı Süleyman Agha, and Filibeli Hüseyin Agha. However, the bandits were wandering around Çorlu and Tekfurdağı, and the state was scared that the rebels would unite with Tokatçıklı. Therefore, the state called Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha to fight these bandits and put *Nizam-ı Cedid* soldiers under his order in June 1804. He faced the bandits in Malkara and defeated them. The rebels escaped to the other side of the Balkans. Ibrahim Pasha would chase the rebels, but he did not want to bother the *ayans* of the region and did not go there. So, he wrote to Tirsiniklizade to chase the bandits. Tirsiniklizade beheaded Tokatçıklı when he came to Tırnova and sent his head to Ibrahim Pasha.¹⁵⁰

The bandits came together in Çorlu and went to Tekfurdağı. They shot at the navy, so more units were sent from the naval troops. In the meanwhile, Deli Kadri, Kara Feyzi, and Mahmud and Mestan who were the nephews of Tokatçıklı Süleyman damaged the surroundings of Hasköy. In June 1805, the bandit leader Deli Kadri's band increased its activities and came to Edirne and Babaeski. At the same time, the *bostancıbaşı* of Edirne wrote a letter to inform the capital that bandits were approaching İstanbul and there would be a need for Anatolian soldiers. The situation was so harsh because the bandits almost came to the capital. The state handled Deli

¹⁴⁹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 95-96.

¹⁵⁰ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 102-104.

Kadri problem by forgiving and settling his band in Bergos, but this was not a complete solution. Therefore, he was sent on Serbian rebels.¹⁵¹

The death of Tokatçıklı Süleyman was a turning point in the life of Kara Feyzi. This did not end the problem but changed the content and nature of the rebellion abruptly. After his death, the authorities in İstanbul began to think about the settlement and co-optation of Kara Feyzi and his close retinue.¹⁵² The settlement of Kara Feyzi and his men in Meriç Valley could create a drastic problem so some members of the local populace strictly refused this decision. Therefore, the central government decided to settle him in the borderland between new autonomous Serbian lands and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵³ Settlement process of such a crowded and unreliable group was not easy because both sides did not trust each other. Therefore, Kara Feyzi and his men would remain in Filibe and its vicinities.¹⁵⁴ Later, their settlement in Zağra-i Atik was discussed but it was not accepted.¹⁵⁵ In 1806, the local populace of Gümülcine, which was the town of deceased Tokatçıklı Süleyman demanded Kara Feyzi to become their *ayan* from the capital. The sultan did not confirm this request so their settlement to Breznik/İznebolu which was a new frontier between Rumeli and Serbian was decided.¹⁵⁶ The settlement of a famous bandit leader and his men in the frontier led to the fade-out of the rebellion in the Balkans. Former bandits became the warriors of the frontier against non-Muslim rebels.

In 1806, the governor of Morae Osman Pasha became the governor of Rumelia. Also, Alemdar Mustafa Pasha became the *ayan* of Rusçuk. He eliminated Yılıkoğlu Süleyman and his men Gavur İmam and Odacıoğlu Seyfullah. In 1807, he

¹⁵¹ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 106-107.

¹⁵² Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 288-290

¹⁵³ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 291.

¹⁵⁴ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 297.

¹⁵⁵ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 298.

¹⁵⁶ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 303.

was granted a vizierate rank. His army consisted of lots of infantry that were called as Kırcaali. When he came to İstanbul, he also brought his army, which led to the decrease of riffraff in Rumelia. Also, local *ayans* were gradually eliminated after 1807, and this caused a diminution in patrons of the bandits. Tokatçıklı Süleyman, Tirsiniklizade İsmail, Yılıkzade Süleyman, and Pazvandoğlu Osman died at this stage. The remaining *ayans* were respectful towards Alemdar Mustafa Pasha. Famous bandit leaders Koşancalı Halil and Kara Feyzi were settled in the Serbian border and frontier by the state. Also, they took a mission in the Ottoman-Russian Wars. Koşancalı Halil died in a battle in September 1810 with Russians.¹⁵⁷ All these developments played a role in the decrease in *dağlı* banditry after 1808.

3.3 The *Dağlıs*: Rebels or bandits?

The comprehension of the difference between the terms “rebel” and “bandit” is a significant factor in understanding the causes of *dağlı* phenomenon. The imperial documents mainly label men who participated in the activities of *dağlıs* as *eşkiyâ* and *şakî*, the terms literally mean bandit and brigand. However, they were sometimes labeled as *âsi* and *bâgî*, the terms designate a rebel, as in the case of Kara Feyzi. Even the state called them as *ha'inü'd-din ü devlet* which means enemy of the faith and the state. The difference in terminology derives from the imperial vocabulary which was based on Islamic jurisprudence. According to the interpretation of some jurists, rebels fight for a cause, and this constitutes the main difference between rebels and bandits. This interpretation makes it difficult to fight against the rebels because there are certain limits for fighting them. Preventing their damage and self-defense are legitimate reasons to combat them. However, fighting against bandits

¹⁵⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 109-113.

does not have limits as in the case of rebels and they could be punished for their crimes.¹⁵⁸ It is obvious that the usage of the term bandit in the official documents legitimizes punishing and fighting the insurgents, so this is a probable reason to use the term banditry intensively for *dağlıs*' activities rather than the term rebellion.

The rebels were the inhabitants of Gümülcine region, and there were more than 3,000 settled rebels (*kazalarda olan oturak eşkıya*) in the districts. The central government needed 8,000 soldiers to suppress these rebels.¹⁵⁹ The self-description of *dağlıs* is significant to see how they described their activities and whether they call themselves rebels or bandits. Although it is hard to hear the voices of these people in the imperial dispatches, there are few documents that carry their statement. Kara Feyzi, as one of the most famous *dağlı* leaders, strictly refused the label of an ordinary bandit in his direct correspondences with the Ottoman government and strived to display himself as a rebel who had a cause.¹⁶⁰ A document dated 1796 about *dağlı* issue clearly presents how *dağlı* insurgents describe themselves. In the document, a conversation between a villager and one of the rebel leaders called Ak Kabak is mentioned. After Ak Kabak settled in a villager's house, he mercifully warns the owner of the house about bandits. He says to the villager to hide his belongings immediately in a secure place, to take care of himself, and to provide his supply because robbers would come there and destroy his house when rebels leave the village. Then the villager asks curiously, "Aren't you the ones you called robbers, or will another *dağlı* chief like you come to our village?" (*Ya hırsız dediğiniz siz*

¹⁵⁸ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 176–77.

¹⁵⁹ "...tathir-i kaza buyurulur ise yalnız Gümülcine kazasında üç binden ziyade oturmuş eşkıya olmağla bunlar top olmak ve ayağa kalkmak lazım gelir ise mezburlara galib olacak kadar tedarikat --- lazım --- emr-i tathire şüru sureti tercih olunur ise başı bağı askere muhtaç olduğunu ve bu surette tez elden sekiz bin asker tertib olunup işbu sekiz binden üç bin nefer piyade ve iki bin nefer süvari olarak beş bin neferi tarafına vasıl olur ise kifayet edeceğine binaen..." "fi-ma-ba'd kazalarda olan oturak eşkıya ayaklanmamak ve yeni baştan peyda olmamak için icra olunacak --- tedbirlere" BOA HAT 1404, 56823. [29 Ra 1193 (16 April 1779)].

¹⁶⁰ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 177.

değil misiniz yoksa sizin gibi karyemize konacak başka bir dađlu sergerdesi mi gelecek?). Ak Kabak replied that since they are men of rebellion (*erbâb-ı 'isyân*), they are not interested in looting his belongings like plate, tongs, cooking pot, and straw mat but the other group is used to doing this kind of robbery, and when they come to his village, they destroy his village and snatch all his things. Indeed, the next day, an official comes with a group of Albanians, and exactly what Ak Kabak said comes true. Villagers lost all materials that they have acquired with great effort for long years in one day.¹⁶¹ The document explicitly shows that *dađlu* rebels differentiated themselves from Albanian bands and labeled them as robbers (*hırsız*). The men of rebellion (*erbâb-ı 'isyân*) is a significant term to display self-description of *dađlu* insurgents. They pointed out a precise difference between their actions and banditry while labeling other groups as robbers and naming themselves as the men of rebellion. However, there is a lack of information about the primary motive for what led them to revolt in the document.

There were both rebels who had their cause and among these groups bandits who bore arms for looting. The upheaval in the region, the involvement of different groups in violence and plundering activities make it difficult to determine whether the actors of these incidents were rebels, or bandits, or mercenaries who were recruited by *ayans*. As we have seen above, imperial documents tended to label *dađlu*

¹⁶¹ "...dađlu sergerdelerinden Ak Kabak dimekle maruf kimesne hanesine konuđu köylünün birine büsbütün eşyayı hakirani düşürüb bildiğın mahfuz ve me'men mahallere hıfz ve kendi selametın çaresine bak ve tedarikini gör zira bu tarafdın kalkub gittiğımız gibi işbu karyeye hırsız gelüb muhtemel senin dahi haneni harab ve yebab iderler ve bu zıkr olunan köylüye keennehu terahhum yüzünden haber virdikde zıkr olunan köylü dahi ya hırsız didiğıniz siz değil misiniz yohsa sizin gibi karyemize konacak başka bir dađlu sergerdesi mi gelecek diyü sual yüzünden izhar-ı suret-i taaccüb ve istiğrab eyledikde biz erbâb-ı isyandan olduğumuzdan kendi sahan ve maşa ve tencere ve hasır misüllü eşyanızı ve malzemenizi garet ve yağma etmeği irtıkab ider makuleden değiliz ancak didiğın öbür takım bu makule hırsızlık ile meluf olduğundan köylerinize geldikçe sizleri harab iderler ve büsbütün şeylerinizi alenen kapuşurlar ve bu cevab virmişdir vakia zabt ve rabta memur olanlardan biri ertesi günü yanında olan Arnavud taifesıyla karye-i mezbura uğrayub Ak Kabağın didiği aynıyla vaki olmuş dermend köylülerin her biri kedd-i yemin ve 'arak-ı cebin ile ömrünü telef iderek sinin-i kesire zarfında tedarik edebildiği büsbütün levazimatdan bir gün içinde mahrum kalmışdır..." BOA HAT 1344, 52527 [29 Z 1210 (5 July 1796)].

bands as bandits while *dağlıs* were describing themselves as rebels. At this point, when we look at the event by focusing on *dağlı* groups, it would be more suitable to describe the events as the rebellion of *dağlıs*. The rebels identified themselves as the men of rebellion by carefully differentiating themselves from bandits and refusing to be bandits. Also, the empire used the bandit term with a legal and political aim that helped to legitimize its actions against these people by ignoring the causes behind the rebellion. Therefore, the frequent use of the bandit term in the imperial discourse was an intentional usage that neglects the background of events by focusing on the violence led by rebels.

The imperial documents and local people are keen on describing rebels as bandits. They named all plundering activities as banditry. On the other hand, rebels refused this classification, and they emphasized the rebellious overtones of their activities by indicating that they were not interested in goods of villagers. However, the same document dated 1796 also shows that farmers who were called as the men of cultivation and agriculture (*erbab-ı hars ve ziraat*) left their children and livestock due to increasing atrocities and attacks. According to the document, they started robbery everywhere by taking arms and thus leading to the increase of banditry day by day.¹⁶² It seems that there was a cycle of violence that caused the rural communities in the Balkans to rebel. The actions of one group triggered another group to participate in this cycle. The *dağlıs* as the first ring of chain of violence gave their name to the rebellion and banditry activities and motivated many others to participate in them. Most of the leaders of the rebellion, and villagers who attended to banditry activities were members of *dağlı* community. Therefore, understanding

¹⁶² "... erbab-ı hars ve ziraat haklarında dahi zuhura gelen mezalim ve teaddiyat derece-i kemale reside olduklarından aceze-yi mezkurun dahi hah ve nanah kendi sıbyan ve hayvanatlarını terk ile berü tüfenk ellerine alub her tarafda hırsızlığa mübaşeret itdiklerine binaen eşkıya zümresi yevmen-fe-yevmen tekessür bulmaktadır..." BOA HAT 1344, 52527. [29 Z 1210 (5 July 1796)].

the roots of this community would help to look at the causes of the rebellion from a meaningful framework, but firstly we need to categorize different groups that had participated in the rebellion and banditry activities.

The *dağlıs* differentiated themselves from ordinary bandits and named themselves as the men of rebellion. Also, imperial dispatches made a distinction between bandits by categorizing one group as real *dağlı* bandits and the other ones as foreigners (*yabancı*) even though they acted in unison. Being aware of the difference between the two groups, the capital sent officials to the region to separate these two groups from each other by sending foreigners to their home provinces and settling real bandits in their homelands and so aimed to prevent their banditry. At this point, while the real *dağlı* bandits refer to the locals of the region who were called as *dağlıs*,¹⁶³ foreigners were Albanian mercenaries and bandits who came to the region, participated in rebels, their plundering activities, and did not return to their homelands. Albanians were more prone to be mercenaries and bandits because when the empire tried to resettle them, they did not accept to be settled by stating that they could not engage in farming, contrary to *dağlı* rebels.¹⁶⁴

Both *dağlıs* and Albanians could enter *ayans*' service as mercenaries. Also, Albanians could be recruited by pashas sent by the central government to fight against *dağlı* rebels and unruly *ayans*. The loyalty of both groups could change depending on conditions so they could fight against each other.¹⁶⁵ The imperial

¹⁶³ "... çavuşbaşı ağa taife-i merkumeyi yerli yerlerine iskân etmek ve yabancılarını dahi vilayetlerine göndermek üzere taraf-ı devlet-i aliyyeden memur olarak İskeçeye azimet etmiş..." BOA HAT 65, 2837 B. [29 Z 1217 (22 April 1803)]

¹⁶⁴ "... ve taife-i merkumenin yabancıları asıl dağlı sergerdelerine sizler ötede haksız ve birkaç neferden ibaretsiniz lakin biz kırk neferden mütecaviz sergerdeyiz biz rençberlik idemeyiz diyerek beylerinde kıylükal suretiyle yabancı olan Arnavudlardan üç yüz mikdarı haşerat Bergoslu Deli Kadri ve --- oğlu ile ayrılıb Havas-ı Mahmud Paşa tarafına doğru azimet eyledikleri havadisleri söylenmekde olmağla ..." BOA HAT 65, 2837. [29 Z 1217 (22 April 1803)]

¹⁶⁵ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 49-50.

officials discussed suppressing *dağlı* rebels by posting Albanian mercenaries under the command of Albanian pashas in town centers around the settlements that *dağlıs* lived, but officials also were not trusting Albanians and regarding them like *dağlıs*.¹⁶⁶ The state officials were aware of the disloyalty of Albanian mercenaries because they could participate in *dağlı* bands when they found their payments low. These two groups were similar in terms of consisting of men who were inclined to become bandits and mercenaries.¹⁶⁷ In spite of the similarities between these two groups and the convenience of *dağlı* term for Albanian groups since they came from the mountainous territories of Albania, they were categorized differently from *dağlı* rebels of the Eastern Balkans. They created a distinct group from *dağlıs* in a multi-actor environment of the period.

3.4 The *Dağlı* community

In an environment with several actors, the central role belonged to *dağlı* rebels in the violence and banditry activities in that period. The brief chronology of events given in the previous section explicitly reveals how diverse the actors are and how intense the transition among groups is. The multiplicity of actors led *dağlıs* to be evaluated in the same place with these different groups or as a part of them. This situation makes it harder to determine the main reasons of *dağlı* rebellion. To understand the probable reasons for the rebellion, I will first try to discuss the characteristics of *dağlı* community rather than complex sequence of events. At this point, I will

¹⁶⁶ "...Hasköy ve Gümölcine ve Sarışaban ve Darıdere semtlerinde üç nefer mirmiran bin nefer adam ile ikamet eylemesi maddesine bin nefer adam idaresine muktedir mirmirandan kimler var ve üç bin nefer asker senevi ne mikdar masraf ile olur meğer Arnavud paşaları tayin oluna Arnavud askeriyle Arnavud paşalarının ol tarafta ikametleri dağlının ikametlerine müşabih olmaz mı şu kadar farkı olur ki bu askere dağlı denilmeyip Arnavud denilir bir taraftan kasabat ve kurayı harap ve fukara-yı raiyyeti tecrim ve bir canibden dahi taraf-ı miriden ulufe talep ederler bu mahzurlar varid olduğu halde işbu üç nefer mirmiranın mahal-i mezkureye tayin ve ikameleri etraflı --- muhtaçtır zan ederiz..." BOA HAT 1404, 56823. [29 Ra 1193 (16 April 1779)]

¹⁶⁷ Anscombe, "Albanians," 103.

propose some ideas about the roots of rebels by concentrating on the constituents of the *dağlı* community, their geography, and their means of subsistence.

The geographical region that the *dağlı* community lived in was the Rhodope Mountains and the settlements around it. An archival document dated 1796 explicitly shows that this group lived in the mountainous region between Fire and Dimetoka in the east, and *Despot Yaylası* (Dospat Plato in present-day Bulgaria) in the west, Yenice-i Karasu and Gümülcine in the south and Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy in the north.¹⁶⁸ Also, linguistic studies that were done in the later years around Kırcaali region and Thrace show that there is a special *dağlı* dialect and it is one of the dialects of Turkish in Rumelia.¹⁶⁹ When we bring together the archival documents and linguistic studies, it seems possible to mention the existence of a specific *dağlı* group or identity with some typical characteristics that share the same geography and have a unique dialect. The leading role in the *dağlı* rebellion must have belonged to this group as the members giving their name to the rebellion.

Former studies have mainly ignored a specific *dağlı* identity and tended to display the *dağlı* rebellion as the activities of some groups that first started banditry and then took shelter in the mountains rather than the rebellion of the local populace of these mountains, although they have also mentioned the Rhodopes region as the homeland of some *dağlı* leaders. Esmer, citing Vera Moutaftchieva, states that the issue was the result of the banditry of villagers who took refuge in the mountains due to the aggressions of Tatars who left their homelands after the invasion of Crimea by

¹⁶⁸ "...Rumeli memalikinin ekseri mahallerine şerarepaş ihtilal olan dağlıların buldukları asıl mesken ve mevaları Fire tarafından ve Dimetoka kazasından ve Despot Yaylası dimekle maruf mahale dek denizin deniz tarafından Yenice ve Gümülcine didikleri maruf yerlere dek mümted olub sakın oldukları işbu mahallerin ekseri taşlık ve dağlıktır..." BOA HAT 1344, 52527 [29 Z 1210 (5 July 1796)].

¹⁶⁹ In the linguistic studies made within the borders of Turkey, interviewees who speak *dağlı* dialect express that their ancestors or themselves migrated from Bulgaria. Kalay, *Edirne İli Ağızları*, 8; Şanlı, "Kırklareli," 11; Tulu, "Kırcaali," 154.

Russian Empire in 1783 and came to Meriç valley. Also, he explains why bandits were called mountain bandits by indicating that they mainly escaped to and hid in the Rhodopes and Balkan Mountains.¹⁷⁰ However, Moutaftchieva also proposes that most bandits were ordinary villagers who lived around Kırcaali and began banditry because of poverty.¹⁷¹ Esmer mentions the same region with Moutaftchieva as the homeland of Kara Feyzi and his band's core members and suggests that they were from Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy region.¹⁷² Although there are some uncertainties about the origins of rebels because of the multiplicity of actors, both Esmer and Moutaftchieva indicate that the area that rebels were originated from was the settlements around the Rhodope Mountains. The labels of *Hasköy eşkiyası* (Haskovo bandits) and *Kırcaali eşkiyası* (Kardzhali bandits) and certain Ottoman documents support the idea that they had their origins in the Rhodope mountains.¹⁷³ However, these studies do not mention any group identity that took shape around this geography. The *dağlı* as an inclusive epithet complicates ascertaining the identity of rebels and their homelands because of the fact that the Balkans is a generally mountainous region, and people from other regions participated in *dağlı* rebels.

Taking notice of local classifications of the inhabitants of the region helps to distinguish other local rebel and bandit groups from *dağlı* rebels because most imperial documents are generally opaque about the origins of various groups. At this point, linguistic studies are important to show the presence of a specific *dağlı*

¹⁷⁰ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 59-60; Yılmaz uses the same comment of Esmer while classifying the roots of rebellion, Yılmaz, "Militarization," 42-43.

¹⁷¹ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 105.

¹⁷² Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 61-62.

¹⁷³ "...bu defa tesyar eylediğin tahriratında ve ilamlarda sabık'ül-beyan Gümölcine ve Yenice-i Karasu ve Çağlayık ve Dimetoka ve Sultanyeri ve Ferecik ve Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy ve Çirmen ve Kırcaali kazaları ahalileri huşunet ile meftur ve fezahata ma'il olduklarından bi'd-defaat ba-ahkam-ı celile mübaşirler tayin ve içlerinden şaki olanlar temyiz ve mücazaları infaz ve ba-hücec-i şeriyye nüzura kat' ve nizam-ı rabta..." BOA C.AS. 1099, 48547 [29 Ra 1193 (16 April 1779)].

community in the eastern Balkan geography and its differences from other groups. These studies show that there are two main Turkish dialects in the Eastern Balkans, which are *gacal* and *dağlı* dialects.¹⁷⁴ These two groups are mainly divided from each other geographically. *Dağlı* dialect is specific to the Rhodope region, especially settlements around Kırcaali town.¹⁷⁵ Although central parts of Bulgaria in the south of *Deliorman* (Ludogorie in present-day Bulgaria) are mountainous areas, inhabitants of these regions were different from *dağlıs*, and they were called as *gacals*. This Turkish-speaking group also sees themselves as the natives of the region that mainly corresponds to central and northern Bulgaria and eastern Thrace.¹⁷⁶ Some of them were probably participating in the rebellion and banditry activities with the name of Deliorman bandits (*Deliorman eşkiyası*),¹⁷⁷ but they were different from *dağlıs* based on their geographical origins and particular identity.

Although there was a specific *dağlı* dialect of Turkish specific to the people who lived in the Rhodope Mountains, Turkish-speaking people did not wholly constitute the whole inhabitants of the territory. Pomaks, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Sarakatsinis lived in this region. Therefore, the participation of these different ethnic groups to the rebellion was a usual situation. It was known that members of non-Muslim subjects such as İnce Stoyan and Kara Tanaş became active in some *dağlı* bands.¹⁷⁸ The region had a crowded Pomak population that was also identified by living in the mountains.¹⁷⁹ This Muslim group was living all around the Rhodope

¹⁷⁴ These studies also mention the Pomak dialect as a third dialect of Turkish in these provinces. Since this dialect has developed with the learning of Turkish by Pomaks whose mother tongues were Pomak language which is a completely different language than Turkish, it must be appropriate not to include Pomak dialect in this paragraph; Kalay, *Edirne İli Ağızları*, 6–10; Şanlı, “Kırklareli,” 11–15.

¹⁷⁵ Tulu, “Kırcaali,”: 154; Günşen, “Doğu Trakya,” 446-47.

¹⁷⁶ Kowalski, “Kuzey-Doğu,” 480; Olcay, *Doğu Trakya Yerli Ağzı*, 10.

¹⁷⁷ Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyancıları*, 12-14.

¹⁷⁸ Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion,” 322; Moutaftchieva, *L’Anarchie*, 39,343.

¹⁷⁹ Demetriou, “Prioritizing,” 100–101.

Mountains but especially centered around the western part of the mountain.¹⁸⁰ They played a significant role in the rebellion. Their role can be seen in the case of Sinab who was a member of this community and one of the most famous *dağlı* rebel leaders. He controlled the northwestern parts of the Rhodope Mountains with his group, which numbered around five hundred men.¹⁸¹ He became a controversial protagonist in many Rhodope legends. While some legends were mentioning his exploits, cruelty, and immense wealth, the rest presented him as a real hero.¹⁸² As being the natives of the region, Pomaks must have played a significant role in *dağlı* rebellion under the leadership of *dağlı* chiefs as well.

In this part, I tried to explore the roots of *dağlıs* and the usage of *dağlı* term. As a geography-specific term: the *dağlı* label described the rebels originating from the Rhodope Mountains without paying attention to their ethnic identities, so it must have become an inclusive term that encompasses the rebels originating from the region. However, the presence of a Turkish speaking group from the same region, also called *dağlıs* causes an ambiguous situation about the origins of the rebels. This makes it harder to ascertain the roots of the rebels and may lead to an assumption only this group rebelled. Yet, the participation of other groups shows that it was a general problem involving the entire region. As a result of this situation, it would be proper to say that the rebels who had a *dağlı* identity consisted mainly of the population of the same area, which was inhabited by a Muslim population. Turkish groups that were called *dağlıs* might play a leading role and might have given its name to the rebellion but also Pomak community and non-Muslims in the region

¹⁸⁰ Apostolov, "The Pomaks," 728-29.

¹⁸¹ Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 103.

¹⁸² Moutaftchieva, *L'Anarchie*, 128.

participated in the rebellion. The main common point of all these different groups was that they were inhabitants of the Rhodope Mountains.

Living in a mountainous area, the geographical and environmental aspects must have had a significant role in the activities of the inhabitants of the region. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find the roots of the rebellion by firstly indicating that the rebellion was located in a specific region and then focusing on this specific geography. Firstly, I tried to show the roots of people who had the *dağlı* ethnonym in the Balkans. In the remaining sections, I will focus on how living conditions in the mountains shaped the lives of their inhabitants and their livelihoods. Thus, I will try to understand the roots of the rebellion by looking at the changes in these factors.

In his majestic work, Braudel mentions a typical mountain dweller character, famous for his wild personality, that has been the subject of Mediterranean literature.¹⁸³ Undoubtedly, their characteristics were the result of harsh living conditions in the mountains of the Mediterranean because they had to struggle in tough circumstances for their daily necessities such as food, water, shelter, and fuel. They were frequently under threat of hunger, famine, epidemics, brigandage, and war.¹⁸⁴ Poverty and physical difficulties were just ordinary aspects of life in the highlands. They lived outdoors without putting on sufficiently protective clothes, walked over frozen terrains and cold rivers without shoes. This lifestyle endowed them with endurance and toughness, which they could especially show during long-lasting wars. They distinguished themselves by their breathtaking resistance and fortitude during their services in various armies and wars.¹⁸⁵ The *dağlıs* of the

¹⁸³ Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 30.

¹⁸⁴ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 104.

¹⁸⁵ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 33–34.

Rhodope Mountains had common traits as members of the Mediterranean mountain communities.

With similar statements, Ottoman documents delineate a particular wild character of the *dağlı* community in the Rhodopes area. According to a document, roughness and villainy were the inherent characteristics of the population who lived in Gümülcine, Yenice-i Karasu, Çağlayık, Dimetoka, Sultanyeri, Ferecik, Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy, Çirmen, and Kırcaali.¹⁸⁶ Another document explains how they got their physical endurance and valor before they reached their twenty-fives by stating that they acclimatized themselves to cold and hot weather conditions according to the season from their young ages, marched against each other, always used muskets and swords, and climbed the mountains and took shelter there.¹⁸⁷

The important issue was what reasons engendered the empire to take notice of the characteristics of this folk and why the issue became the subject of imperial dispatches in detail. Their rebellion was the main reason that the empire sent officials to investigate and suppress the revolt but it is also obvious that prolonged activities of the rebels led the state to realize that the activities of the rebels were not ordinary banditry. Therefore, imperial officials tried to inspect the issue comprehensively, reflected on the problem carefully, and sent these detailed documents explaining the possible causes of the rebellion to the capital.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the state officials deliberated on certain measures to prevent the activities of the rebels. Settling Albanian mercenaries

¹⁸⁶ BOA C.AS. 1099, 48547.

¹⁸⁷ "...küçük yaşlarından mukteza-yı mevsime göre gah berd ve hararetin şiddetine kendilerin alıştırmak ve gah biri birleri aleyhlerine yürümek ve daima tüfenk ve kılıç kullanmak ve nice nice mesafat -ı baideyi meşyen yürümek ve büyük dağlara ve balkanlara çıkmak ve ihtifa etmek misüllü zahmet ve meşakkatler ile meluf olduklarından sin ü salleri yirmi beş seneyi müteceviz olmazdan evvelce mukavemete kadar ve gereği gibi bahadır bir kavim olur..." BOA HAT 1344, 52527 [29 Z 1210 (5 July 1796)].

in the towns from where the rebels originated was one of the ideas of some state officials. However, the solution was seen as an improper measure and faced the opposition of other officials.¹⁸⁸ The imperial measures that were taken against the rebels mainly consisted of suppressing their rebellion by brute force. However, long-lasting rebellion demonstrates that the state could not succeed to eradicate their actions in this way. The other option that the empire mainly preferred to prevent rebellion was the negotiation with the rebel leaders, appointing them to state positions or as governors in certain provinces. As a matter of fact, this occurred in the case of Kara Feyzi, as we have seen in the first part of this chapter.¹⁸⁹ However, the negotiation issue needs to be considered carefully because it provides certain clues for the rebellion. The subject was the resettlement of the rebels in certain places. The empire negotiated this matter with the bandit leaders, and the problem was solved to a great extent after the relocation of the rebel groups in various places, such as Breznik in the case of Kara Feyzi. If the rebels demanded their resettlement in other regions, it was a sign of inevitable problems in their homelands. Therefore, focusing on their geography would provide multiple answers for understanding the roots of the rebellion.

¹⁸⁸ BOA HAT 1404, 56823 [29 Ra 1193 (16 April 1779)].

¹⁸⁹ Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion," 2.

CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND TO REBELLION:

LAND, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT

This chapter makes a general assessment of the nineteenth-century rebellions in the Balkans and other parts of the empire and looks at common points and differences between these rebellions and *dağlı* rebellion. Since the rebellions in the Ottoman lands in the nineteenth century were mainly related to land issues, it tries to show how the land regimes developed in the Rhodope Mountains. Then, it examines the agricultural production dynamics of the villages in these Rhodopes through an analysis of the *temettuat* registers (land and income surveys).

4.1 Nineteenth-century rural rebellions in the Ottoman Empire

Banditry activities in the Balkans are generally seen as activities specific to non-Muslim minorities. The reason for this was associated with the retreat of the Slavic communities in the region to the mountainous areas after the Ottomans conquered and dominated the Balkans. Non-Muslim communities formed special bands called *haiduk*. They sometimes adopted a semi-independent lifestyle that is far from the central authority and sometimes rebelled against this authority.¹⁹⁰ This kind of lifestyle had an important role in the nationalist revolts of the Balkan nations in the nineteenth century. However, the driving force of nationalism in these revolts has been discussed in previous studies, and it has been argued that these revolts mainly stemmed from economic, social, and agricultural changes.¹⁹¹ As a matter of fact, the

¹⁹⁰ Barkan, "Balkan Memleketlerinin," 485.

¹⁹¹ İnalçık, *Tanzimat*; Barkan, "Balkan Memleketlerinin Ziraî Reform Tecrübeleri."

dağlı rebellion, which broke out just before the national revolts in the Balkans, was led by mainly Muslim groups. Considering the *dağlı* rebellion, the view that Turks and other Muslim groups could not penetrate the mountainous regions, especially in the Balkans, does not seem consistent if we consider the Rhodope Mountains. Especially in the eastern part of the Rhodopes, the majority of the population consisted of Turks and Pomaks towards the west. They were the main agents of this rebellion.

The phenomenon that *dağlı* rebels consisted of a mainly Muslim population is related to the presence of the Left Branch (*Sol Kol*), one of the main routes of the Ottoman advance, and the settlement of crowded Turcoman groups in this region after the conquest of the region.¹⁹² The settlement of Muslims in the Rhodopes was followed by the conversion of the Christian population to Islam.¹⁹³ At this point, the fact that the *dağlı* rebellion originated in a region mostly composed of Muslims makes the nationalist roots of the revolts in the Balkans questionable. As Ömer Lütfi Barkan stated, the general historiography's attempt to explain the revolts in the Balkans with nationalist motives caused the economic and social reasons of these revolts to be ignored. Barkan emphasized that the economic conditions of the communities who had to live under the Ottoman yoke and whose lands were confiscated were effective in the emergence of these revolts.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Halil İnalçık revealed that the revolts initiated by the Bulgarian peasants in Vidin in 1849 and 1850 resulted from the deterioration of the land regime. Although he pointed out that nationalism played a role in these events that emerged in the Balkans, he studied the land and tax issues in the emergence of this and similar rebellions.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Yeni, "The Yörüks," 1.

¹⁹³ Minkov, *Conversion to Islam*, 77–78.

¹⁹⁴ Barkan, "Balkan Memleketlerinin," 498–99.

¹⁹⁵ İnalçık, *Tanzimat*, 100–101.

For example, the Serbian revolt was not an urban revolt, it was a revolt incited by the peasant classes. It ended when the Turkish landowners left the country, and the peasants got rid of their liabilities to the landlords. Similarly, the revolts in Bosnia, which had a landed aristocracy, occurred for socio-economic reasons.¹⁹⁶ In the rebellion of Vidin, the dominance of the aghas over the land was one of the main reasons for the emergence of the rebellion. This showed that the main character of the rebellion was based on economic and social factors. The Vidin rebellion was an important example in terms of showing how these factors played a role in the revolts that broke out in Rumelia and other regions of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹⁷ The deterioration of the land regime caused the uprising of the *reaya* in the Balkans and put the peasants under the economic domination of the aghas.¹⁹⁸ However, the main triggering factor for these rebellions were the changes in land regimes that stemmed from Tanzimat reforms. Tanzimat reforms became a reference point for the peasants who struggled to change old property relations with their landlords. Indeed, this was not a one-sided struggle. Landlords also wanted to benefit from property rights and exerted their claims on lands, which created tension between peasants and landlords. On the other hand, since peasants had to pay taxes both to the state and their landlord, this situation created a huge burden on them. Therefore, peasants demanded the abolition of the *çiftlik* regime and the distribution of *çiftlik* lands to them.¹⁹⁹

As in the case of the Vidin and Niş rebellions, the land disputes that escalated with the Tanzimat reforms were the main reason for peasant rebellions and resentment in the Balkans. Peasant communities struggled against the privatization of the lands by landlords, and they prevented these attempts in certain situations.

¹⁹⁶ İncalcık, "Tanzimat Nedir?," 45–46.

¹⁹⁷ İncalcık, *Tanzimat*, 110.

¹⁹⁸ İncalcık, "Tanzimat Nedir?," 46.

¹⁹⁹ Terzibaşoğlu and Kaya, "19. Yüzyılda," 73.

However, they could not resist the deterioration in common properties and common use rights of certain lands. The restrictions on tenants' use rights of lands and their bondage to the soil led to the emergence of social and economic problems and peasant rebellions in the Balkans. These problems were the signs of agricultural transformation in the Balkans and paved the way for extensive tensions.²⁰⁰ The transformation did not only lead to large-scale events, but also small-scale rural crimes spread all over the Balkans.²⁰¹ The *dağlı* rebellion had both large-scale and small-scale characteristics of rural unrest. While bigger groups of *dağlıs* were looting the region between Sofia and İstanbul, smaller groups were also committing crimes against the local communities.²⁰² When we look at these large and small-scale characteristics of the rebellion, the *dağlı* rebellion had similarities with the rural rebellions in the nineteenth century, so a comparative evaluation of these rebellions would provide some answers for the roots of the rebellion. Although the *dağlı* rebellion occurred before the Tanzimat reforms, it is also necessary to look at the impacts of agricultural transformation and changes that stemmed from land or crop regimes on the emergence of the *dağlı* rebellion. Yet, these problems were not native to the Balkans in the nineteenth century. The rebellions and conflicts throughout the Ottoman Empire marked the century. Therefore, looking at other rebellions in the

²⁰⁰ Terzibaşoğlu and Kaya, "19. Yüzyılda," 49–50.

²⁰¹ Terzibaşoğlu, "The Ottoman Agrarian Question," 323.

²⁰² "Ağa-yı mumaileyh ahz ü tenkil-i eşkıyaya ba-evamir-i aliyye memur kılındığı veçhile Çirmen kazasına lede'l-vürud marifet-i şer' ve ahali-i kaza ittifakıyla karyelere mübaşiran neşr ve taharri ve tecessüs olundukda yirmi seneden berü şekavet ile me'luf Çirmen kazası eşkıyalarının sergerdelerinden Kuvvet Karyeli Kör Hasan ve karındaşı İdris nam şakiler üç nefer avaneleriyle ahz ve mukaddema cesaret itdikleri şekavetden ma'ada bu aralıkda Edirne tabi' Kalfa karyesinde susam tarlasından iki nefer ehl-i 'ırz bakire kızlarını gasb ve hetk -i 'ırz ve badehu yine babalarına ahali-i kaza ibramıyla altı yüz guruşa bey' ve badehu iki nefer reaya kızlarını dahi kezalik gasb ve hetk-i 'ırz idüb mezbureler kemal-i hicablarından tesmimen kendülerini helak eylediklerinden muvacehelerinde feryad itmeleriyle merkulmarın cezaları tertib --- ruus-ı maktuaları irsal olduğun." BOA HAT. 25, 1252 A [12 Z 1199 (16 October 1785)].

empire will provide a comprehensive understanding of the roots of rebellions in the 19th century.

A similar dispute occurred in Lebanon in the other part of the empire. As a result of the pressure of the Druze landlords on the Christian peasants, the peasants revolted and agreed with the central authority to reduce taxes. However, the central authority refrained from making any concessions on the property to the detriment of the landlords.²⁰³ Also, Lebanon became a scene for another outburst between the Christian landowners, the Khazin sheikhs, and the peasants who used Khazins' lands as their tenants. Contributing to this struggle was the economic weakening of the large Christian landowners, especially the Khazins. However, commercialized agriculture also influenced the emergence of this situation. The French Revolution damaged France's silk trade with Lebanon. This greatly affected the Khazin family because they were intermediaries in selling the raw silk that was produced here to French spinning mills. At the same time, his lands were divided by inheritance, and in the nineteenth century, some members of this family were almost landless. During the nineteenth century, the silk trade gained impetus, but European traders were exporting their silk fabrics back to the region. This, in turn, stroke the small domestic industry that produced silk fabrics. The sheikhs who employed peasant women were significantly affected by this. At the same time, the French opened modern silk spinneries and this worsened the situation because the French became economically advantageous.²⁰⁴ In this respect, the factor of commercialized agriculture had impacts in the emergence of the *dağlı* rebellions, similar to the rebellion in Kisrawan. However, we have to consider the whole structure of a region to evaluate these rebellions. The consistency in multiple factors provided the stabilization of regions.

²⁰³ Traboulsi, *A History*, 28.

²⁰⁴ Porath, "The Peasant Revolt," 84–85.

Yet, the deterioration of the balance between these factors led to the collapse of the whole structure. As we have seen in the case of Kisrawan, the spoil in multiple factors such as land regime and agricultural patterns led to the Kisrawan Revolt. This provides us with a unique example for the *dağlı* rebellion. While the share of silk production in total agricultural output made the region fragile in terms of economic and agricultural structure in Kisrawan, the specific agrarian structure of the Rhodope Mountains created similar fragility for the region. Especially, the deterioration of the balance between production patterns such as tobacco and cereal production and animal husbandry paved the way for the emergence of the *dağlı* rebellion.

Another rural conflict in the empire occurred in Northern Anatolia in the nineteenth century. The peasants in Samsun revolted against the claims of local notables in the 1840s and 60s. After the abolition of the tax farming system, the Hazinedar family, who lost their former tax farming privilege, claimed that the ownership of the villages where they collected taxes belonged to them. They treated the peasants as tenants and levied extra taxes on peasants. The peasants refused the demands of the Hazinedar family and refused to pay these taxes. In this example, the peasants did not have large-scale armed struggles, but many peasants left their land and began to migrate to Russia.²⁰⁵ Tanzimat had an important role in the case of Vidin, Niş, Kisrawan, and Canik. The villagers wanted to benefit from the Tanzimat reforms, and they interpreted the Tanzimat in their way and made demands.²⁰⁶ Although the rebellions and disputes in this period did not have nationalist characteristics, the land disputes in this period would pave the way for later nationalist movements. As a result of Tanzimat reforms, landless and unprotected

²⁰⁵ Aytekin, "Peasant Protest," 202–3. In this study, Aytekin makes a detailed comparison of Vidin, Kisrawan, and Samsun-Canik Rebellions.

²⁰⁶ Aytekin, "Peasant Protest," 221–22.

Armenian groups emerged in Eastern Anatolia. The reforms did not only affect Armenians but also Kurdish peasants because they had to pay taxes to both the state and their landlords. Although the disputes derived from class conflict, in the beginning, they later turned into ethnic clashes between Kurdish and Armenian groups.²⁰⁷

In the Western part of the empire, rural communities in Ayvalık engaged in a struggle with each other for the land. The main reasons for the disputes were the status of properties and land distribution. Since the empire lost control of Crimea, the Caucasus, and provinces in the Balkans, especially Western Anatolia and Thrace, faced a great wave of immigration from the lost regions. Immigrants settled in certain regions, and the state gave them lands. However, problems occurred in the distribution of lands because there were different groups and different claims on the land. The seizure of lands by newcomers created tension between native people and immigrants. Also, the natives of the region, *yörüks*, and non-Muslim inhabitants conflicted with each other. All groups had different claims on the land. *Yörüks* defended their rights of passage, grazing, and collecting acorns in certain areas. Immigrants demanded the title of the lands that they created by drying marshlands. Landlords struggled with both of these groups and tried to secure their lands and title deeds.²⁰⁸ Even though these problems did not incite rebellions in nineteenth century Anatolia, they led to tension between the landlords and immigrants.²⁰⁹

The *dağlı* rebellion differed from these rebellions due to the Tanzimat factor because it broke out before the Tanzimat. However, based on these examples, it is crucial to focus on whether the factors originating from the land regime, property,

²⁰⁷ Cora, "Doğu'da," 132–34.

²⁰⁸ Terzibaşoğlu, "Landlords," 65–77.

²⁰⁹ Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes," 176.

and agricultural patterns were influential in the outbreak of the *dağlı* rebellion in order to understand the causes of the revolt. In this way, the social, economic and agricultural factors of the rebellion will be understood. However, before that, it is necessary to present the economic structure and land regime in the Balkans.

4.2 The landholding and social structure in the Rhodope Mountains in the eighteenth century

The period in which the *dağlı* rebellion emerged was the era known as the age of *ayans* and the emergence of *çiftliks*.²¹⁰ The deterioration of the *timar* system played an important role in the concentration of lands in the hands of the notables. The lands belonging to the state passed into the hands of the landlords, and the peasants living in these lands began to work for these landlords under difficult conditions. Local leaders' possession of lands occurred in several forms: The lands belonging to the state were given by the sultan as property to certain persons. As a result of the renting of *timar* lands as *mukataa*, they passed into the hands of the notables. The state sold *miri* (state) lands as *malikanes* (life-lease tax-farm) because of the deficit in treasury and military personnel seized *miri* lands.²¹¹

The example of Tırhala provides us with information about the structure of *çiftliks* and small peasant holdings in Rumeli. Two types of land tenure were common in Tırhala by the nineteenth century. There were simple villages inhabited by individual peasants who had small peasant holdings and *çiftlik* villages inhabited by sharecroppers that cultivated *çiftlik* lands.²¹² In small villages, peasants only paid their tithe to the state as taxes. However, in *çiftliks*, sharecroppers had to pay half or

²¹⁰ McGowan, "The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812," 661.

²¹¹ Inalcık, "Tanzimat Nedir?," 39-41.

²¹² Kaya, "On the Çiftlik Regulation," 337.

one-third of the harvest to the landlords depending on the *çiftlik* structure. Also, *çiftlik*s had *subaşı*s who were responsible for the management of *çiftlik*s and collecting taxes. They had made contracts with the sharecroppers by providing credit with a 20% of interest rate and exploited them by taking annual payments other than their usual taxes.²¹³ *Çiftlik* conditions were harsh for sharecroppers so this led them to leave their villages and dispersed to the rural areas.²¹⁴ This example is important because local population had a similar situation in the *dağlı* example. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the presence of *çiftlik*s in the Rhodope Mountains.

4.2.1 The presence of *çiftlik*s in the Rhodope Mountains

Few studies about Gümülcine region show that *çiftlik* numbers were not high compared to other regions. Therefore, the data makes it harder to have precise assumptions about *çiftlik* related problems in the case of *dağlı* rebellion, as we have seen in the nineteenth century rebellions that we presented above. *Avarız* registers of Gümülcine in 1701 and 1709 give the number of *çiftlik* holders besides ordinary people in the city and its districts. It was not possible to understand the characteristics of these *çiftlik*s from *avarız* registers because they provide information population. The *çiftlik* holders made up of 2.30% the registered population in 1709. While there were 144 *çiftlik* holders in Gümülcine in 1701, this number had decreased to 80 in 1709. In Ağrican district of Gümülcine, it decreased from 15 to 14. There were not any *çiftlik* holders in the district of Cebel that was one of the homelands of *dağlı* rebels.²¹⁵ If there were *çiftlik*s in Cebel, their holders

²¹³ Kaya, "On the *Çiftlik* Regulation," 341–47.

²¹⁴ Kaya, "On the *Çiftlik* Regulation," 366.

²¹⁵ Gökçe, "Osmanlı Nüfus," 96–97.

probably preferred to live in Gümülcine because of the rough living conditions in the mountainous area.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Tokatçıklı Süleyman Ağa, who was the *ayan* of Gümülcine during the *dağlı* rebellion, had four farms, and his brother had two farms. After their death, the heirs of Mestan Ağa, the former *ayan* of Gümülcine, demanded returning of four *çiftlik*s because Tokatçıklı Süleyman Ağa forcefully took possession of the *çiftlik*s. However, officials rejected their demand due to the lack of registers. The worth of four *çiftlik*s was 25,000 *kuruş*. Also, he had properties worth 14,500 *kuruş* in Sultanyeri.²¹⁶ These properties were a drop in the bucket compared to the farms of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha. He had 15 farms and 23 villages as *çiftlik*s in *Paşa Sancağı*.²¹⁷ For example, the worth of Ali Pasha's "Dört Kapılı Kiloçeste Çiftliği" was 30,000 *kuruş* and the *çiftlik* had 1024,5 *dönüms* land.²¹⁸ Although land values are highly changeable depending on the location, land type, and buildings, this might provide an idea about the size of Tokatçıklı's *çiftlik*s.

One of the main aspects that leads us to suppose the number of farms in the region was high is that the region was a significant tobacco-producing region. In the eighteenth century, the spread of agricultural products requiring expertise such as tobacco, cotton, silk played an important role in the emergence of farms.²¹⁹ McGowan's findings show that the size of the *çiftlik*s in this region was not big compared to *çiftlik*s in other parts of the empire from the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century.²²⁰ The fact that tobacco production was widespread in the region in 1691²²¹ suggests that the farms recorded in 1701 and 1709 and the farms of

²¹⁶ Başer, "Faaliyetleri ve Merkezi Hükümetle Olan İlişkileri," 49–50.

²¹⁷ Sezer, "Tepedelenli," 103.

²¹⁸ Sezer, "Tepedelenli," 75–78.

²¹⁹ McGowan, "The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812," 687.

²²⁰ McGowan, *Economic Life*, 77.

²²¹ Yılmaz, "Tütün," 270.

Tokatçıklı Süleyman Ağa may have been engaged in tobacco production. However, the lack of knowledge about *çiflik*s in Cebel district of Gümülcine suggests that farms were not widespread in the mountainous area or that the villagers here may be composed of independent small peasants. As we would see in the second part, the inhabitants of the villages that we examined in the *temettuat* registers were also small landowners. They were called *erbab-ı ziraat* in Hasköy registers and *rençber* in Dimetoka registers. However, the lack of registers from other parts of the region prevents making a general inference about the presence of *çiflik*s.

4.2.2 Changing status of locals in the Rhodopes: From *Evlad-ı Fatihan* to *reaya*

Before dealing with the *temettuat* registers, it would also be beneficial to look at the social structure of the Rhodopes region because it would provide some insights about evolving situation of the peasants in the Rhodope Mountains. There is no comprehensive study on the transformation of the *tımar* system over the years until 1800 for the Rhodope Mountains. However, Tayyip Gökbilgin's work on the *yörüks* in Rumeli provides important clues about the social structure in the region.

According to this study, a part of the population in the region constituted *evlad-ı fatihan* (the sons of conquerors) that had a privileged status. In other words, the people of the region had a special military status that made them exempt from taxes in return for their service during the campaigns. With 1,154 infantrymen, Gümülcine was home to the most populous *evlad-ı fatihan* group in all of Rumelia. There was a total of 2,622 *evlad-ı fatihan* infantrymen in the districts of Gümülcine, Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy, Sultanyeri, Ferecik, Yenice-i Karasu, Çağlayık, Dimetoka and Mekri. When their families are included, their population is around 15,000 in the Rhodopes. These numbers show that in 1691 there was an important *yörük* population in the Rhodopes

under the title of *evlad-ı fatihan*. The group, which is especially concentrated in the Rhodopes, is composed of the *Tanrıdağı yörüks*²²² whose name is derived from a mountain in the region.²²³

The fact that this group has a privileged status under the title of *evlad-ı fatihan* may be helpful in understanding the later developments and transformation of the lifestyle of the population in the region. Although this group was categorized under a military class, they made their living by farming and stockbreeding. However, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, dissolution occurred in this group, and the number of *eşkincis* and *yamaks* registered in this *ocak* began to decrease.²²⁴ As a matter of fact, *evlad-ı fatihan* groups living in the mountains of Gümülcine made a request to the state to renounce their privileged military status that made them exempt from certain taxes in 1708. For this reason, the state sent *tahrir* officers to count this population.²²⁵ In the *tahrir* of 1709, the district of Cebel in Gümülcine was composed of the villages of *evlad-ı fatihan*. The purpose of keeping this record is that this population, who was registered under the title of *evlad-ı fatihan* and who were *yörüks* with a special status, wanted to change their status into *raiyyet*. The state accepted this demand and included this group, which has land tenure like ordinary *reaya*, in the *avarız* tax base.²²⁶ A part of the population in the Rhodopes got rid of their military liability to the state and became ordinary *reaya* at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

²²² Gökbilgin, *Rumeli'de Yürükler*, 257–72: According to *evlad-ı fatihan tahrirs* in 1691, there were 16,582 *evlad-ı fatihan* infantry in all of Rumelia. Assuming that there was an average of 5.5–6 inhabitants in the households of the people who were registered at that time, the author reveals that this group consisted of approximately 100,000 people throughout Rumelia. The infantry enlisted from the Rhodopes region constituted 15.81% of the total number of infantries in Rumelia.

²²³ Gökbilgin, *Rumeli'de Yürükler*, 67; Altunan, “XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda,” 190.

²²⁴ Altunan, “XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda,” 194–95.

²²⁵ Gökçe, “Osmanlı Nüfus,” 85.

²²⁶ Gökçe, “Osmanlı Nüfus,” 95–97.

The districts of Gümölcine, Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy, Sultanyeri, Ferecik, Yenice-i Karasu, Çağlayık, Dimetoka and Mekri were also host to the 59% of tobacco farmers by 1691²²⁷ and they were homeland of *dağlı* rebels. Although there is no explicit document²²⁸ or study that mentioned *yörük* groups in Rumeli turned into tobacco farmers or *dağlıs* were descendants of *yörüks* in the Rhodope Mountains, the coincidence of these phenomena leads us to think about the evolution of at least a part of *yörüks* into tobacco farmers and later *dağlı* rebels. It is hard to ascertain such a phenomenon in this study. However, the documentary, *Tobacco Girl*, also gives a clue about the evolution of *yörüks* into tobacco farmers. The documentary, which depicts the life of a *yörük* family in Macedonia, begins with a song, “They call us *yörüks*. 600 years ago, our ancestors came to Macedonia from Anatolia by foot.” In the background, the protagonists of the documentary are picking tobacco in the field. Throughout the film, the importance of tobacco for the subsistence of this community is easily seen.²²⁹ This fact helps us to think about the transformation of *yörük* groups into settled farmers with the help of tobacco agriculture in the Balkan geography since the soil conditions are suitable for growing more flavorful and lower-nicotine tobacco.²³⁰ Rather than being tenant farmers in the increasing numbers of *çifliks*, they just changed their lifestyle and economic activity in the highlands where they herd since they have a free status.

²²⁷ Yılmaz, “Tütün,” 270.

²²⁸ “...Yenice-i Karasu ve tevabii gümrüklerinin muhtevi olduğu mahallerde hala Edirne Bostancıbaşısı Ağa kulları teftiş-i eşkıya bahanesiyle taife-i tüccar ve zürra’yı tabir-i hakk tazyik ve tecrim idüp ve bu esnada havali-i mezkurede hasıl olan duhanın gümrüklere idhal ve bazen iskelelere ve mahal-i saireye nakl ve tesviki vakti olub taife-i tüccar ve kiracıların esna-yı rahda ahz-birle sizler dağlı ve eşkıyasız diyerek hilaf-ı emr-i ali ve mugayir-i şürot-ı serbestiyet tazyik ve tecrim ve hayvanatların zabt itmeleriyle emval-i gümrük-i mezbura hasarat-ı azimeyi mucib ve şiraze-i nizamının ihtilalini --- bir keyfiyet idüğü...” BOA AE. SSLM III. 43, 2520 [28 R 1213 (9 October 1798)].

²²⁹ Garvanlieva, *Tobacco Girl*.

²³⁰ Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke*, 46.

4.3 A micro-perspective: Agricultural, economic, and social structure of the villages in Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy and Dimetoka according to *Temettuat* registers

This part focuses on the economic, agricultural, and social structure of the villages in the region, whose borders we have drawn in the previous section and whose economic structure has been revealed through *salnames*.

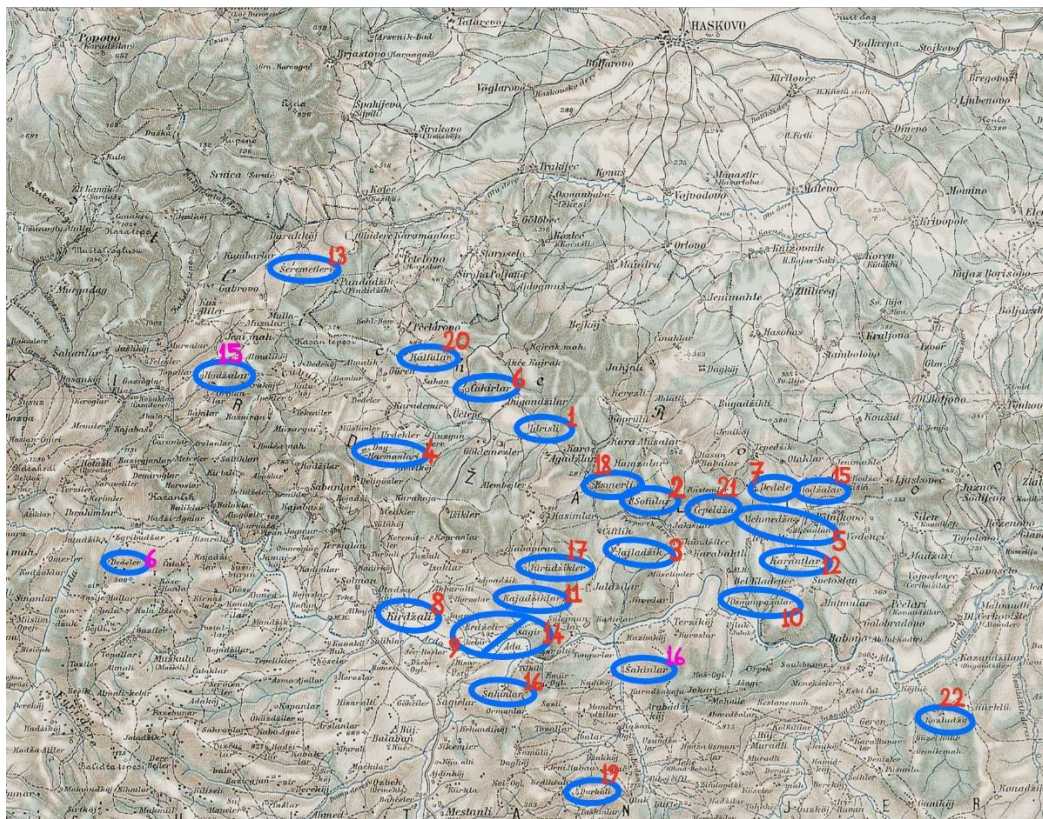


Fig. 2. The map of Hasköy villages²³¹

Based on the *temettuat* registers, it concentrates on the agricultural production patterns in the villages of Hasköy on the northern border of the region and Dimetoka on the western border. It reveals the village life and living conditions in the region by presenting the product types, outputs, and their monetary values on a micro scale. It

²³¹ K. Maschka, R. Fischbacher, 43°-42° Stara Zagora (Eski Zagra), 1/200.000, Wien: K.u.k. Militärgeographisches Institut, 1903.

also focuses on the landholding issue. The findings show that the population consisted of peasants who had small amount of land and landless peasants. It seems that since the state solved the problem by settling rebels in different areas, the shortage of land in the region was one of the main factors that led the *dağlı* population to rebel at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The *temettuat* registers clearly describe the land shortage in the Rhodope Mountains. In this way, based on these landholding and production patterns, the section focuses on whether the living conditions here were effective in the emergence of the *dağlı* rebellion. For this, *temettuat* registers of 22 villages of Hasköy district and eight villages of Dimetoka district were examined.

The lack of *temettuat* registers of all villages in the Rhodopes region constitutes a major shortcoming of this study. There were no *temettuat* registers of the towns such as Gümölcine, Yenice-i Karasu, and Sarışaban and the villages that were part of these districts. However, there are surveys of Dimetoka, Hasköy, and Mekri in this region. This leads to the limitations of the examples in the study. Therefore, it was selected the *temettuat* registers of the villages which can be identified on the map in Dimetoka and Hasköy. The 22 villages of Hasköy are İdrisli, Sofular, Yaylacık, Dağ Harmanlısu, Akçealan Mehmedçe, Çakır, Dedeler, Kırcaali, Eğercili-i Kebir, Osman Beşeler, Kayacıklar, Karaahadlar, Şeremetler, Eğercili-i Sagir, Hocalar, Şahinler, Yöricekler, Esmerli, Durbalı, Kalfalar, Çepelceler and Kozluca.²³² The eight villages in Dimetoka are Karakilise, Kulfallar, Yuvacılar, Maskaralar, Ahlatçı, Çelebiler, Hisarlık, Ruşenler.²³³

²³² BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 6407, 6411, 6412, 6415, 6418, 6444, 6445, 6447, 6451, 6454, 6458, 6459, 6467, 6469, 6470, 6494, 6500, 6507, 6508, 6513, 6520

²³³ BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5513, 5567, 5580, 5591, 5613, 5696, 5700, 5979.

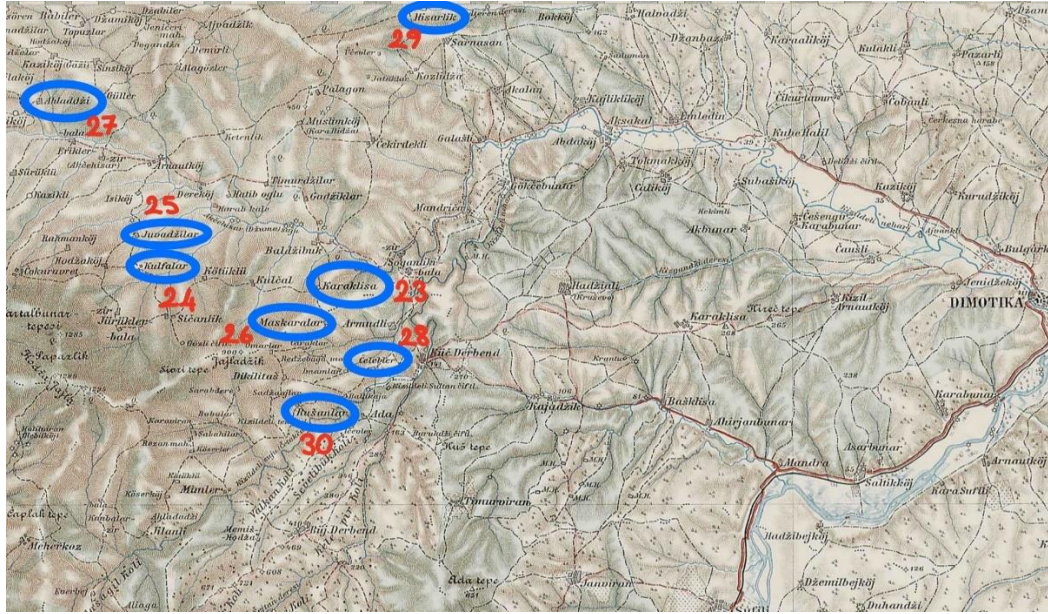


Fig. 3. The map of Dimetoka villages²³⁴

The total number of households in these 30 villages was 816. Considering that a household consists of five individuals²³⁵, an average of 4,080 people lived in 30 villages. Household structures in these villages differed. However, in general, the villages discussed in Dimetoka were more populous settlements. The villages of Dimetoka consisted of an average of 30.62 households. In Hasköy, this number was on average 25.95. There were 245 households in eight villages of Dimetoka, and 571 households in 22 villages of Hasköy. The entire population of these villages consisted of Muslims. Almost all households in these villages were engaged in agricultural activities. Few of them were servants (*hizmetkar*), teachers (*muallim-i sibyan*), tobacco sellers (*duhancı*). Apart from this, people whose occupations were farming (*erbab-ı ziraat* and *rençber*) also had income from professions such as reaper (*orakçı*), spoon making (*kaşıkçı*), tar making (*katrancı*), butchery (*kasap*),

²³⁴ E. Gautsch, R. Fischbacher, *44°-41° Dimotika*, 1/200.000, Wien: K.u.k. Militärgeographisches Institut, 1906.

²³⁵ Barkan, "Research," 6.

firewood making (*çıracı*), hoeing (*çapacı*), and milling (*değirmenci*). However, they met the basis of their income from agricultural production.

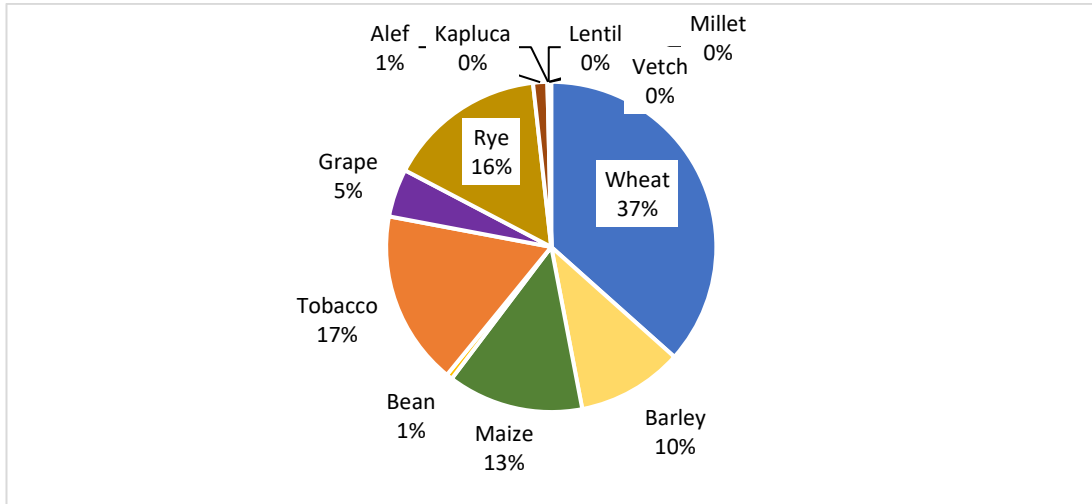


Fig. 4. Crop based averages of tithe collected on agricultural products in all villages

4.3.1 Agricultural production in the villages

In 1870, cereals were the main agricultural product in Ottoman Bulgaria. Then grapes, fruit, oilseeds, legumes, and tobacco were following.²³⁶ The villages we examined also reflect this reality. Agricultural products grown in these villages consisted of cereals, legumes, grapes, and tobacco. Wheat, barley, rye, maize, vetch, *kapluca*, and millet were the grain varieties that were produced in these villages. Beans and lentils were produced as legumes. Apart from these, tobacco and grapes had an important share in total agricultural production. When the monetary value of the tithe paid by the villagers was taken as the basis for determining the income rates, the product that brought the highest income in all these villages was wheat with 37%. It is followed by tobacco with 17%, rye with 16%, maize with 13%, and barley with 10%. These numbers show that a significant part of the crop production in the region

²³⁶ Palairret, *The Balkan Economies*, 58.

consisted of subsistence products that enabled the villagers to meet their living needs. However, the large-scale production of wheat in Hasköy villages can be seen as a sign of commercialization in wheat production. This was a possible change in production patterns. Viquesnel described that the farmers in the plain of Dimetoka left tobacco production and began to plant cereals as a result of demands from the European countries in 1846. This situation provides a good example of the commercial aspect of cereals.²³⁷ Also, the fact that tobacco production was in the second place indicates that the inclination toward commercial agriculture had an important place in the economy of the region. The high number of tobacco-producing households in certain villages indicates that the main source of income in these villages was commercial agriculture. This is particularly evident in the villages of Dimetoka.

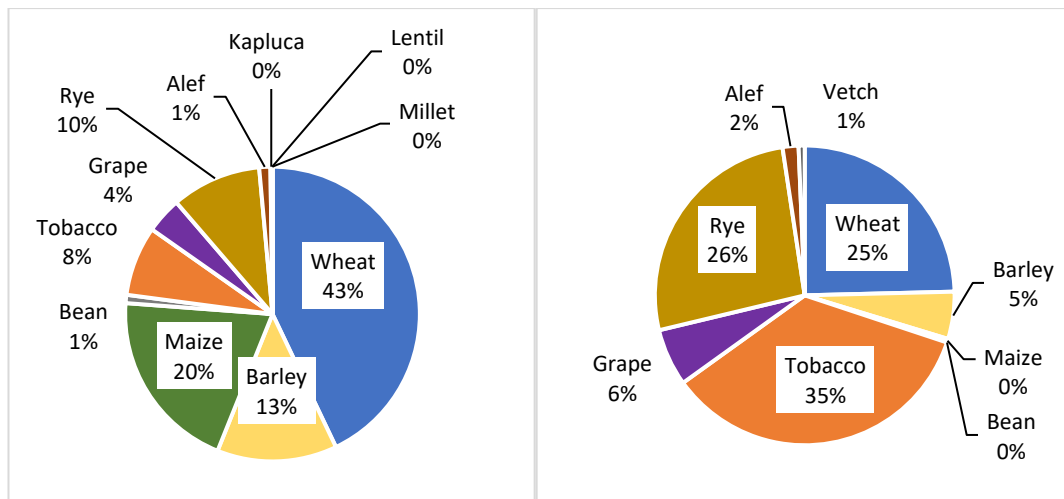


Fig. 5. Crop based averages of tithes collected on agricultural products in Hasköy (in the left) and Dimetoka (in the right)

²³⁷ Viquesnel, *Voyage Dans La Turquie d'Europe: Description Physique et Géologique de La Thrace*, 2:505.

Although the villages of Hasköy and Dimetoka are not far away from each other, there were differences between the incomes earned from agricultural production in the villages of the two districts. While the share of wheat production in incomes in Hasköy villages was 43%, this rate was 25% in Dimetoka villages. In Hasköy, wheat is followed by maize with 20%, barley with 13%, rye with 10% and tobacco with 8%. The share of tobacco, which was an important trade commodity, in these registers shows that commercial agricultural products had an important share in total agricultural production. The share of tobacco in production in the villages of Hasköy was in fifth place.

The income from tobacco in the villages of Dimetoka was the first with a share of 35%. Tobacco is followed by rye with 26%, wheat with 25%, grapes with 6%, and barley with 5%. Commercial agriculture was at the center of agricultural activity in Dimetoka villages. 232 of 254 households produced tobacco and this consisted of 95% of the households. The other products were probably produced to feed household members in a limited amount.

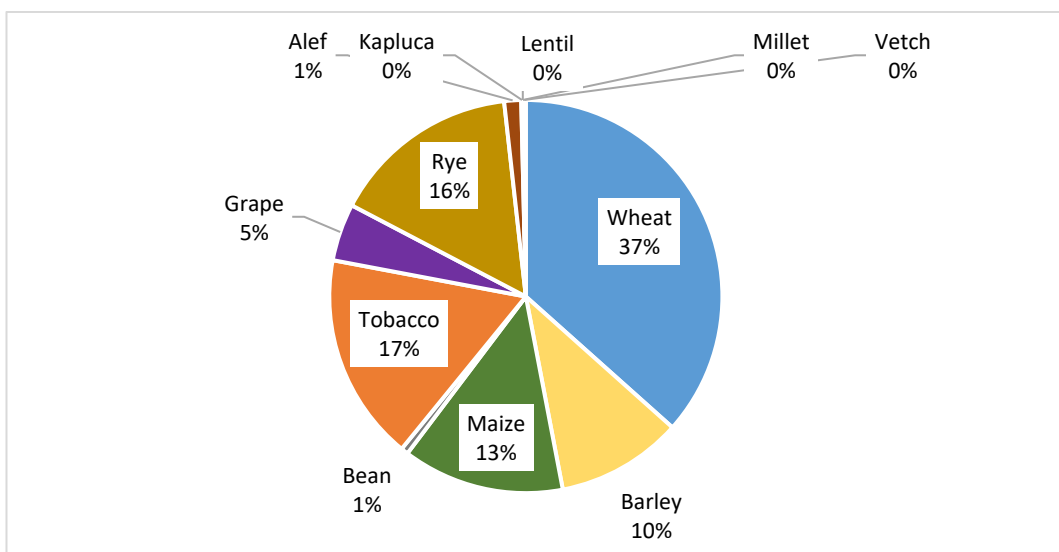


Fig. 6. Crop based averages of tithe collected on agricultural products in tobacco villages in Hasköy

In both districts, 482 of 816 households produced tobacco and the rate of tobacco producing households was 59%. In the villages of Hasköy, 44% of the households produced tobacco. This corresponds to 250 of 571 households. At this point, it will be useful to look at the villages that produced tobacco over 44% of the population, to understand the agricultural structure in the settlements where tobacco production was intense. In Hasköy, more than 44% of the households in 10 of the 22 villages produce tobacco. These were Sofular, Akçealan Mehmedçe, Dedeler, Osman Beşeler, Karaahadlar, Eğercili-i Sagir, Hocalar, Yöricekler, Esmerli, Çepelceler villages. The value of the tithe collected from tobacco in these villages is 1595,5 *kuruş* and corresponded to 16% of the total tithe. It ranks third when compared to other products. Wheat comes first with 40%, followed by maize with 18%.

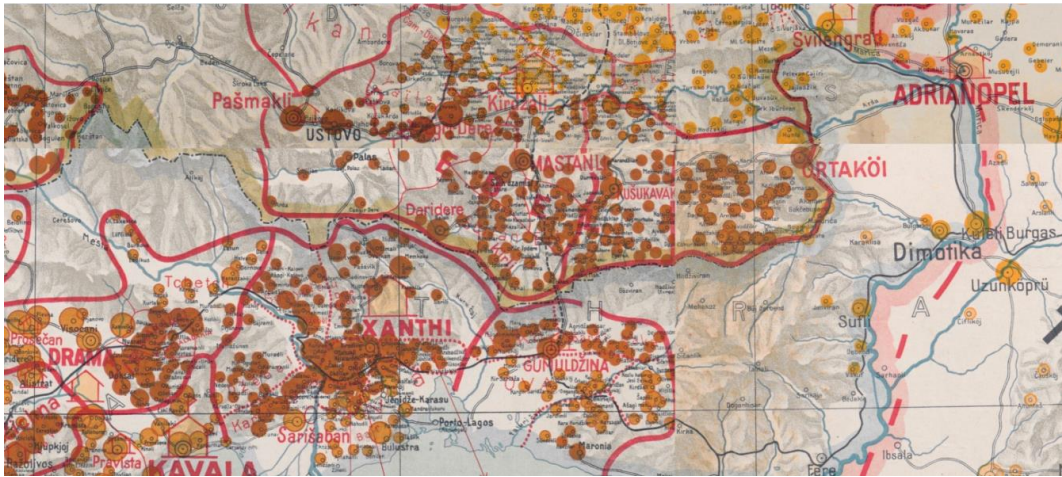


Fig. 7. A part of oriental tobacco map by Marco Nestoroff²³⁸

When we look at the Oriental tobacco map of Marco Nestoroff dated 1925, we can understand the relatively low levels of tobacco production in the villages of

²³⁸ Nestoroff, *Special Map*.

Hasköy compared to tobacco because they produce lesser quality tobacco compared to other parts of the Rhodope Mountains. However, the villages of Dimetoka in this map produce better quality tobacco.²³⁹ Therefore, we can see that when the quality of tobacco increases, farmers prefer to produce more tobacco.

The share of rye and maize in total production clearly shows the impact of mountainous character of the region.²⁴⁰ Taking into consideration the average grain production on the basis of bushel (*kile*) in all villages, wheat ranks first with a share of 32%. Rye and barley come right after with 23%. Maize was the fourth product with a 17% share. However, when the villages of Hasköy and Dimetoka are examined separately, rye production in the villages of Dimetoka ranks first with 44%. Wheat was in second place with 34%, and barley was in third place with 14%. It is seen that the farmers in Dimetoka did not prefer maize. In the villages of Hasköy, on the other hand, the share of maize among the cereals ranks third with 23%. The second preferred crop was barley, followed by rye with 15%.

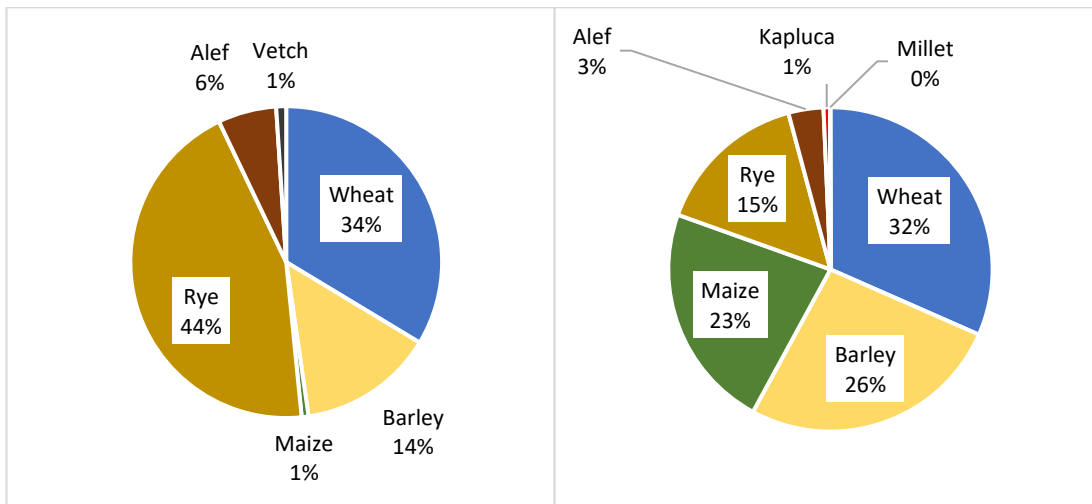


Fig. 8. Average distribution of cereal production in Dimetoka (in the right) and Hasköy (in the left)

²³⁹ Marco Nestoroff, *Special Map of All Oriental Tobacco Regions (Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece)*, 1/500.000, Sofia: FUMARO, 1925.

²⁴⁰ Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı*, 192; Stoianovich, "Le Maïs Dans Les Balkans," 1038.

In the research of Tefvik Gran on the villages of Filibe, wheat production changes depending on the farming structure in the villages. Consequently, the share of wheat production in crop production is high in villages where independent small agricultural enterprises are concentrated. It varies between 75% and 58%. However, the production of wheat rate varies between 45% and 9% in villages where *iftlik* and tenancy relations exist. Gran says that the demand of the families for cheaper cereals that can be substituted for wheat leads to low wheat production in these villages.²⁴¹ Considering that all households in the villages of Dimetoka and Hasky consist of small farmer families, we can see that the households in the region also prefer cheaper grains. This impacts wheat production in these villages as in the case of Filibe. Wheat production is at a lower level than the villages in Filibe with a share of 32%. This indicates that the inhabitants of the villages in Hasky and Dimetoka are poorer peasants.

4.3.2 Land use patterns in the villages

The size of the land owned by the households shows that the population of the villages consisted of small peasant families. These households were families who cultivated the land with their own means of production and labor, and they could earn a small living.

Gran states that in villages in Filibe, the households had an average of 35 *dnms* of land, which was not enough for their subsistence, and it was necessary to have 45-50 acres of land to generate enough income.²⁴² The land sizes in the villages of Hasky and Dimetoka were much lower than this amount. The size of land

²⁴¹ Gran, *19. Yzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı*, 191.

²⁴² Gran, *19. Yzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı*, 192–93.

belonging to households was very low with 11,4 *dönüms* on average. In terms of land size, the households in Dimetoka had slightly more land than Hasköy.

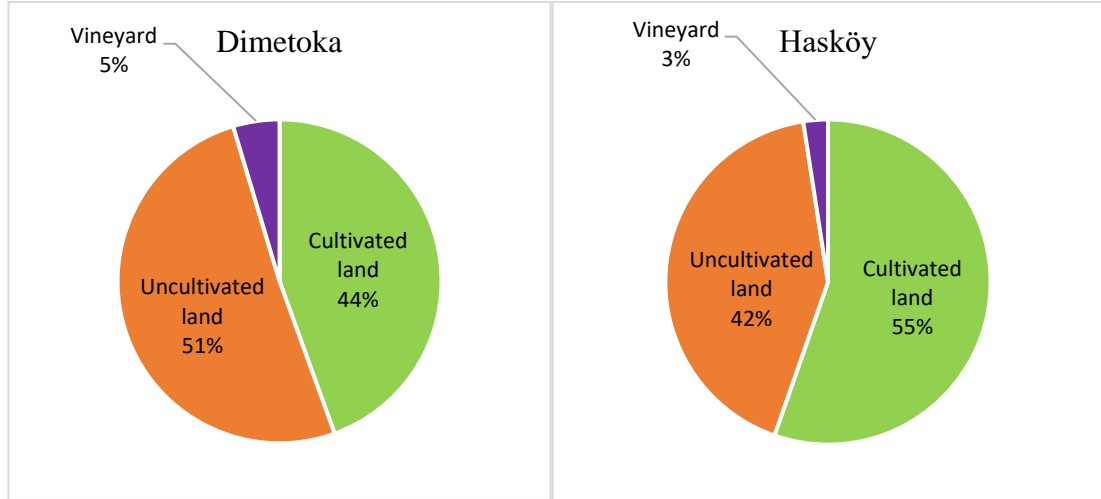


Fig. 9. The distribution of land types in Dimetoka and Hasköy villages

While the average land size was 13,8 *dönüms* in Dimetoka, it was 10,3 *dönüms* in Hasköy. Çelebiler village in Dimetoka has the highest average with 24,3 *dönüms* of land, while Kulfallar village had the lowest average with eight *dönüms*. In Hasköy, Kayacıklar village was in the first rank with 17,4 *dönüms* in land size. Şahinler village was the village where the villagers had the least land with 2,3 *dönüms*.

However, the households in Şahinler village were more engaged in animal husbandry as can be understood by goat numbers. Şahinler village was followed by Karahadlar village with 4,8 *dönüms*. These numbers show that the amount of land owned by the farmers was far below the amount to meet their subsistence. This caused the people of the region to engage in activities such as commercial agriculture that would generate income on their limited lands or engage in different economic activities.

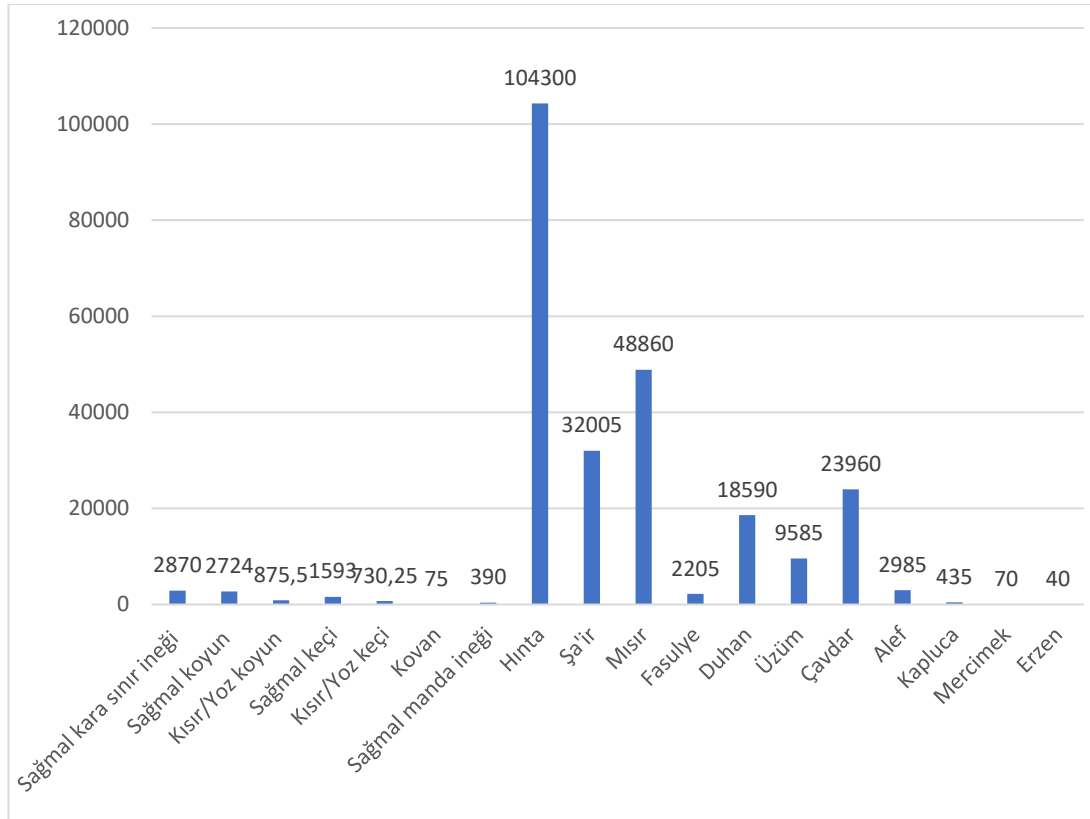


Fig. 10. Total revenues of agricultural and livestock products in Hasköy villages²⁴³

Land use patterns also enable us to have information about the production in the districts. Accordingly, there were three types of land in the region. These were vineyards, cultivated, and uncultivated lands. However, their shares differed between districts. Cultivated lands in Hasköy were higher than uncultivated lands. Vineyards made up 3% of the land. 52% was cultivated and 45% was uncultivated land. The excess of cultivated lands shows that fallow was less practiced in Hasköy. As can be seen from the intensity of grape production in Dimetoka, the vineyards had a rate of 5%. 44% of the land consisted of cultivated lands, and 51% consisted of uncultivated lands. This situation must be related to the intensive production of tobacco. Because lands producing quality tobacco were generally eroded lands with thin soil cover.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ While calculating the monetary value of crops, I multiplied the monetary value of tithe (*öşür*) with 10.

²⁴⁴ Swanson, *A Golden Weed*, 256.

This might impact the fallow rate in the villages of Dimetoka due to the intense tobacco production.

Under these scarce conditions, the peasants also had to keep animals to meet their needs. In addition to the oxen that they owned to plow the fields, families also raised farm animals to meet their needs such as cheese, butter, milk, meat, leather, and wool. They also sold the products of these animals in the market. At the same time, the animals provided fertilizer for the farmers. The fact that animal husbandry is complementary to plant production, which Güran put forward in the villages of Filibe, was also generally valid for the villages in Hasköy and Dimetoka. However, few amounts of land per household in Şahinler village and the high number of animals indicate that there were villages in this region whose only livelihood was animal husbandry. Few amounts of land in this village shows that plant production was a complementary activity to animal husbandry. The total number of milch (*sağmal*) and infertile (*kısır/yoza*) goats in this village of 35 households is 540. This amount constitutes 46% of the goats in all villages in Hasköy. However, crop production was low. Peasants produce 10 bushels of wheat in total in this village. *Alef* and barley, which were used as animal feed were the most significant products. Apart from this, there was also the production of rye consumed by the mountain villagers. These data show that the main livelihood of the village was animal husbandry and the villagers produced animal products for the market. Crop production in this village was carried out to support animal husbandry.

Sheep and goat breeding was common in the region. There are 1,172 goats in the villages of Hasköy. Goats were in the first place with 45% of income-generating animals. However, income from goats was low in terms of income. The proportion of income from goats is 27%. The reason why the villagers prefer goat breeding despite

the low income must be related to the mountainous character of the region. The number of sheep was also almost close to goats. There were 1,108 sheep in these villages. Since sheep was a more profitable animal than goats, 39% of the income obtained from animals came from sheep breeding. Apart from sheep and goat breeding, there were a total of 292 milch cows (*sağmal kara sığır ineği*) in these villages. 31% of the villagers' total income from livestock comes from cows. Apart from these animals, there were 13 buffaloes and 15 hives in the region. 4% of income was obtained from buffaloes and 1% from hives. All these numbers show that in most of the villages, animal husbandry was complimentary to crop production and met household needs because the size of land that is required for enough crop production was also low. In villages where the amount of land is much lower, livestock was the main source of livelihood.

4.4 The environmental and agricultural roots of *Dağlı* rebellion

The *temettuat* registers of the villages in Dimetoka and Hasköy provide a micro-scale depiction of the Rhodope Mountains about agrarian patterns, livelihood, and landholding. Therefore, we can trace the relationship between the region's characteristic and the historical developments that Tabak and McNeill presented in their books. Especially, the findings from *temettuat* registers are significant to compare the agrarian patterns of the Rhodopes and the mountainous areas of the Mediterranean. Registers show that there are similarities with the patterns in the Rhodopes and the findings of Tabak and McNeill. Therefore, we can see that the characteristics of mountain way of life in the Rhodope Mountains had impacts in the emergence of *dağlı* rebellion.

The *dağlı* rebellion occurred around a period, as both John McNeill and Faruk Tabak described in their books, which is called the “demise of mountain way of life” and when mountain communities began to leave their lands that had been home to them for centuries.²⁴⁵ Therefore, the reasons behind the *dağlı* rebellion must have been related to the developments that led mountain communities to leave their lands, and apparently, the fact that the rebellion ended with the resettlement of the rebels in different places points out this phenomenon. According to McNeill, this phenomenon resulted from two significant developments, were overshoot and market integration that many mountain environments in the Mediterranean began getting integrated into after 1800s, which might have started earlier in some regions and later in the others. These two terms provide a hypothetical base for understanding of the *dağlı* rebellion. The population of highlands boosted so much that the resources could not meet the basic survival demands of the population, and it was harder to increase these resources technically. The result of these developments was population overshoot.²⁴⁶

The overshoot in the mountain context could have different consequences such as clashes that one group tries to capture the resources of others, migration to new areas that they can earn their livelihoods easily, or finding new ways of subsistence in the mountains, like trying new products or engaging with new occupations.²⁴⁷ In the example of the Rhodope Mountains, these factors can be easily seen. Local people were engaged in different professions other than farming. *Temettuat* registers show that there were reapers (*orakçı*) and hoers (*çapacı*) in the villages. In fact, these professions were their secondary jobs because they were farmers. They probably worked on the plains during the times of planting and

²⁴⁵ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 293; McNeill, *The Mountains*, 2.

²⁴⁶ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 2–3.

²⁴⁷ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 3.

harvesting. Seasonal emigration was a widespread activity. However, small labour demands for these professions were a huge problem because it led to the emergence of bandits in the mountains.²⁴⁸

Indeed, the outcomes of the overshoot were not always negative at first hand, and it triggered people to meet their demands in new ways, which increased carrying capacity of their environments. They experienced new agricultural products, specialized in certain crops, or mastered new professions. When they could not satisfy their demands in this way, they became mercenary soldiers in the armies or started doing banditry activities in neighboring regions. However, carrying capacity of mountainous regions could suddenly increase or decrease depending on the situation. If the population could acquire new skills and technologies, carrying capacity would increase and prevent the problems of population pressure by bringing new opportunities and growth. These periods were prosperous times for the population, but when the skills were lost, and resources were depleted, carrying capacity was going down.²⁴⁹ In the case of *dağlı* rebellion, we can not reach data about the population size in the Rhodope Mountains. However, some aspects of the rebellion had similarities with the results of overshoot in the other parts of the Mediterranean. One of the results of this phenomenon was that mountain people served in the armies. This situation can be seen in the Rhodopes case because the *dağlı* rebels served in the armies of *ayans* as mercenaries. When they could not find a job in armies, they turned into bandits. Indeed, they objected to the term bandit for themselves, and they preferred the term rebel. However, the economic structure of the region was also important because market integration was the second aspect that affected mountain way of life.

²⁴⁸ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 31.

²⁴⁹ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 3–4.

Market integration and overshoot were interactive phenomena. Overshoot led to the experimentation of new products that made life easier in the mountains because the economic and agricultural activities were not enough for the increased population of the region. When locals could achieve high yield and income from a new product, they generally focused on the new product. If they are advantageous in producing the new crop, market integration provided benefits for them because the region became the main hub of this product. On the other hand, it was detrimental for those who could not produce cheaper or high-quality products compared to others. Those who had fewer products or products of low demand could be susceptible to unpredictably changeable factors such as climate, war, politics, and prices. Market integration had different effects on the mountain peasants of the Mediterranean. Since it meant the increase in demand from outside on a particular production site, first it brought prosperity to the region, but it was becoming destructive for the mountain way of life in the end. The *dağlı* rebellion helps us to trace the impacts of market integration in the Rhodope Mountains because the region turned into a banditry center for a long period.

Evaluating the development and transformation of the agriculture, consumption, and trade of these crops would help to shed light on how overshoot and market integration occurred in the Rhodopes region and how these changes paved the way for the process that led to the *dağlı* rebellion. Focusing on the production of grains and tobacco as the main outputs of a region whose main economic activity was agriculture would provide us with some answers about the rebellion. All these products were important for mountain way of life in the Mediterranean and even the effects of some were revolutionary after their introduction to the region as in the case of tobacco and maize since they were not native to the Mediterranean.

First, we can trace the role of grains because they were the main ingredient of bread that was essential for the Mediterranean diet both in the lowlands and highlands. It had many different varieties such as wheat, barley, rye, and maize. Temperature and humidity were the main factors that determined what kinds of grains could be grown and the places where grains could grow. All these factors determined the type of bread on which peasants' survival depended. Irrigation was an essential factor for wheat production in the high villages. Villages in arid lands could grow barley. In high-altitude places, villagers could cultivate rye because of the short growing season in the mountain climate. With the introduction of maize to the Mediterranean, maize bread became a principal food in the region.²⁵⁰ These grains constituted the main crops in the Rhodope Mountains. *Temettuat* registers explicitly show that the share of maize, rye, and barley were high. Although wheat production has the highest percentage in total, it was low compared to the plains. Problems in the production of these grains would create troubles for the inhabitants of highlands since bread was their staple food.

As a matter of fact, a document dated 1803, that talks about the resettlement of *dağlıs* has an enlightening statement regarding the reasons for the rebellion. It says that since until then, the cereal of Gümülcine fed Yenice, İskeçe, mountain villages, and tobacco farmers of these towns, extreme poverty occurred due to the depletion of cereals and the *dağlı* issue came to this situation.²⁵¹ Although it does not give an idea about the types of cereals, it mentions a provision problem that paved the way for the

²⁵⁰ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 126–27.

²⁵¹ "...biz ita'atte bulunalım diye merkuman yazıb Kara Feyzi'ye göndermişler bu surette heriflerin iskana ve bizi te'mine meyleri ziyade görünür cenab-ı hakk fesaddan hıfz eyleye ve müfsidler ve devlet ha'ınlerini kahr tenkil eyleye amin --- amin şimdiki hale nazaran Süleyman Ağa yola yatsa dağlı takımı uygundur avn-i hakk ile iskan olunmaları anlaşılır öteden beri Yenice'yi ve İskeçe'yi ve bunların dağ köylerini ve duhan zürra'larını besleyen Gümülcine'nin zahiresidir inkıta'ı sebebiyle kemal-i müzayaka mess edip asıl madde dahi bu hey'ete geldiğinden agavat kulları rica ve it'ızarı ziyadeleyip ..." BOA HAT 54, 2510 [17 M 1218 (09 May 1803)].

rebellion. However, an earlier document dated 1792, provides a piece of invaluable information about bread types that local people consume, and peasants' source of income. According to the document, the population of Yenice-i Karasu district consisted of tobacco farmers, and the town demands cereals from neighboring Gümülcine, and Çağlayık since the scarcity in cereal stocks of the town. Most tobacco farmers feed on only maize and rye bread so there should be no problem in the transportation of maize and rye from Gümülcine and Çağlayık to Yenice market and in their sale.²⁵² The document obviously presents the importance of maize and rye, which were the main ingredients of bread locals consumed, and tobacco which was a commercial source of income for the local populace.

These documents are significant in terms of showing the production and consumption patterns of locals and pointing out a provision-related problem during a period when the *dağlı* rebellion emerged. Also, *temettuat* registers present that the most produced grain was rye with a 44% share in Dimetoka's villages that had the highest proportion of tobacco production. The share of rye in Hasköy's villages was 15% and it was the fourth grain in total cereal production. In this respect, both *hatt-ı hümayuns* and *temettuat* registers provide information about the importance of rye production in the Rhodope Mountains. Rye helped poor mountain villagers by providing a fruitful harvest in harsh mountain conditions. It had been grown as a substitute grain in the Mediterranean. However, it gained popularity around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of changing climate conditions resulting from the Little Ice Age, which provided appropriate humidity conditions in

²⁵² "...fi'l-hakika Yenice-i Karasu kazasının ahalipleri zürra'-i duhan olup ve kaza-yı mezburun hububatı akall ü kalil olduğu ve etrafında vaki Gümülcine ve Çağlayık kazalarından celb-i hububata muhtaç ve ekser zürra'-i duhanın ekl eyledikleri kokoroz ve çavdar ekmeğine münhasır olmağla Gümülcine ve Çağlayık kazalarından kokoroz ve çavdar zahirelerini Yenice pazarına irsal ve bey'ine mümanaat olmamak babında..." BOA C.DH. 50, 2463 [14 C 1204 (1 March 1790)].

the higher altitudes for rye. Therefore, populations of highlands began to expand their rye fields in their regions, and rye became one of the main staple crops.²⁵³ Even though it was not the first product in certain places, it diversified the product range. It contributed to overshoot as an easy-growing and substantial cereal in the mountain ranges. Also, it consolidated market integration by providing a cheaper staple for tobacco farmers. Therefore, the scarcity of this crop must have had an impact on the emergence of the rebellion.

Rye, as the second product that made it possible to live in highlands, was, unlike maize, native to the Old World. However, maize was one of the imported American crops like beans, potatoes, and tobacco. They entered the Mediterranean following the period when people from the plains began to migrate to the highlands. They helped the region's poor to live without much difficulty in these areas of hard conditions by providing cereals, fodder, and commercial products. They adapted to the Mediterranean environment easily since they were grown in the mountainous regions of South America and supported the movement of inhabitants of low-lying plains of the Mediterranean to the mountains.²⁵⁴ Maize, as one of these crops that facilitated living in highlands, gained an indispensable place in Mediterranean agriculture, especially in mountainous regions. In the Balkans, it has largely supplanted traditional grains by the eighteenth century and became one of the staple crops since it had advantages in terms of providing high yields and growing easily in the Mediterranean climate and high altitudes.²⁵⁵

Rye was more productive than common grains. While the yield of rye was 3-10 for 1 in the eighteenth century, the yield of maize was going up 24-80 for 1. It

²⁵³ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 257.

²⁵⁴ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 252.

²⁵⁵ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 89; Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 256–57.

was exempt from tithes because it could be grown in the gardens and highlands that were far from the roads and tax collectors. Since it was a new crop, it did not have a place in the tax system. Also, it was advantageous compared to wheat, rice, and barley because the central authority did not demand maize for the provisioning of capital.²⁵⁶ In both *hatt-ı hümayuns* and *temettuat* registers, the importance of maize can be seen. It was the third crop with a 23% share in the villages of Hasköy. The total share of rye and maize production in Hasköy was 38%. Maize consisted of only 1% of the cereal production in Dimetoka villages but it seems that the high amount of rye production compensated for the lack of maize agriculture. It is obvious that these products increased the carrying capacity of the mountainous areas. Maize, like rye, became the main staple food of local people in the Rhodope Mountains because they had high yields in the mountain conditions and complemented other products, especially tobacco in our case.

While the population of highlands was supplying their food from crops that were suitable for higher altitudes, they were also providing certain services and products that lowlanders could not produce at a cheaper cost and with higher quality such as timber, honey, silk, and labor force.²⁵⁷ Locals of the Rhodope Mountains produced timber and silk as well and they mainly exported their labor force by serving as mercenaries in the armies of local *ayans*. However, one of the most important outputs of the region was its tobaccos of different qualities. Tobacco became a significant cash crop in the Mediterranean's mountainous regions. The commercialization of agriculture in the Ottoman Empire, which approximately started in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, intensified the production of

²⁵⁶ Stoianovich, "Le Maïs Dans Les Balkans," 1038–39.

²⁵⁷ McNeill, *The Mountains*, 8.

tobacco throughout the empire.²⁵⁸ Tobacco agriculture mainly centered in the Balkans and became a significant cash crop. As we have seen in *salnames*, *temettuat* registers, *hatt-ı hümayuns*, and maps, the many inhabitants of the Rhodopes preferred planting tobacco in changing quantities as an agricultural activity. Since it was not a native crop to the Mediterranean and its fast adoption by the peasants in the region, the spread of tobacco agriculture is an interesting phenomenon.

Fernand Braudel stated that wheat, olive, and grape as an eternal trinity of the Mediterranean.²⁵⁹ Faruk Tabak pointed out the change in the agricultural system of the basin, which mainly consisted of this triad, after agricultural and commercial developments, and the Columbian Exchange.²⁶⁰ As a result of these changes, tobacco got a considerable foothold as a profitable cash crop in the hills of the Levant²⁶¹ and it started to be grown in Macedonia and western Anatolia. İskeçe, Yenice-i Karasu, Kavala, Serez, Kırılıkova, and İzmir became important tobacco production centers. Tobacco fields expanded incrementally since tobacco had the adaptive capacity to different types of soils and climates.²⁶² Although the tobacco plant could easily adapt to the lands in the Ottoman Empire, the ruling elite could not adopt the consumption and agriculture of the plant.

In the beginning, the Ottoman Empire tried to prevent tobacco agriculture and trade around 1609 and 1649 due to religious reservations. The decrees, dated 1631, that were sent to the towns in the left branch (*sol kol*) of Rumeli, stated that the production, trade, and consumption of tobacco was strictly forbidden, the ones who did not obey the rules would be punished and their tobacco fields would be

²⁵⁸ White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 276.

²⁵⁹ Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 236.

²⁶⁰ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 91.

²⁶¹ Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 259.

²⁶² Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean*, 265.

confiscated by the state. However, these measures did not prevent cultivation of tobacco and its production sites increased immensely. The state abolished the prohibition in 1649. Until 1688 when the state accepted tobacco as a source of income and turned it into a revenue unit (*mukataa*), tobacco agriculture continued to flourish. Therefore, the empire began registering tobacco farmers to levy taxes upon them. A tobacco *tahrir* register dated 1691 gives a considerable account for the numbers of tobacco farmers and the areas where tobacco was grown, even though it probably does not include all units in the Ottoman Empire. According to the register, there were 10,273 tobacco farmers in 819 villages of 41 towns throughout the Ottoman Empire. 9,197 farmers lived in 954 villages of 27 towns in Rumeli, and they were constituting 89.5% of the registered tobacco producers.²⁶³

According to this register, towns around the Rhodope Mountains, Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy, Çirmen, Dimetoka, Çağlayık, Sultanyeri, Yenice-i Karasu, and Gümülcine were home to 5,437 tobacco farmers in 356 villages. They constituted 59% of 9,197 farmers in Rumeli by 1691.²⁶⁴ The comparison with the later registers dated 1771 shows that tobacco agriculture increased almost threefold in Yenice-i Karasu, and Çağlayık. While the acreage of the field per farmer was one *dönüm* in two towns by 1691, it increased to 3.5 *dönüm* per farmer in 1771. In Yenice-i Karasu, the number of farmers also rose to 3,127 from 994 during this time span. This was the result of specialization in tobacco agriculture in the region, which means farmers depended on this crop for their living.²⁶⁵ As we have seen the previous chapter, Gümülcine, Yenice-i Karacasu, Çağlayık, and Sarışaban did not have *temettuat* registers. Since these districts were the most important tobacco-

²⁶³ Yılmaz, "Tütün," 24–29.

²⁶⁴ Yılmaz, "Tütün," 270.

²⁶⁵ Yılmaz, "Tütün," 43.

producing areas in the Rhodope Mountains, this study has a deficiency in this respect. It is not possible to compare tobacco production in these districts with later periods. However, *temettuat* registers provide information about general agrarian activities and tobacco production in the northern parts of the Rhodope Mountains. In 1844, tobacco was the second product with a 17% share in crop-based averages of the tithe in the villages of Hasköy and Dimetoka. Since *tahrir* registers only dealt with tobacco production, they can not provide information about a general agrarian scheme of the villages that produced tobacco. However, this study used slightly later but more detailed *temettuat* registers and provided more comprehensive information about the agrarian structure of the villages. Therefore, it helped us to see the importance of other products other than tobacco such as rye and maize.

These settlements coincided with the homelands of *dağlı* rebels.²⁶⁶ Problems related to or derived from the general agrarian structure or trade might be a significant factor in the rebellion of the mountain population. Widespread tobacco agriculture led to a fragile situation for the peasants who focused on a single cash crop as we have seen in the former documents. The supply problem in the staple crops created a famine which led tobacco farmers to think about giving up tobacco

²⁶⁶ "...Gümülcine ve Yenice-i Karasu ve Çağlayık ve Dimetoka ve Sultanyeri ve Kırcaali ciballerinde zuhur iden eşkıyanın ebna-yı sebil ve fukara-yı raiyyet ve kuttan-ı memlekete vuku' bulan mezalim ve taaddiyatlarına binaen..." BOA AE.SABH.I. 23, 1893 [29 Z 1193 (7 January 1780)]; "Eyalet-i Rumeli'de Paşa Sancağı tabir olunur liva dahilinde müretteb kazalardan Yenice-i Karasu ve Gümülcine ve Çağlayık ma'a Sarışaban ve Mekri ve Ferecik ve Dimetoka ve Sultanyeri ve Ahiçelebi ve Çırpan kazalarının bazıları ve kuralarının ekseri cibal tabir olunur sa'b ü'l-menal kuhsar ve sengistan mahal ve mevazi'de vaki olduğundan ekser ahalipleri şekavetle mecbul ve kazaha-yı mezkure ve kuralarının ahalipleri beynlerinde ehl-i ırz güruhu var ise dahi eşkıya-yı mezkureye mağlub ve mecbur ve kezalik Çirimen Sancağı'nda kain dört beş aded kaza ve kuralar dahi cibalde kain ve ahalipleri bunlara mümasil olmakdan naşi ekser evkat ve ehyanda zikr olunan cibal ahalipleri mesken ve me'va larının sa'bü'l-menal olduklarına iğtiraren izhar -ı isyan ve tuğyan ve etraf ve eknafta kain kuzat ve kura ahalipleri ve zuhafa-yı reaya veya husus-ı ebna-yı sebil ve panayırların mürur ve uburları ve hengam-ı kıyam ve avdetleri esnalarında fukara-yı tüccara ve haza'in-i miriye ve saireye isal ve --- ve hasar ve katl-i nüfus ve gasb-ı emval ve hetk-i ırz ve namus misillü itmedükleri şekavet ve fezahat kalmadığına binaen..." BOA C.DH. 37, 1815 [29 Z 1206 (18 August 1792)].

cultivation and producing subsistence crops.²⁶⁷ Apparently, the introduction of tobacco and maize, and the expansion of rye increased carrying capacity of a fragile mountain environment and increased the density of population in a limited environment. Market integration directed people to cultivate more tobacco by bringing an intense demand for the famous tobacco. Intensive uses of resources in the region because of increasing population, depending on cash crops, and the decrease in the production of cereals had disastrous results for the people. Therefore, locals started doing banditry and to serve as mercenaries under the service of local *ayans*. This was an ordinary rule in the mountainous regions of the Mediterranean, as McNeill stated.

The problems in the production and provision of cereals were not the only sources of famine. Also, tobacco production and trade could be drastically affected by certain factors such as wars, natural disasters, and price collapses. These kinds of problems had terrible consequences for tobacco producers because their only source of income was a cash crop. They might not have enough money to acquire their staple foods when they face a problem that harms tobacco production. A document dated 1787 points out such kind of problem in tobacco production. It reports that there was a scarcity of tobacco that was grown in the mountains, and districts of

²⁶⁷ “Yenice-i Karasu kazasında kadimden berü duhan zer‘ oluna gelür ancak kaza-yı mezburede zehair akall-i kalil zer olunduğu ve zer olunan zahairleri mubayaalarına kafi olmadığından civarında vaki‘ Gümülcine kazasından zahair kaza-yı mezbure pazarına tevarüdüyle bey ü şıra birle rüesa-yı sefaine muktezi beksimad ve tüccaran tabh olunan nan-ı aziz ve zürra‘ taifeleri dahi ortakçılarına kafi zahireyi pazardan işira ile taayyüş idegeldikleri ve bu sene-i mübarekede zikr olunan Gümülcine kazasından pazar-ı mezkura zahair vürudu memnu olduğundan bir keyl zahire vürud etmediğinden kaza-yı mezburun müzayakaları derkar ve salif‘üz-zikr Gümülcine kazasından zahair vürud etmediği suretde kaza-yı mezburda sakın tüccar-ı duhan ve rüesa-yı sefaine muktezi beksimad tabh olunmadığı halde gümrüğü iradına noksan-ı külli tari olduğundan başka zürra‘ taifesi dahi sinin-i sairenin rub‘ı mertebesi duhan zer‘ etmeyecekleri aşikar olmakla kemafi’s-sabık pazar-ı mezbura civarları olan mezkur Gümülcine kazasından zahair irsal olunması babında...” BOA C.DH. 50, 2463 [14 C 1204 (1 March 1790)].

Hasköy, Sultanyeri, and Dimetoka due to the paucity of precipitation.²⁶⁸ In the following part, the document urges officials to transport the few amounts of harvested tobaccos to the customs and collect their custom duties. It does not mention a resentment of local people that derived from the scarcity but when we bring the information from other documents, we can see a series of harvest related problems during the years when *dağlı* rebellion occurred. Apparently, the agrarian structure had a determining role in the destiny of local people in the Rhodopes area. Good harvest and high prices led tobacco producers to prosper. However, if the harvest fails, people could not provide their subsistence foods. While problems in the provision and harvest of subsistence crops were leading to famine, bad tobacco harvest also could have dire consequences for producers who could not afford to sustain their daily food. These problems in agricultural production most probably directed villagers to participate in banditry activities. Therefore, it is essential to look at the development of agricultural structure in the region from a broader perspective.

²⁶⁸ “Hasköy ve Sultanyeri ve Dimetoka kaza ve ciballerinde zer’ hasıl duhanların işbu sene-i mübarekede nedret-i emtardan kilet üzere olmağın bazı muhtekirler vakti ile İnöz ve Tekfurdağı ve Gümölcine ve sair getürecekleri iskelelerine nakl-i tesyir itmeyüb ol vechile duhan gümrüklerine hasarat tareyan itmekle merahim-i aliyyelerinden mercudur ki ruz-ı hızırdan kırk gün evvele varınca kazaha ve ciballerinden berüdeki girüye kalmamak üzere duhan sevk ve tesyirine Hasköy kazasından Eđerçelerli Bilal nam kulları ihtimam-ı tam eylemek üzere memur olub nakl ve eđer ketm ve ihtifa iden olur ise şurutı mucibince mallarında vezn-i kantar ve resm-i gümrükleri tahsil ittirileceğı cümleye ilam için Hasköy ve Dimetoka ve Sultanyeri kazalarına hitaben bir kıta emr-i ali inayet buyurulmak babında emr ü ferman devletlü inayetlü merhametlü efendim sultanım hazretlerindir.” BOA C.İKTS. 43, 2118 [24 R 1201 (12 May 1787)].

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis deals with the roots of the *dağlı* rebellion that emerged between the years 1780-1810 in the Rhodope Mountains from an environmental, geographical, and agrarian perspective. Even though it seems that it is a micro-scale study of the rebellion, it also provides a macro-scale depiction of the settlements in the Rhodopes geography. I discussed the large-scale economic, administrative, and agricultural structures of the settlements in the Rhodope Mountains where the insurgents emerged on. On a micro-scale, production patterns in certain villages and the economic structure of the households were examined. Thus, I aimed to discover the agrarian background of the *dağlı* rebellion. At the beginning of my research, I expected to find a connection between the uprising and its environmental roots. The abundance of *hatt-ı hümayuns* about the rebellion helped me to look at the case from multiple perspectives and directed me to ask new questions. My findings on tobacco agriculture and the role of maize and rye in the locals' diet in the documents led me to focus on agricultural production in the region. I asked how these crops influenced the lives of people. Therefore, I decided to focus on agrarian patterns in the Rhodope Mountains together with rebels' activities. I began by presenting the macro-scale geographical depiction of the Rhodope Mountains. Then, I examined the economic, agricultural, and administrative structure of the settlements in the region by using *salnames*. Even though the dates of documents differed from each other, their primary focal point was the Rhodope Mountains.

In the second chapter, I started to introduce the mountain ranges, rivers, and human geography of the Rhodope Mountains which was the homeland of the *dağlı* rebels. By examining *salnames*, I presented the geographical, economic, agricultural, and administrative depiction of the Rhodope Mountains in the nineteenth century to understand what kind of agrarian patterns were dominant in a macro-scale structure. In this respect, I showed that agriculture was the main occupation in the districts of Gümülcine, Kırcaali, Dimetoka, and Sarışaban. I presented total agricultural production in the districts. I again noticed the importance of tobacco as a significant crop in the region although it lost its former magnitude in total production in certain places.

In the third chapter, I presented chronologically the activities of the *dağlı* rebels in the Balkans and how they ravaged the settlements in the region. The chronology covers their emergence as bandits and the end of their rebellion. I aimed to show different rebel groups and their intricate relationship with other groups and *ayans*. Since *ayans* from the Rhodope Mountains, such as Tokatçıklı Süleyman Ağa, and Kırcaalili Emin Ağa, had *dağlı* backgrounds, they maintained their ties with rebels, and sometimes they did not follow the orders of the central government to suppress the rebellion. Although the rebels lived in their area of influence, they did not wage a total war against them. Especially their settlement (*iskan*) process drew my attention because it helped to relate their rebellion with environmental factors in the region. The state negotiated their settlement in certain areas, and the rebellion finally ended after the most notorious rebel Kara Feyzi accepted to settle on the Serbian Border. This brought to my mind the concept of population overshoot in the Mediterranean Mountains. When the population limit reached the highest level, mountain ecosystems cannot carry the burden, and the inhabitants engaged in new

activities such as being bandits and mercenaries and migrated to new areas. I argued this phenomenon in the next chapter.

Then, I examined whether they were bandits or rebels because they are different concepts. When I realized the numbers and terms they used for themselves, I preferred the term rebel. Also, I drew the definite boundaries of the region by using *hatt-ı hümayuns*. I argued that former studies did not pay attention to the homelands of *dağlı* rebels, even though some of them presented the settlements that gave birth to them. Therefore, this part helped me focus on which districts I should concentrate on *salnames*, and *temettuat* registers. Later, I emphasized that the rebels called *dağlıs* were a separate community living in the Rhodope Mountains. Since the Balkans are generally a mountainous region, this naming does not cover all the groups in the Balkans. While addressing this phenomenon, I used archival documents and dialect studies made in places such as Edirne, Kırklareli, and Tekirdağ, which later took refugees and immigrants from the Balkans, and I tried to emphasize that the *dağlıs* were a unique community that lived in the Rhodope Mountains. Then, I presented their relationship with geography and the impact of geography on this community because the documents show that the mountain way of life led them to be more courageous and have warrior characteristics.

In the fourth chapter, I offered a general overview of the nineteenth century rebellions in the Ottoman Empire to understand factors behind them. These rebellions directed me to focus on property and land regimes in the region. I discussed the potential impact of *çiftlik* system in the Rhodope Mountains, but the lack of studies about the system in this region prevented having a general view of landholding patterns. Later, I looked at the historical status of the local population. It gives us an idea about why people chose the path of rebellion because they had

military status in the past. As Hobsbawm stated, the role of groups with military status in the past played a vital role in the emergence of banditry. When we look at the *dağlıs*, they served as mercenaries in the service of the notables during that period, fought in the Ottoman-Russian wars, and had a military status called *evlad-ı fatihan* at the beginning of the century. Their military status gives some idea about their banditry and rebellious activities in a sense.

Then, I looked at *temettuat* registers to have knowledge on the micro-scale by analyzing agrarian activities in the villages of Hasköy and Dimetoka. *Temettuat* registers show that the amount of land per household was very low. This helped me to link the rebellion with population overshoot again. It explained why some rebels accepted settlement in other regions because there was not enough land for the crowded population. I presented the main agrarian patterns in the villages by examining these registers. Tobacco, maize, and rye were the most significant products, following wheat. Their total share in the production also showed how they helped to survive in the mountainous areas, as in the examples of McNeill. They contributed to the increase in population, but later, the ecosystem could not carry a high population which paved the way for the rebellion.

Following *temettuat* registers, I presented the story of tobacco production in the Rhodope Mountains. As a commercial crop, tobacco was important for the livelihood of the local population. Because historical sources, *salnames*, and travelers visiting the region clearly indicate that the region was one of the most important tobacco production areas in the Ottoman Empire. After the introduction of tobacco agriculture into the region, production has increased incrementally. This cash crop had led a significant part of the farmers in the region to choose to produce tobacco because it provided good income in a land-scarce region. But the negative

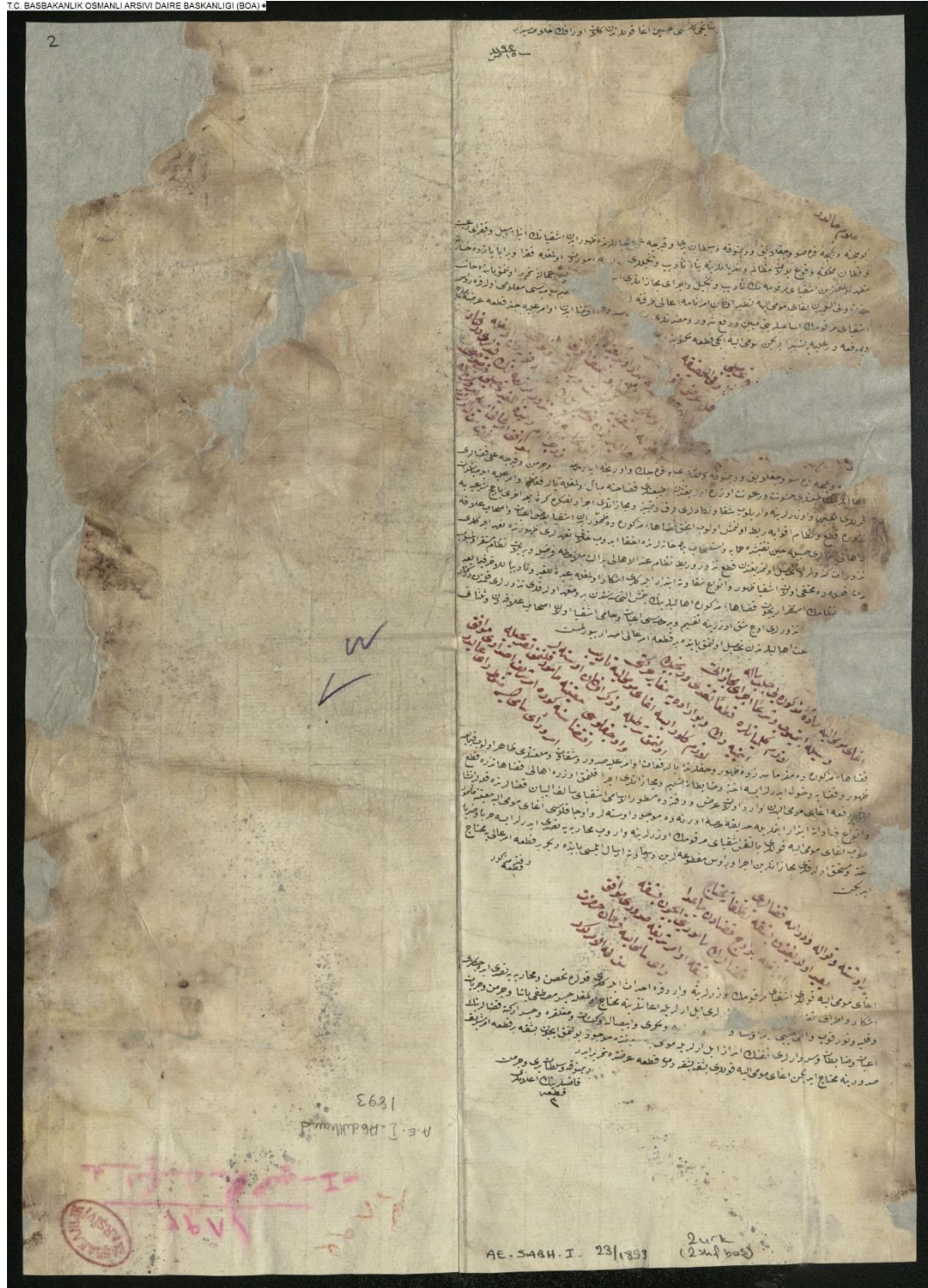
consequences of focusing on a cash crop in a resource-scarce region were evident. When a supply problem of cereals occurred in the region, the farmers were faced with the problem of famine. For this reason, they preferred giving up tobacco agriculture and starting to produce subsistence crops. Again, archival sources show that this famine-based situation might have led to the *dağlıs'* rebellion. As a matter of fact, the state sent orders not to hinder the grain sold in the markets. However, the length of the rebellion shows that this situation is not enough to solve the problem in the region.

These factors had a decisive effect on the lifestyle of the communities before the industrial revolution. They influenced the economic activities of people, their relations with the environment they live in, and their agrarian preferences and production methods. Especially due to the Little Ice age, living in the plains in the Mediterranean basin became harder. However, crops that were brought from America and suitable for growing in the mountainous region began to be grown in the mountains around the Mediterranean and made living conditions in the mountainous areas easier. However, this situation started to push the population limits in these places towards the nineteenth century, and the highlands became uninhabitable for a part of the population. I tried to present how this development occurred in the Rhodope Mountains and led to the *dağlı* rebellion.

APPENDIX

Facsimiles of primary documents

BOA AE. SABH I. 23/1893



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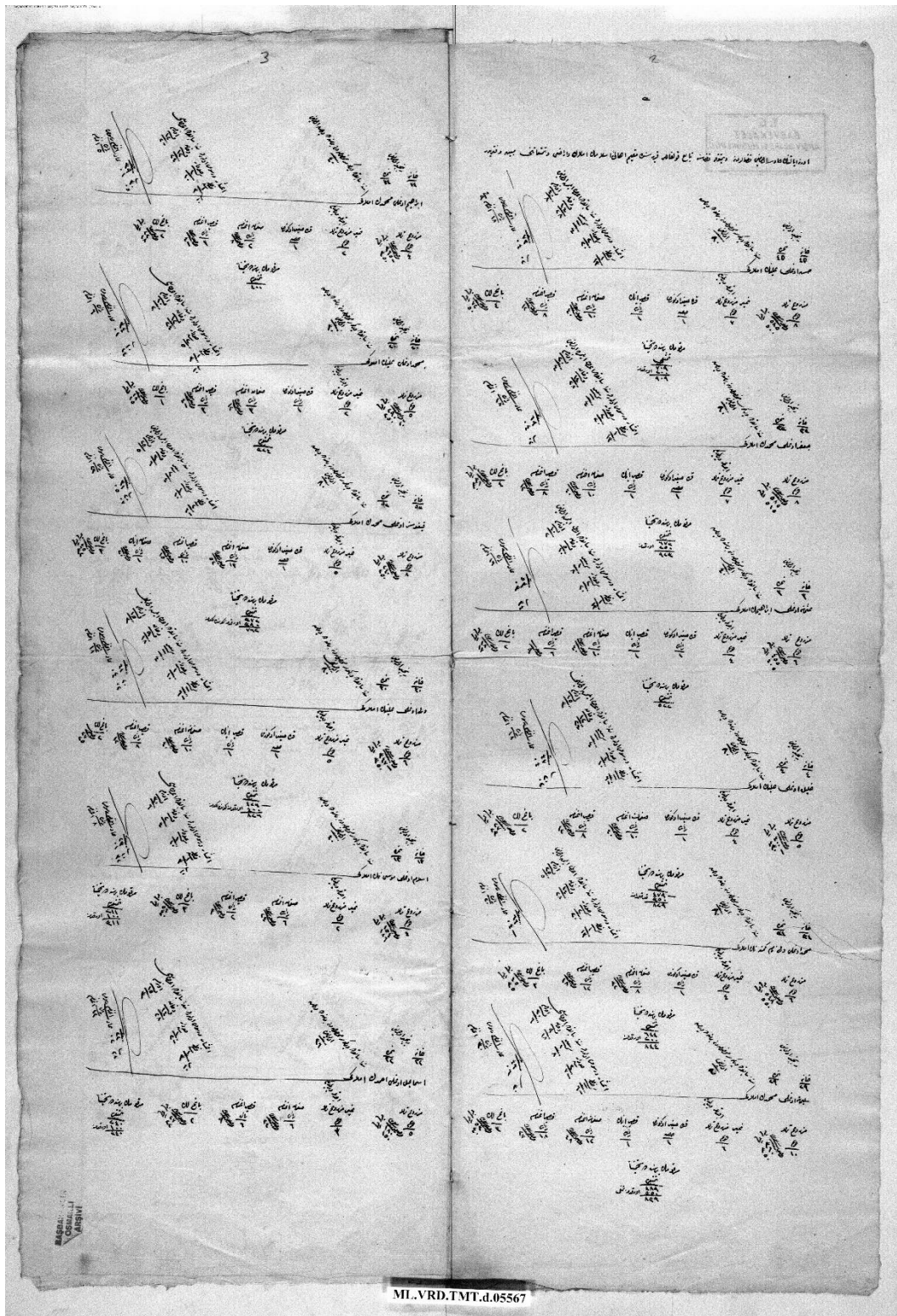
مادونه بر ساجی باشی مطلق مال ازنده کله قربانک شوم سید ۱۳۱۲

HAT. 25/1252-A

HAT. 0025



Handwritten manuscript in Persian script, consisting of two pages. The text is organized into approximately 15 horizontal sections, each separated by a horizontal line. Each section contains dense, cursive handwriting. The right page has a small circular stamp at the bottom center. The manuscript is identified by the reference number ML.VRD.TMT.d.05979.



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BOA HAT 25/1252-A.

BOA HAT 54/2510.

BOA HAT 65/2837.

BOA HAT 65/2837-B.

BOA HAT 174/7538.

BOA HAT 1344/52527.

BOA HAT 1404/56823.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5513.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5567.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5580.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5591.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5613.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5696.

BOA ML. VRD. TMT. d. 5700.

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